

ADULT
SABBATH SCHOOL
BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

APR MAY JUNE 2002

Great Apocalyptic Prophecies



SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CHURCH



Let Ellen G. White help you study!

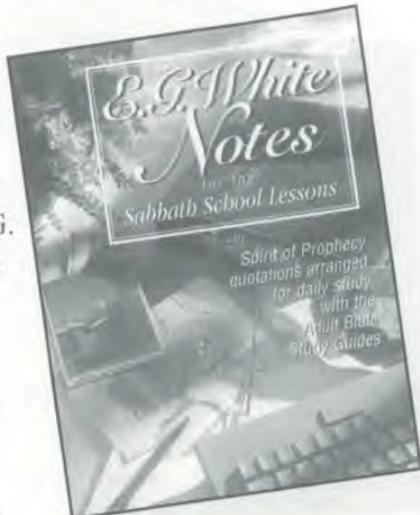
E. G. White Notes for the Sabbath

School Lessons is an indispensable study tool designed to help you gain new insights and fresh perspectives from your Sabbath School Bible study.

This attractive booklet contains E. G. White comments addressing the topics of the day, week, and quarter in the Adult Bible Study Guides.

Don't miss out! Start getting more from your daily Bible study with *E. G. White Notes* today.

Available at your Adventist Book Center.
Call 1-800-765-6955 to order.



Pacific Press[®] Publishing Association. Visit us at www.pacificpress.com
© 2001 Prices subject to change.

Scripture references other than from the King James Version quoted by permission in this Bible Study Guide for second quarter 2002 are as follows:

NIV. From the Holy Bible, New International Version, copyright © 1978 by International Bible Society. Used by permission.

NKJV. From the Holy Bible, New King James Version, copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission.

NRSV. From the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

RSV. From the Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright 1946, 1952, 1971, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide (ISSN 1096-7400) (Standard Edition). Published quarterly by Pacific Press[®] Publishing Association, 1350 N. Kings Road, Nampa, ID 83687-3193, U.S.A. One-year subscription in U.S.A., \$8.79; single copy, \$3.99. One-year subscription to countries outside U.S.A., \$11.79; single \$3.99. All prices at U.S.A. exchange. Periodicals postage paid at Nampa, Idaho. When a change of address is desired, please send both old and new addresses.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide (Standard Edition), P.O. Box 5353, Nampa, ID 83653-5353. Printed in the United States of America.

Editions in Braille available. Contact Christian Record Services, Box 6097, Lincoln, NE 68506.
Easy Reading Edition available. Contact Pacific Press[®], 1350 N. Kings Road, Nampa, ID 83687.

Copyright © 2002 by the Office of the Adult Bible Study Guide, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600, USA.

Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide (ISSN 1096-7400)/No. 428/April-June 2002.

Contents

1. Interpreting Apocalyptic Prophecies (March 30–April 5).....	6
2. Daniel 2 and 7: The ABCs of Apocalyptic Prophecies (April 6–12)	14
3. The Son of Man and the Final Judgment (April 13–19)	22
4. Daniel 8: The Prince of the Heavenly Host (April 20–26)	30
5. Daniel 9: The Coming of the Messiah (April 27–May 3)	38
6. The Eschatological Day of Atonement (May 4–10)	46
7. Matthew 24: Jesus' Sermon on Apocalyptic Prophecy (May 11–17)	56
8. The Child, the Church, and the Dragon: Revelation 12 (May 18–24)	64
9. The Dragon Versus the Remnant—Part 1 (May 25–31)	72
10. The Dragon Versus the Remnant—Part 2 (June 1–7)	80
11. The Three Angels' Messages: Revelation 14:1–12 (June 8–14)	88
12. The Climax of Apocalyptic Expectation: The Blessed Hope (June 15–21)	96
13. Preparing for the Apocalyptic Consummation (June 22–28)	104

Editorial Office: 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904

Principal Contributor
Angel Manuel Rodriguez

Editorial Production Manager
Soraya Homayouni Parish

Editor
Clifford Goldstein
goldsteinc@gc.adventist.org

Art and Design
Lars Justinén

Associate Editor
Lyndelle Brower Chiomenti

Pacific Press® Coordinator
Paul A. Hey

The Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide is prepared by the Office of the Adult Bible Study Guide of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The preparation of the guides is under the general direction of a worldwide Sabbath School Manuscript Evaluation Committee, whose members serve as consulting editors. The published guide reflects the input of the committee and thus does not solely or necessarily represent the intent of the author(s).

When the Apocalyptic Gets Personal

One of my “favorite” interpretations of apocalyptic prophecy, delivered (believe it or not) at the United States Capitol before a packed house on February 22, 1857, purported to show from the book of Daniel the exact day, even the hour, of the signing of the United States Declaration of Independence!—See Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 84, 85.

Another classic, more recently, claimed that the 70-week prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27 was partially fulfilled in the signing of the Israeli PLO—peace accord in 1993! One “favorite” apocalyptic prognostication even predicted that in 1994 an asteroid would wipe out one-third of the world’s population.

What is it about apocalyptic prophecy that can bring out such gullibility, even naiveté, among Christians? It is bad enough that the good folk who make these predictions look foolish after the fact, but, sadly, their repeated failures reflect negatively on all Christianity. After all, those who already have doubts about the Christian faith certainly will have more doubt when, time and again, these predictions, based on the same Book that reveals the salvation offered the world by Christ’s death, fail to transpire when and as proclaimed.

This is too bad, because there is so much in apocalyptic prophecy that should cause people to believe, not to doubt. I know, because of what the apocalyptic prophecies have done for me, personally. More than twenty years ago, having just had a powerful conversion *experience*, I was exposed to some apocalyptic prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, prophecies that immediately helped ground my experience in the Bible. In other words, however real and intense my conversion experience, it was still just that, an *experience*, and experience needs to be balanced, interpreted, and verified by the Word of God. And for me, these apocalyptic prophecies added that needed ballast in ways that strengthened my faith back then and that, in fact, continue to strengthen it today. No doubt, many others could testify to the same.

Thus, this quarter, Dr. Angel Rodríguez, of the Biblical Research Institute at the General Conference, covers some of the major apocalyptic prophecies that, if properly understood, will become personal for each of us, as well. These prophecies will build our trust in God’s Word; will teach us more about “the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24); and will make us more sure, more confident, and more hopeful of the future because of what Christ—as revealed in these prophecies—has done for us in the past.

Indeed, this is the purpose of the apocalyptic prophecies, not to tell us about asteroids or peace accords but to reveal Jesus, and when we better understand Jesus—what He has done, is doing, and will do for us—that is the moment when the apocalyptic prophecies become personal, the way they always have been meant to be.

The Fear Factor

Man," wrote Francisco José Moreno, "is afraid. Fear is one of the fundamental motivating forces behind our actions. The history of mankind is to a very large extent the history of our attempts to deny, repress, or escape from fear."—*Between Faith and Reason: Basic Fear and the Human Condition* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1977), p. 1.

Humans are, indeed, afraid—and with good reasons too. Who knows what the next full moon, the next gust of wind, the next political twitch, will bring? Maybe wealth will arrive in the mail, maybe happiness with the tick of the clock, maybe peace and health in the morning light. Or, maybe (or even more likely), disease is in the wind, famine in the sunshine, and war in the soul. Even if we avoid famine, war, and disease, our biggest fear—death—always awaits us at the end.

Fortunately, we have a God who loves us, a God who knows our fears and who seeks to alleviate those fears as much as the parameters of the great controversy will, for now, allow. One way He does this is through the apocalyptic prophecies in which the Lord spoke to the prophets (through dreams and visions rich in symbolism) to help us see way beyond the draining fervor and hopeless ferment of a fallen, dying world. In an existence in which chaos, evil, and sin seem to infect even the protons and electrons of reality, a message can be squeezed out of the symbols, deciphered from the codes, and translated from the images of these prophecies. That message is Fear not, God is in control; His plan will finally triumph, and the greatest of all His promises is as real as God Himself, the promise of a new life in a new body in a new and sinless world for those who by faith endure to the end.

Through the unique power of the apocalyptic, God shows that no matter how capricious, evil, selfish, and cunning human will is; no matter humankind's devising, schemes, and plans; the Lord still rules, both in heaven and earth, and He alone will determine the course of events that lead to the end of the kingdom of sin. Although human will and responsibility are not annulled, the apocalyptic shows us that God's plan will prevail; no matter how chaotic and unruly, even arbitrary, events seem now.

Most important, the apocalyptic reveals to us Jesus, who confronted the powers of evil in heaven; in His three-and-a-half-year ministry on earth; and, finally, in His sacrifice on the cross. In each encounter, He unreservedly and uncompromisingly defeated His and our foes. Now, at the close of the conflict, He will defeat evil again, paving the way for our planet to be reincorporated into the harmony of the kingdom of God.

This is the message of the apocalyptic. Read it, love it, trust it, and believe it, because through it God has given us a sure remedy to alleviate the fear that, understandably, dominates a sinful, dying world.

Tired of theoretical Christianity?

Get REAL.

Randy Maxwell provides practical, hands-on advice for spiritual growth that you can use right away in *5 Steps to Christlike Living*. Used alone or in a small group, this book will prove to be a treasure-trove of ideas on connecting with God despite a busy schedule, restoring your spiritual passion, dealing with guilt, romancing your spouse, getting more out of church, getting along with your teenager, knowing God's will in your life, and much, much more. 0-8163-1816-6. Paperback. US\$9.99, Cdn\$14.99.



Available at your local ABC, 1-800-765-6955.
Or read a sample chapter first and order online:
www.AdventistBookCenter.com



Pacific Press®

© 2001 • Prices subject to change • 354/15590

Help Them Connect



In today's society, computers are necessities. With them we can learn, explore, create. Computers can be effective instruments to spread the gospel.

The Hiroshima (Japan) Adventist Secondary School must upgrade its computer lab in order to retain its accreditation and remain competitive with other schools. But the lab will provide far more than mere training in how to operate a computer. School leaders see it as a means to train young people in innovative evangelistic techniques, such as Christian Web sites and Online Bible schools.

Our Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help provide this needed tool so that young people can reach others with the gospel while they learn. For more information, read ...

MISSION

The Thirteenth Sabbath Offering on June 29
supports projects in the Northern Asia-Pacific Division

Interpreting Apocalyptic Prophecies



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Dan. 2:28; 7:15-18; Matt. 24:15, 16; Luke 24:27; 2 Thess. 2:3-8.

MEMORY TEXT: “‘There is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries’” (Daniel 2:28, NIV).

ONE OF THE GREAT CONTRIBUTIONS OF BIBLICAL THOUGHT is the notion of linear time, the idea that time moves in a straight line, from one distinct beginning to one distinct end. This view contrasts many pagan faiths and concepts that have viewed time as circular, cyclical, something that constantly returns to its beginnings, and goes through all the cycles, again and again, never ending.

That is not the biblical model, which teaches that the world has a specific beginning in time and a specific end. Though we know the past, as humans we are more concerned with the future. What will happen, when, and why? Most important, how will it affect our lives?

God knows this concern, which is why He has opened up the future to us through the apocalyptic prophecies, even if He does it in a “strange” way: He hides the message behind symbols and images often difficult to understand, thus calling our attention to their uniqueness and importance. That is why, besides using these symbols and images to share the future with us, the Lord has provided, within the Bible itself, the method for interpreting these images and symbols. This week, we will explore that method.

***(Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, April 6.)**

HISTORY AT A GLANCE.

"But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these" (Dan. 2:28).

Some of the most powerful and rationally appealing prophecies appear in the book of Daniel. Bible students from ancient times through today have studied the writings of this Jewish prophet, captive in Babylon, and one point that clearly comes through in his texts—particularly in the prophecies of Daniel 2, 7, and 8—is that Daniel covers the broad scope of world history. He is not dealing with just one time and one limited place but something much larger, and that is the history of the world.

Read Daniel 2:38 and 8:20, 21. In these verses Daniel names three of the four great kingdoms depicted in the visions he has been shown. What does that tell us regarding the historical scope of these prophecies? Are they limited to a specific time in the past or only to some future events yet to take place? What information do the texts themselves give regarding the method for interpreting these prophecies?

By covering world history from his time up until "the time of the end" (a phrase that appears five times in the book of Daniel and nowhere else in Scripture), Daniel shows just how wide and broad are the issues he is addressing. This is important to know, because some people would like to limit all his prophecies only to the past, even prior to the Christian Era; others want to place them way off in the future, to events beyond even our time today.

It is hard, however, to see how anyone, looking carefully at the texts and letting Scripture be its own interpreter, could conclude anything other than that Daniel's prophecies cover a sweep of world history from his time unto the end. The angel interpreter, for instance, in Daniel 7:17, 18, all but gives that interpretation. For this reason, many interpreters have, over the centuries, understood these prophecies as a great historical sequence of one kingdom after another up until the end. This is called the *historicist* approach, and it is the foundation of the Adventist understanding of prophecy.

Read through Daniel 2 until you can see for yourself the historical sweep of world empires presented in the chapter. Know it well enough to be able to share it with others, because it sets the foundation for the prophecies yet to come.

JESUS' METHOD OF INTERPRETATION.

"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains" (Matt. 24:15, 16). See also Luke 21:20-22.

Notice what is happening here. This presents one of the rare times that Jesus Himself is recorded as interpreting an apocalyptic prophecy; in this case, from the book of Daniel. We should pay very careful attention to what the Lord is saying, because it unlocks a crucial principle regarding biblical interpretation.

As much as possible, read the immediate context surrounding verses 15 and 16 in Matthew 24. Whom is Jesus addressing? What questions is He answering? What is the background for His interpretation?

Whatever the numerous issues involved, Christ's words do present one very important point for those interested in understanding apocalyptic prophecy, particularly the book of Daniel. Jesus interprets these sections in Daniel, the sections about the abomination of desolation (see Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11), as something that is fulfilled *after* Him and *after* His time on earth. Jesus, talking to His disciples around the time of A.D. 31, places these prophecies at a date in the future.

This is a crucial point, because, over the years, many Bible scholars and interpreters have claimed that all the prophecies of the book of Daniel were fulfilled almost two centuries *before* the ministry of Christ. In other words, they claim that these prophecies have nothing to do with the future, or any end-time events, but were consummated in the Maccabean revolt in the second century B.C. Obviously, Jesus had a different understanding of, at least, some of Daniel's prophecies, for He placed them after even His own earthly ministry.

We live at a time when secular forces are at war with Christian faith. One way to weaken our faith is to make us believe that there is no such thing as predictive prophecy in the Bible, prophecy without any bearing on our future. How can the simple point from today's lesson, regarding Jesus' understanding of Daniel, help protect us from this insidious assault against our faith?

INTERPRETATION OF SYMBOLS (Dan. 2:38; 8:21; Rev. 12:9; 17:15).

Apocalyptic literature is rich in symbols. These symbols have thrilled, stymied, and inspired Bible students for thousands of years. A symbol, of course, is the use of an object to convey an idea or concept other than the symbol itself. In some cases there may not be a natural connection between the symbol and what it symbolizes (for example, a tree symbolizing a believer); in others, a clear relationship exists between the two (for example, fire as a symbol of destruction). Often, but not always, the Bible itself provides the meaning of a symbol.

Study the following symbols and write down the meaning given in the texts.

Symbol	Text	Meaning
Head of gold	Dan. 2:38	_____
Stone	Dan. 2:44, 45	_____
Four beasts	Dan. 7:17	_____
Goat	Dan. 8:21	_____
Seven stars	Rev. 1:20	_____
Lampstands	Rev. 1:20	_____
Lamps	Rev. 4:5	_____
Dragon	Rev. 12:9	_____
Seven heads	Rev. 17:9, 10	_____
Ten horns	Rev. 17:12	_____
Water	Rev. 17:15	_____

Notice that (1) the meaning of the symbol is clearly stated in the biblical text, facilitating the task of the interpreter; (2) the meaning is found in its immediate context, which suggests that we must pay close attention to the context of a verse; and (3) a symbol may have more than one meaning, but we must accept the one chosen by the biblical writer. For instance, water may be a symbol of life (John 4:10-14; Rev. 21:6), but in some contexts, such as Revelation 17:5, it symbolizes "multitudes."

In dealing with symbols whose meanings are not clearly stated, we must study that particular symbol and prayerfully select the meaning that seems most compatible with the immediate context.

Why does the Bible use symbols in these prophecies? Why couldn't the meanings just have been expressed in ways that would leave no room for question? Perhaps the Lord wants us to study deeply for ourselves? Perhaps He wants to hide these meanings from certain people? How do you understand the reasons?

PAUL'S VIEW OF PROPHECY.

"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming" (2 Thess. 2:3-8).

Read carefully the above text, keeping in mind the theme of this week's lesson, that of understanding how to interpret prophecy. Here, Paul points to a series of prophetic events that is to climax in the Second Coming.

As best as you can, list the events that Paul talks about in the above verses, in their order of appearance:

According to Paul, some of these events had already started, even in his day ("the mystery of iniquity doth already work" [vs. 7]). Thus Paul, like Daniel, locates the fulfillment of apocalyptic prophecy within the flow of history, beginning in his own day and culminating in the end of the world. Here again is more evidence for historicism, in which events follow a historical sequence that can be traced through history up until the Second Coming. Apparently, Paul does not subscribe to the view that leaves all prophetic fulfillment to some distant dates in the past (called preterism); nor does he take the futurist view, which puts off all prophecy to some far distant date in the future.

As we look back and see how, historically, prophecies have been fulfilled as predicted, how can those fulfillments strengthen our faith in prophecies that have yet to be fulfilled?

CHRIST-CENTERED INTERPRETATION (Luke 24:27; John 5:39).

The primary purpose of apocalyptic prophecy is not to predict final events but to introduce the only One, Christ, capable of defeating the evil that attempts to control the flow of history.

Match each title below with the corresponding biblical passage from the book of Daniel. Then, in the blank provided, write down the significance of the title:

<i>Title</i>	<i>Verse</i>	<i>Significance</i>
— Son of man	(1) 9:25	_____
— Messiah	(2) 8:11	_____
— Michael, one of the chief princes	(3) 7:13	_____
— Michael . . . the great prince	(4) 9:26	_____
— Prince of princes	(5) 12:1	_____
— Michael your prince	(6) 10:13	_____
— Prince of the host	(7) 10:21	_____
— Messiah the Prince	(8) 8:25	_____

The book of Revelation also puts the emphasis on the centrality of Christ in the final conflict. Christological titles abound in the book, indicating the manifold work of our Savior. He is Prince of the kings of the earth (Rev. 1:5), Son of God (2:18), the Lion and the root (5:5), the Lamb (5:6), the Word of God (19:13), and King of kings and Lord of lords (19:16). It is through Him, and Him alone, that we are redeemed (5:9), purified from sin (7:14), and become victorious over evil (12:11). In the final conflict, those powers that fight against Him and His people will be destroyed (17:14). No wonder we are told, time and again in Scripture, to rejoice, trust, and have faith. Despite immediate appearances, our God is in control. Because Jesus has redeemed us and defeated the enemy at the Cross, He invites all of us to share in the fruits of what He has accomplished for us.

One thing is certain: Despite all the visions of beasts and wars, earthquakes and plagues, and other end-time calamities, Jesus assures our final victory, no matter what happens to us here and now, as long as we continue to accept Him. If you know someone who is struggling through something difficult now, or even if you yourself are, study the promises of the final victory in Christ and use them to give yourself, or someone else, some comfort and hope in a world that, at times, seems to offer little of either.

FURTHER STUDY: Ellen G. White, "The Revelation," *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 578-592.

The historicist system of apocalyptic interpretation was the one "used by the early Church Fathers up to the fifth century A.D. LeRoy E. Froom has shown that a significant shift in prophetic interpretation occurred when Augustine defined the kingdom of God as the Christian church and spiritualized the millennium, making it a symbol of the Christian Era (*The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, vol. 1, pp. 473-491). His views prevailed during the Middle Ages, until the period of the Protestant reform. The Reformers restored historicism as the method to be used in the interpretation of Daniel and Revelation."—*The SDA Encyclopedia*, second revised edition, vol. A-L, pp. 698, 699.

"In the Revelation are portrayed the deep things of God. . . . Its truths are addressed to those living in the last days of this earth's history, as well as to those living in the days of John. Some of the scenes depicted in this prophecy are in the past, some are now taking place; some bring to view the close of the great conflict between the powers of darkness and the Prince of heaven, and some reveal the triumphs and joys of the redeemed in the earth made new."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 584.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why is it important for the church to use a method of prophetic interpretation supported by the Scriptures themselves as opposed to current popular or "scholarly" methods?
2. Certain prophecies have not yet been fulfilled. How safe is it to attempt to interpret them? How can the writings of Ellen G. White help?
3. Think about it: If the preterist view of interpretation is used, all of Christian history is removed from prophecy; if, on the other hand, the futurist method is used, again all Christian history is removed from prophecy. In contrast, only the historicist method keeps the Christian Era at the forefront of the prophecies. Discuss.

SUMMARY: Apocalyptic prophecy unfolds as a study in history, with the rise and fall of great world empires forming the background. Daniel, Jesus, and Paul, in the texts used this week, affirm the historicist approach to prophecy. Rather than covering only the past or only the future, they cover the past, the present, and the future.



Snakebite!

Ch. Victor Sam

Sikha Roy was doing her morning chores when suddenly a poisonous snake slithered through a crack in the wall and struck her. Sikha ran from the house crying "Help me! A snake has bitten me!"

Relatives rushed her to the local hospital, but the doctor could not help her. "Take her to the bigger hospital," he urged.

The nearest large hospital was 45 miles (75 km) away. But when the doctor there examined her, he, too, shook his head. "There is nothing I can do to save her," he said. Her relatives gathered around her bedside, speaking in whispers and waiting for her to die.

"This is what she gets for going against the traditions of the elders!" one family member whispered.

"We tried to warn her that no good would come to her when she changed her religion," another added.

After Sikha was baptized seven months earlier, she faced strong opposition from her family, those who now stood vigil around her bedside. It seemed that their prophecies were coming true; the gods were punishing her.

Meanwhile, in the village, Sikha's church family learned of her encounter with the snake. They could not be with her, so they gathered to pray for her. They begged God to save Sikha's life as a witness to those in the community who opposed Christianity.

Several hours passed as Sikha lay apparently unconscious in the hospital. Her relatives waited by her bedside, and the church members prayed in the village. Suddenly, Sikha opened her eyes and tried to sit up. She started to get out of bed.

The relatives called the doctor to come and examine her. After he checked her over, they asked him, "What did you do?"

"I did nothing," he admitted. Then he told Sikha, "You are truly blessed. Your God has saved you!"

"Thank You, Lord Jesus!" Sikha said, her eyes shining. The little group returned to the village, amazed at what they had just witnessed.

News of the miracle spread quickly through the village. "Jesus Christ saved my life!" Sikha told them. "Let me tell you more about my wonderful God." Many now listen who before had no interest in the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Christianity is sweeping India like a brush fire. Pray that God will continue to touch the hearts of His children in that great subcontinent.

Ch. Victor Sam is director of the South Bengal Region in Calcutta, India.

Produced by the Office of Mission
Sabbath School-Personal Ministries department of the General Conference
Email: gomission@gc.adventist.org

Daniel 2 and 7: The ABCs of Apocalyptic Prophecies



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Daniel 2 and 7.

MEMORY TEXT: “‘Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him’” (Daniel 7:27, NIV).

SOME OF THE MOST INCREDIBLE FAITH-BUILDING PROPHECIES in all Scripture appear in Daniel 2 and Daniel 7. In these two parallel chapters, Daniel portrays the sweep of world history from his own time up through ours and to the end of the world. If anyone ever needed a “rational” basis to believe in the inspiration of the Bible, God has given it in these two chapters.

What is interesting is that Daniel 2 and 7 describe the same events from different perspectives. While Daniel 2 emphasizes the rise and fall of the kingdoms of the earth, Daniel 7 emphasizes the experience of the people of God before that eternal kingdom is finally established.

Whatever their differences, Daniel 2 and 7 both describe history from a spiritual angle, revealing a dimension not found in standard history books. Both chapters are deeply religious documents, showing that history is, after all, the arena of God’s activity. Both chapters end with a note of triumph: God’s kingdom will be victorious over the kingdoms of the earth. In the final victory, the Son of man is the indispensable instrument, and it is through Him that His people inherit the kingdom.

**(Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, April 13.)*

TWO PARALLEL VISIONS.

Though two symbolically different prophecies in two different chapters, Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 parallel each other:

<i>Daniel 2</i>	<i>Daniel 7</i>
Gold (vs. 32)	Lion (vs. 4)
Silver (vs. 32)	Bear (vs. 5)
Brass (vs. 32)	Leopard (vs. 6)
Iron (vs. 33)	Fourth beast (vss. 7, 8)
God's kingdom (vss. 34, 35)	God's kingdom (vs. 14)

What great kingdoms do these symbols represent?

The Lord deemed the identification of these symbols so important that He named the first three in the book of Daniel and made the identity of the fourth unmistakable. The first one, the gold head in Daniel 2 and the lion in Daniel 7, is Babylon (Dan. 2:38). The second kingdom (the silver and the bear) is identified in Daniel 5:28, 30, 31 and 8:20 as the Medo-Persian Empire. The third (the brass and the leopard) is symbolized by a goat in Daniel 8:21 and identified as Greece in Daniel 11:2. The name of the fourth kingdom (the iron and the fourth beast) is not given, but only one power possibly fits its description in the sweep of world history—and that is Rome.

What identifying marks of the fourth kingdom in Daniel 2 and of the fourth beast in Daniel 7 make its identification as Rome the only sensible one?

What we see in these prophecies is what is known by theologians as “recapitulation,” a fancy word for repetition. Certain prophecies are repeated, not identically but in ways that reinforce their basic message, even if these prophecies are given from different angles. In other words, they can cover the same historical period from a different perspective, thus revealing new elements in the events described. Daniel 2 and 7, for instance, trace history from the time of Babylon to the end of earth’s history; chapter 7, however, though repeating what is in chapter 2, enlarges and expands on it, as well.

José was the only Adventist in his family of atheists and skeptics. Only after studying Daniel 2 and 7 with them did they start to loosen up toward his beliefs. What is it about these two prophecies that can open people to the validity of God’s Word?

THE FOURTH BEAST.

"And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise" (Dan. 2:40).

"Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet" (Dan. 7:19). See also Daniel 7:7.

What similarity exists between the language used in Daniel 7 to describe the fourth kingdom and the words used in Daniel 2?

The beast representing the Roman Empire is like no other beast. Daniel describes it as "terrifying and frightening and very powerful" (Dan. 7:7, NIV). It was an undefeated power, committed to conquer through war. *The Cambridge Ancient History* points out that "from the end of the third century [B.C.] onwards, Roman policy was aggressive," having no interest in settling disputes through negotiations but rather making demands to other nations that made war unavoidable.—A. E. Austin, editor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), vol. 8, p. 382. Cruelty characterized the Roman Empire's attitude toward those it conquered, a cruelty represented by its "iron teeth" (Dan. 7:19, NIV).

What would happen to the powerful Roman Empire? Dan. 2:41; 7:24.

Many reasons can be given for the breakup of the Roman Empire, "but it was really the massive invasions, which had become incessant during the second half of the [fourth] century, that toppled the empire."—*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Macropaedia* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1981, fifteenth edition), vol. 15, p. 1132.

Unlike the three powers that preceded it, Rome was not replaced by another single power, in the way that Media-Persia replaced Babylon or Greece replaced Media-Persia. Instead, it was broken apart into smaller entities, just as Daniel's vision showed. How amazing that Daniel, centuries before this event, described the demise of pagan Rome so accurately! If God can tell the future of empires, certainly He holds our individual future in His hands, as well. How does that knowledge give you comfort, especially in the midst of terrible trials?

THE LITTLE HORN—PART 1.

"If a man consider the origin of this great ecclesiastical dominion, he will easily perceive that the papacy is no other than the ghost of the deceased Roman empire, sitting crowned on the grave thereof." —Seventeenth-century British philosopher, Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in *Great Books of the Western World* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1971), p. 278.

Read Daniel 7:8, 24 and describe in your own words the rise of the little horn. What events surround its rise that can help lead to a certain identification?

The identification of the power represented by the little horn is of critical importance for the interpretation of Daniel 7. The prophecy provides several facts that help make a sure identification.

First, the little horn arises out of the fourth beast (7:24); thus it is not separate from the Roman Empire but is actually part of it.

Second, it appears after the other 10 horns (7:8). The 10 horns represent the collapse and division of the Roman Empire; therefore, the little horn came after the Roman Empire's collapse.

Third, as Daniel 7:20 reveals, it becomes greater than the other horns ("literally 'whose appearance was bigger than that of its companions'" [The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 4, p. 830:20. "Stout"]). It represented an entity more powerful than the other kingdoms of divided Rome.

Fourth, three of the ten horns were uprooted (7:8). In order for it to have space to exercise its greatness, three powers are eliminated.

What power arose out of the ruins of pagan Rome to be a leading influence among the divided kingdoms? The answer is blatantly clear, the Roman Church. Historian R. P. C. Hanson comments that though the church "was formally unprepared for the appalling and unprecedented collapse of the society in which it had grown into maturity, when the crisis came the Church found powers within itself to deal with the crisis, to endure, to survive and finally to go far towards permeating and controlling the new state of affairs which the barbarian invasions and settlements had brought about."—"The Church and the Collapse of the Western Roman Empire," *Church and State in the Early Church*, ed. Everett Ferguson (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1993), vol. 7, p. 385.

How can we teach the texts we have studied today in a way that does not appear bigoted? What can we do to show that we are not discussing individuals but an institution? Or can we, honestly, make that distinction? Discuss different approaches.

LITTLE HORN—PART 2.

"And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time" (Dan. 7:25).

Daniel spends much time giving specific details about the activity of this little-horn power, papal Rome. Among those details are:

1. *Speaking great words against God.* The church spoke with authority through its teaching office, defining dogmas and beliefs and requiring submission to them. In the process, truth and error were mixed together. Consequently, nonbiblical teachings were accepted as truth (for example, immortality of the soul, sacrament of penance, purgatory, mediation of the saints, etc.).

2. *Persecution.* Those who did not submit to the dogmas were persecuted and even killed. During the Inquisition, torture was used against the "enemies" of the church. "In 1252 [Pope] Innocent IV sanctioned the infliction of torture by the civil authorities upon heretics, and torture later came to have a recognized place in the procedure of the inquisitorial courts."—*New Catholic Encyclopedia* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 1967), vol. 14, p. 208: Torture and the Church.

3. *Changing the law.* The most dramatic and daring change introduced through the union of church and state was the *change of the law of God*. The biblical day of rest, the seventh-day Sabbath, was changed to Sunday. This change was made, based on the teaching authority of the church, and remains today the day of rest among Catholics and most Protestant denominations. One Catholic source reads: "*Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?* We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church . . . transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday."—Rev. Peter Geiermann, C.S.S.R., *The Convert's Catechism of Catholic Doctrine* (St. Louis, Mo.: B. Herder Book Co., 1937), p. 50.

Even a cursory study of Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 reveals that the Lord has given us a lot more details about the little horn and its activity than about any of the other powers depicted. Why do you think that is so, and what does it tell us about the importance of knowing just who this power is?

Why, especially in an age of great ecumenical trends, must we keep in mind the truth about this little horn and what it represents?

THE FIRST APOCALYPTIC TIME PROPHECY.

"And they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time" (Dan. 7:25).

Unlike any of the other powers in Daniel 7, the little-horn power is distinguished by one special characteristic: It comes with Daniel's first apocalyptic time prophecy. It is the only one of the kingdoms represented in the chapter identified with a time prophecy, another detail that strengthens the argument that God wants us to know, in particular, who this power is.

What does this time prophecy mean here in Daniel 7:25, regarding the little horn? In apocalyptic symbolism, "day" often represents "year." Scholars of many denominations have long recognized this principle (Jewish commentators were applying the day-year principle to biblical texts centuries before Adventists ever existed). The Old Testament gives numerous examples of the day-year principle.

For example, 1 Samuel 20:6 reads, "For there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the family"; the word for "yearly" is really translated as "days." This is just one of many examples.

Read 1 Kings 1:1; the word translated "years" here is really "days." See also Genesis 6:3, Numbers 14:34, and Ezekiel 4:6 and try to find hints of the day-year principle in these texts, as well.

The "time and times and the dividing of time" in Daniel 7:25 is depicted in Revelation 12:6 as 1,260 days. If the "time and times and the dividing of time" equals 1,260 days and a day equals a year, then the "time and times and the dividing of time," or 1,260 days, equals 1,260 years. Thus, the reign of the little-horn power (or, at least, a phase of it) will last more than twelve centuries.

In A.D. 538, after the retreat from Rome of the Arian invaders, the way was paved for the rise of papal Rome. Amazingly enough, in 1798—exactly 1,260 years later—the French general Berthier arrested and exiled Pope Pius VI, with the intention of bringing to an end the Roman Catholic system. In fact, there were some Bible students before 1798 who, studying these prophecies, came to the conclusion that something drastic would happen to Rome near the beginning of the nineteenth century, which is precisely what happened. For further study, see *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 834, "A time and times and the dividing of time."

How does this massive time period—covering more than a millennium—help identify the little horn?

FURTHER STUDY: Read *The SDA Bible Commentary* on Daniel 2 and 7; C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Publishing Assoc., 1981), vol. 1, pp. 101–141; Ellen G. White, “An Era of Spiritual Darkness,” in *The Great Controversy*, pp. 49–60.

Read the following insight in conclusion to this week’s topic:

The Beasts and the Lamb. “To Daniel was given a vision of fierce beasts, representing the powers of the earth. But the ensign of the Messiah’s kingdom is a lamb. While earthly kingdoms rule by the ascendancy of physical power, Christ is to banish every carnal weapon, every instrument of coercion. His kingdom was to be established to uplift and ennable fallen humanity.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1171, on chapter 7:2-7: “Messiah’s Ensign, a Lamb.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In your opinion, why did God use the principle of recapitulation (see Sunday’s lesson) instead of giving the prophet one single vision that would include all the prophetic events?
2. If you were part of a Bible study on this topic that had Roman Catholics in attendance, what approach could be taken to help break down barriers that would, no doubt, arise?
3. In recent years, there have been many documents signed by Roman Catholics and Protestants that make great claims of unity between them. How should we, as Seventh-day Adventists, in light of Bible prophecy, respond in a responsible manner to these pronouncements?
4. Many people are skeptical of Christianity because of the bloody and intolerant history of the church. How could this week’s lesson help weaken that common argument against the validity of the Christian faith?

SUMMARY: Daniel 2 and 7 complement each other, providing an overview of history from God’s perspective. The vision, with amazing accuracy, predicted the rise and fall of the ancient kingdoms, including the rise of the papacy, which is depicted in the prophecy with unmistakable clarity and precision. Clearly, God wanted us to know the identity of that power. The reasons will become more apparent as we continue this study.



The Joyride

J. H. Zachary

Christopher was in and out of trouble on the New Mexico Navajo reservation where he grew up. Eventually he ended up on probation. He decided to enroll in Holbrook Indian School, an Adventist institution that serves Native Americans, in order to straighten himself out.

But Christopher again fell in with the wrong crowd. One of the boys got the keys to the school vehicles, and one night several boys crept out a window after the school watchman left and took a joyride in one of the school's cars. They carefully returned the car to its parking place and slipped back into the dormitory before anyone saw them.

Emboldened by their success, the boys tried it again the next night. They drove to a town 30 minutes away from school and again managed to return the vehicle without being seen.

On the third night they decided to visit Phoenix, more than three hours away. Although they started out just after midnight, they soon realized that they had to hurry if they were to be back before daybreak. They turned around and started for the school. As the 14-year-old driver sped down the highway to avoid being caught with the car, they were, instead, stopped by a highway patrol officer.

The officer called the boys' parents to pick them up at the local jail, and the school dean picked up the vehicle. Since the boys planned to return the vehicle, the school did not press charges. But three of them were placed on six months' probation. However, Christopher was almost 18, and his part in the joyride broke his probation. He was sentenced to spend spring break in a state correctional facility.

Christopher missed the school trip, which he had been looking forward to. But the experience in the correctional facility gave him time to examine his life and see that he was headed in the wrong direction. When he was released from the correctional facility, he returned to the school a different person. He asked for Bible studies and gave his heart to Jesus. Staff and students rejoiced when, as the school year ended, Christopher was baptized.

Christopher plans to graduate from Holbrook and go on to college as the Lord opens the way. "That careless joyride has opened a whole new life for me," he says. "I thank Christian teachers for their love and guidance. Their response to my behavior has shown me what the forgiveness of Christ is all about."

J. H. Zachary is coordinator of international evangelism for The Quiet Hour and a special consultant for the General Conference Ministerial Association.

Produced by the Office of Mission
Sabbath School-Personal Ministries department of the General Conference
Email: gmission@gc.adventist.org

The Son of Man and the Final Judgment



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Gen. 3:8-19; Ps. 95:5, 10; Dan. 7:10, 22; John 5:24, 25; Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 9:24; Rev. 20:12, 13.

MEMORY TEXT: “‘A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened’” (Daniel 7:10, NIV).

LAST WEEK WE STUDIED DANIEL 2 AND 7, in which the sequence of history as it relates to God's church (Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome [pagan and papal]) was shown. Yet, not all the events depicted were of an earthly nature. In fact, Daniel 7 climaxes with a great judgment scene in heaven that leads, ultimately, to God establishing His final kingdom (vss. 26, 27).

Three times in Daniel 7 (vss. 9-11, 21, 22, 25, and 26) this great heavenly judgment happens after the “time and times and dividing of time,” used to delineate a phase of the little horn’s dominion. The sequence unfolds like this:

- (1) Little horn (vs. 25)
- (2) Heavenly judgment (vs. 26)
- (3) Second Coming (vs. 27)

Clearly, then, the book of Daniel teaches a pre-Advent judgment. This week's lesson takes a look at the biblical teaching on this important topic.

***(Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, April 20.)**

THE GOD WHO JUDGES.

“For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son. . . . And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man” (John 5:22, 27).

The Bible, in numerous places, makes it clear that there will be a judgment. In the above texts, however, Jesus says that He, Himself, will be the One who does the judging.

Why is it that Jesus will be the Judge, as opposed to the Father? What insight does verse 27 provide that answers this important question?

“He who took humanity upon Himself, and in this world lived a perfect life, is to judge us. He only can be our Judge. . . . Christ took humanity that He might be our Judge.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 185. “Because He has tasted the very dregs of human affliction and temptation, and understands the frailties and sins of men; because in our behalf He has victoriously withheld the temptations of Satan, and will deal justly and tenderly with the souls that His own blood has been poured out to save,—because of this, the Son of man is appointed to execute the judgment.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 210.

What the prophet is saying here is that, apparently, the Father entrusted judgment to Christ to avoid any resemblance of injustice on His part. In other words, because Jesus had been a human being, because Jesus had partaken of our sorrows, our pains, and our sufferings, He should be our Judge!

The American Indians have a saying: “Never judge a man unless you have walked in his moccasins.” Jesus, who “was in all points tempted like as we are” (Heb. 4:15); Jesus, who came “in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Rom. 8:3); Jesus, who “became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14, NKJV); Jesus, “born of a woman” (Gal. 4:4, NIV), He, and He alone, will be the One who judges us, because He has “walked in our moccasins.”

No doubt, the Bible teaches that there is a judgment. Think of how much more comforting it is to know that our Judge is Jesus, Someone who has been here; Someone who knows what temptation is like; Someone who knows our sorrows, toils, and troubles. Look at how Jesus judged people when He was on earth. In what ways does that give you comfort to face His judgment at the end of the world?

JUDICIAL PROCESS.

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10).

"For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Eccles. 12:14).

It is hard to imagine the concept of judgment, at least a fair judgment, without any kind of trial or investigation. Only in nations that violate the most basic of human rights are people sentenced without any inquiry into their deeds. Even in the ancient world, an inquiry preceded judgment.

Read Judges 6:28-30, Esther 2:21-23, and Acts 25:4-12 and study the examples of an inquiry before judgment there.

In Israel's judicial proceedings, investigating the evidence was of fundamental importance. "Investigatory activities . . . had the precise aim of casting light on a particular event (crime) in such a way that—knowing what crime had been committed and knowing who was its author—it would be possible to proceed to the indictment and sentencing of the culprit in accordance with truth and justice."—Pietro Bovati, *Re-establishing Justice* (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1994), p. 241.

Which legal procedure did God follow in the first trial recorded in the Bible? Gen. 3:8-19.

In Genesis 3:8-18 God functions as Judge and Prosecutor, who, before pronouncing the sentence, makes an investigation. He asks Adam and Eve, "Where are you?" "Who told you that you were naked?" "Have you eaten from the tree?" He gathers information that will determine the verdict. Because God knows what happened, "the purpose of the trial scene is to make clear to the man and the woman what they have done."—Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Ausburg Publishing House, 1984), p. 254.

Daniel 7:10; Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10; and Revelation 20:12, 13 indicate an investigative process in the final judgment. What does this tell us about how we should live now? Also, because no one has the perfect life needed to stand in judgment, what do these texts say about our need of a Savior?

THE JUDGMENT HAS COME.

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27).

Study Romans 2:5-8. What insights does it reveal about judgment?

The New Testament establishes several important things about the timing of the final judgment. First, judgment generally does not take place while we are alive; character is fixed *after* death (the exception is the last generation).

Second, judgment is directly associated with "the day of wrath," the Second Coming (Rom. 2:5; 2 Tim. 4:1). Then each one is rewarded according to his or her works.

Third, at the return of Christ "the righteous judgment of God" will be revealed (Rom. 2:5). In this case, "judgment" refers to the legal decision arrived at by a celestial court unknown to humans. At the coming of Christ, the verdict passed in heaven is revealed: death for some; eternal life for others (vss. 6-8).

Where in salvation history did Daniel place the final judgment? Dan. 7:9, 10, 25, 26.

Daniel teaches that the final judgment is a judicial process that includes the following elements: (1) it begins in the heavenly courtroom before God, the angels, and the Son of man (Dan. 7:9, 10, 13); (2) the books are investigated before a decision is reached (vss. 10, 22); (3) the revelation of the verdict will result in the vindication of the saints and the condemnation of the enemy (vss. 22, 26); (4) it begins some time after the 1,260 years of persecution, instigated by the little horn (vss. 25, 26).

In what ways do you draw comfort from the notion of judgment? Or does the notion scare you? If, however, God is just and loving, we should trust that judgment will be something as just and loving as God Himself. Thus, if we are fearful of the judgment, that must be only because either we know that we are not living right, and/or we do not have a correct understanding of God and His love. What can you do for yourself (or for someone else) who fears the judgment, to help this person understand it better? At the same time, in what ways does knowing there is a judgment positively motivate us to live in accordance with God's will?

THE JUDGMENT OF THE WICKED.

“And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:13-15).

However unpleasant a topic, the final punishment of the lost is discussed in the Bible. The lost are described as those who, through their own choices, did not avail themselves of the light that God, in one way or another, had made available to them. Nevertheless, it is a topic of concern and importance, because it deals with what is, in many ways, the fundamental issue in the whole great controversy: the character of God.

How does Revelation 20:11-15 depict the judgment of the wicked?

The judgment of the wicked also includes an investigative component before the execution of the final sentence. This investigation takes place during the millennium and the saved ones participate in it (Rev. 20:4). It includes the passing of judgment on Satan and his angels (1 Cor. 6:2, 3; 2 Pet. 2:4). At the end of the millennium comes the execution of the sentence, which is the destruction of the wicked (Rev. 20:12-15). Study the following summary of the judgment process:

FINAL JUDGMENT

Judgment Begins	Second Coming of Christ	Millennium	Judgment Ends
Investigative judgment of saints	Rewards for the saints	Investigative judgment of the wicked	Executive judgment of the wicked
In heaven before Second Coming	On earth at Second Coming	In heaven during millennium	On earth after the millennium

Contrast our understanding of the second death, as eternal destruction, to the common notion of hell as eternal, conscious torture in flames of fire. What different pictures of God do they present?

THE PURPOSE OF THE JUDGMENT.

"In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel" (Rom. 2:16). See also Acts 24:25.

Are the judgment and the gospel compatible? How do we understand the role of the judgment if we are saved by faith, without the deeds of the law? See Rom. 3:28.

In the Scriptures the gospel and the final judgment are inseparable; in fact, the gospel reaches its consummation at the judgment. Among the goals of that judgment are:

1. *To reveal the truth about God's people.* Judgment presupposes an uncertainty that will be resolved through an investigation, an evaluation of evidence, and a final verdict in which, at a cosmic level, God's faithful ones are vindicated (Dan. 7:22).

2. *To reveal God's justice and love.* The judgment does not inform God about who is forgiven or guilty; rather, it reveals the justice and love of God before the onlooking universe.

3. *To restore harmony in the universe.* An element of disharmony fragments the universe as a result of the conflict between good and evil. The final judgment restores harmony by rewarding the forgiven and bringing to an end the presence of evil in the cosmos, cleansing it from sin. It is then that God's work of salvation through Christ will be consummated (Rev. 11:15-18).

4. *To force all humans and evil powers to assume responsibility for their actions.* Confronted by the evidence gathered by the Divine tribunal, every creature will have to acknowledge the righteousness of God's verdict against him or her. Those who accepted Christ as their Savior recognize that, though they deserved eternal death, it is through Christ's grace *alone* they have been given eternal life instead. All the wicked will recognize that they deserve to die eternally and, in the judgment, they will acknowledge the justice of the Divine verdict against them (Phil. 2:9-11).

5. *To motivate personal spiritual growth.* The final judgment calls us to perseverance in the Christian life; it calls for total reliance on Christ. The judgment does not make our salvation uncertain; rather, it reaffirms its exclusive certainty in Christ (Rom. 8:1).

Someone once described the judgment not as a time when God decided to accept or reject us but as the time when God finalizes our choice of whether or not we have truly accepted or rejected Him. How do you view that concept of the judgment?

FURTHER STUDY:

Ellen G. White, "Facing Life's Record," *The Great Controversy*, pp. 479–491.

Please note the following points in conclusion to this week's study:

1. *The coming of the Son of man to the Ancient of Days* (*Dan. 7:13*). "Attended by heavenly angels, our great High Priest enters the holy of holies and there appears in the presence of God to engage in the last acts of His ministration in behalf of man—to perform the work of investigative judgment."—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 480.

"We are thus led to the conclusion that Dan 7:9-14 describes the eschatological Day of Atonement . . . when the true high priest will come to the Ancient of Days surrounded by clouds of incense."—Crispin H. T. Fletcher-Louis, "The High Priest as Mediator in the Hebrew Bible: Dan 7:13 as a Test Case," in *Society of Bible Literature 1997 Seminar Papers* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1997), p. 186.

2. *The heavenly records.* "The book of life contains the names of all who have ever entered the service of God. . . . 'A book of remembrance' is written before God, in which are recorded the good deeds of 'them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name.' Malachi 3:16. . . . There is a record also of the sins of men."—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 480, 481.

The nature of the heavenly books is unknown to us, but they clearly convey the idea that decisions made for or against a person are based on factual, objective evidence. It is because of the objective nature of the judgment that God's justice will be recognized by all (*Rev. 15:4*).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. If the investigative judgment takes place in heaven, how could it be said that you will stand before the judgment seat of God? See *Luke 12:8, 9; The Great Controversy*, p. 482.
2. The standard used by God to evaluate the life of each individual is His law (*James 2:12*) and the person's response to Jesus (*2 Thess. 2:12*). How are the two related?
3. In the Bible and in Ellen G. White's writings, the theme of the final judgment is used to encourage us to persevere in faith or to reform our lives. How could you present that subject to others in a positive light?

SUMMARY: The final judgment proclaims the consummation of the work of Christ for us. It begins with a pre-Advent investigation of those who have claimed to serve the Lord and concludes with the executive judgment of the wicked after the millennium.



The Miracle of the Missing Boxes, Part 1

Charlotte Ishkanian

When Carlos Flores* picked up his luggage at the airport in Havana, Cuba, several boxes were missing. The boxes contained Bible lessons for children, and Flores, director of the popular children's program *Your Story Hour (Tu Historia Preferida)*, suspected that the boxes were in customs.

He found the customs office and filled out the forms to retrieve the missing packages. He was sent to talk with the customs agent on duty. The agent, a young woman named Yolanda,* asked him what the boxes contained. Flores gave her some sample Bible lessons like those in the boxes. While she read the lessons carefully, Flores pleaded with God to protect the lessons from destruction or high import duty. He reminded God of the children waiting to study these lessons. The woman continued reading. *What if she finds something objectionable in the lessons?* he thought. Again he prayed.

When she finished reading the lessons, she looked at him. "My grandmother sometimes took me to church when I was a child. She told me stories from the Bible and talked about God." Flores held his breath. *What is she trying to tell me?* he wondered. "My grandmother was a Seventh-day Adventist," she said. "But my father is a Communist and opposes any interest in Christianity."

Flores listened for any hint that she opposed religion or Adventists, but he found none. In fact, he thought he saw tears in her eyes.

"Are there other lessons in this series?" she asked him.

Flores told her that there were several more and offered to bring them to Yolanda. He gave her his card and invited her to visit his office some day. Then he thanked her for her time and left the airport.

Later that afternoon he was surprised when he saw the young customs agent enter his office. "I have come to learn more about your program," she said. She asked for a complete set of the Bible lessons to study.

"The lessons you read this morning are for children," Flores explained. "We also have lessons for adults, if you would like them."

"No, thank you," she answered. "I want to read these lessons." She looked at the lessons a moment then asked Flores, "Are you an Adventist?" Flores began to sense God's purpose in holding the precious Bible lessons in customs.

(continued next week)

*Carlos Flores and Yolanda are pseudonyms. Charlotte Ishkanian is editor of *Mission*.

Produced by the Office of Mission
Sabbath School-Personal Ministries department of the General Conference
Email: gomission@gc.adventist.org

Daniel 8: The Prince of the Heavenly Host



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Daniel 8.

MEMORY VERSE: "As he came near the place where I was standing, I was terrified and fell prostrate. 'Son of man,' he said to me, 'understand that the vision concerns the time of the end'" (Daniel 8:17, NIV).

DANIEL 8, however similar in many ways to Daniel 7, develops a theme not found in Daniel 7, the attack against Christ as the High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary.

Daniel 8 exudes sanctuary imagery. The beasts, for example, used as symbols in Daniel 7, are unclean (lion, bear, leopard), while those used in Daniel 8 are clean (ram, goat). Also, in contrast to the beasts of Daniel 7, the animals in Daniel 8 are *sanctuary* animals. By employing these animals as symbols of kingdoms (particularly in contrast to the beasts used in the previous chapter), the Lord seems to be directing the reader's mind toward the sanctuary, thus giving hints on how we can understand and interpret the vision.

Daniel 8 also emphasizes the element of conflict, but at two levels: the historical (horizontal) and the spiritual (vertical). The goat attacks the ram and is victorious; the little horn attacks the south (the east and Palestine) and is victorious. But, then, the little horn does something that no other kingdom has done: It goes against the Prince of the Host in the *heavenly sanctuary*. This is the vertical dimension of its campaign: It makes an assault against Heaven itself!

***(Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, April 27.)**

A REVIEW OF WORLD HISTORY (Dan. 8:1-14).

The vision of Daniel 8:1-14 can be broken down into four major events that follow in order:

Ram
Goat
Little horn
Sanctuary cleansed

Read the vision over in verses 1-14 as many times as needed, until you clearly can see this sequence.

Unlike Daniel 2 and Daniel 7, both of which begin with the Babylonian Empire, Daniel 8 starts with Media-Persia instead. Though no explanation is given, more than likely the omission has to do with the time that Daniel had the vision, 547 B.C.; by then, Babylon was declining in power and importance, while the Medo-Persian Empire was ascending in both. Babylon was excluded, probably because it was already fading away, and the Lord wanted to emphasize the events that followed Babylon and not Babylon itself.

The vision of Daniel 8 begins in the Medo-Persian Empire. In the 70-week prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27, the 70 weeks also begins in the Medo-Persian Empire (see Dan. 9:1, 2). Some believe that one reason Daniel 8 excluded Babylon and started with Media-Persia was to help establish the link between the prophecies of Daniel 8 and Daniel 9. Discuss that argument.

After the Medo-Persian Empire, another power arose. In Daniel 8, it is shown as a goat and represents Greece. It is even named as such (Dan. 8:21). The large horn between the eyes is Alexander the Great. The Medo-Persian Empire “became great” (vs. 4), but Greece, which followed, “became very great” (NIV), even trampling the ram (vss. 7, 8). Alexander died in 323 B.C. at the age of 32 (vs. 8), leaving the empire without a capable successor. After a few years of internal fights, the empire was divided among his generals. This happened exactly as Daniel prophesied in Daniel 8:8, where we read the prediction of Alexander’s demise and the parceling of his empire: “The large horn was broken,” and “in place of it four notable ones came up” to take his place (NKJV).

How amazing! Daniel lived in the sixth century B.C. and not only depicted the rise of Greece in the fourth century B.C. but named it. How can a prophecy like this not only strengthen our faith in the Bible but give us courage amid trials to see that our loving God not only knows the future but even holds it in His hands?

THE LITTLE HORN—PART 1 (Dan. 8:9, 10, 23-25).

Daniel 8 depicted four major events: ram, goat, little horn, sanctuary cleansed. The ram was Media-Persia, and the goat was Greece. Next comes the little horn. Who is this power, and what does it do?

The correct identification of the little horn is of crucial importance. First, it represents an empire that “grew exceedingly great” (Dan. 8:9, NKJV), in contrast to Greece, which “grew very great” (vs. 8), and Media-Persia, which “became great” (vs. 4).

Second, the little horn originates from one of the four cardinal points of the compass, not from one of the divisions of the Greek Empire, suggesting that it is another empire.

Third, the parallelism between Daniel 2, 7, and 8 clearly shows that the horn represents a new power, the fourth power of the previous visions, and this is Rome, which conquered Egypt to the south, Syria to the east, and “the Beautiful land” of Judea (NIV). At first, the horn was fundamentally a military and political power, conquering other nations. In this phase, it represented pagan, or imperial, Rome.

Read Daniel 8:9-12 again carefully. At what point does the activity of the little horn shift from the horizontal (military, political) to the vertical (spiritual)? What appears to be the object of this vertical attack?

The little horn attempted something that no other power had done before: It reached up to the heavens, signifying its challenge to God’s authority, an act that reflects the same spirit of rebellion that possessed Lucifer at the beginning of the great controversy (Isa. 14:13, 14).

The attack of the little horn against the sanctuary is described in military terms (compare vs. 12, NKJV). In the earthly sanctuary, an army (“a host”) of Levites protected it against desecration (Num. 18:1-10; 1 Chron. 9:27-33). The enemy would have to fight first the Levitical guard and defeat it before having access to the sanctuary itself and to the ministering priest. This same picture is used in Daniel 8. The little horn attacks the heavenly host and casts “down some of the host” (vs. 10); it then goes into the sanctuary where he “exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host” (vs. 11, NKJV). The little horn is attacking Heaven and a ministry in heaven.

How, possibly, could an earthly power, of any kind, wage an attack against Heaven? Did this power attempt to burn it down? Or are the texts talking about a spiritual attack instead? If so, what could that mean?

THE LITTLE HORN—PART 2 (Dan. 8:10-12).

So far, this chapter has revealed the following sequence of events: Media-Persia, Greece, Rome (pagan/papal). Indeed, the little horn represents Rome in its pagan and papal aspects. Passages dealing with the horizontal, political expansion refer to imperial Rome (vs. 9), while the religious, vertical growth designates the second, or papal, phase (vss. 10-12), the part that Daniel spends numerous verses describing in detail.

Identify the Prince of the host, or the Prince of princes, who comes under attack by the little horn. Josh. 5:13, 14; Dan. 8:11, 25.

The title “Prince of the host,” or “captain of the host of the Lord,” is found in one other place in the Bible (Josh. 5:14), and it designates a heavenly being identified as the Lord Himself (Josh. 6:2), the pre-incarnated Christ. In Daniel, this Prince is also the Son of man, the Messiah, the King, and the Priest (Dan. 7:13; 9:25; 12:1). In Daniel 7 He is described primarily as King, but in Daniel 8:11, He is officiating in the heavenly sanctuary. What Daniel 8 shows is that the little horn is attacking Christ Himself, not as a human being (as Rome did in its pagan phase) but now as High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary.

What did the little horn remove from the Prince? Dan. 8:12.

The little horn tried to control the “daily” or “continual” (in Hebrew, *tamid*) ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary. Most translations render *tamid* as “continual sacrifice,” but the term *sacrifice* is not in the original. In the sanctuary services, *tamid* was associated with the different activities performed by the priest during his daily ministry, and *only* his daily ministry. It is used in connection with the *daily/continual* sacrifice (Exod. 29:42), the bread of the presence (Exod. 25:30), the offering of incense (Exod. 30:8), and the fire upon the altar (Lev. 6:13). The daily ministry of the priest in the Holy Place of the earthly sanctuary was a type of the daily ministry of the intercession of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary. It is this aspect of the priestly work of Christ that the little horn opposes and attacks.

Many Christians have tended to focus on Christ’s earthly ministry alone, at the expense of His heavenly one. What does the little horn’s attack on Christ’s heavenly ministry say about the importance of this ministry? What is it about Christ’s ministry that would make it the subject of attack?

FALSE PRIESTLY MINISTRY (Dan. 8:11-13).

What did the little horn do to the daily ministry, the sanctuary, and the truth? Dan. 8:11, 12.

Though pagan Rome killed Jesus (Dan. 11:22), papal Rome began an assault against Him from another angle, that of interfering with His high-priestly ministry in heaven. How, though, could the little horn, essentially an earthly religiopolitical power, attack Christ and His ministry in heaven? What did it do?

1. *"It overthrew the place of his sanctuary"* (NRSV). A literal translation reads: "And the place of his sanctuary was thrown." *Place* refers to the foundation of the sanctuary, used here metaphorically to designate the essence, the purpose, of the sanctuary. The verb *was thrown* expresses the idea of casting aside, rejection, abandonment (see 2 Kings 7:15). By misappropriating the priestly work of Christ, the horn rejects the foundation of the heavenly sanctuary as a place of mediation and forgiveness.

2. *A host is placed over the daily ministry.* Daniel 8:12 could be translated, "A host was given over the continual in transgression/rebellion." The verb *was given over* often means "to set someone over" (see Dan. 11:21). Hence, the text says that the horn misappropriated the daily ministry of Christ and then "set over," or appointed, its own host to control or minister it. A false religious system was instituted instead of the biblical one, an act of terrible rebellion against God and the truth.

3. *It cast the truth to the ground.* The truth of the work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary (which includes the plan of salvation) was discarded by this religiopolitical power, the same power shown (in Dan. 7:25), as attempting to change the law of God.

What question was raised by a heavenly being in Daniel 8:13?

The question is about the event that will put an end to the series of events listed in the chapter. A literal translation reads: "Until when the vision, the daily, and the rebellion that causes desolation . . . ?" The *vision* is the one recorded in 8:1-14, which includes Media-Persia and Greece; the *daily*; the work of the Prince of hosts (vs. 11); and the *rebellion* or the attack of the little horn (vs. 12). The question addresses the duration of the *whole vision*.

Obviously, Daniel 8 is dealing with crucial issues. Review what this week's lesson has so far covered until all the events are clear enough in your mind, to the point where you could explain them to someone else.

" 'FOR TWO THOUSAND AND THREE HUNDRED EVENINGS AND MORNINGS' " (Dan. 8:14, NRSV).

What does the phrase “evening and morning” designate? Gen. 1:8, 13; Exod. 27:20, 21; Lev. 24:2, 3.

The phrase “for two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings” (NRSV) defines the period that will cover the fulfillment of the vision of the ram, the goat, and the little horn, including the daily ministry of Christ and the little horn’s attack on His work. At the end of that prophetic period an important event is introduced: The sanctuary will be cleansed (vindicated/restored). This is the event that initiates the prophetic period and the event that closes it. What the chapter does not provide is a specific date for the beginning of the period (that comes in Daniel 9).

If the 2,300-day period covers the time span that includes the ram, the goat, and the little horn, why must the 2,300 days not be taken literally?

Daniel 8:10 introduced the daily ministry of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary; Daniel 8:14 reveals the yearly service, called the Day of Atonement (*Leviticus 16*). *In Daniel 8 both phases, the daily and the yearly of Christ's high-priestly ministry, are shown.*

During the earthly daily service, the sanctuary was cleansed from the sins of the Israelites, but just for that year. In the true fulfillment of this earthly service, Daniel 8:14 announces that after 2,300 years Christ was to initiate a work that would end the sin problem, not just for a year but for eternity.

What is the final fate of the little horn? Dan. 8:25.

During the Day of Atonement, God manifested Himself as the One who overcomes evil. In the earthly service, that was the day the people faced a final cleansing of sin for the year, an act that made it possible for them to continue in His presence. It was also the day of judgment. In chapter 8, Daniel looks forward to the time when those events, symbolized by the earthly type, will be finalized on a cosmic scale.

What should it mean for us, if anything, that we are living in the time when the sanctuary in heaven is being cleansed? Should that knowledge change our lives? If so, how?

FURTHER STUDY: C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares*, vol. 1, pp. 145–188; William H. Shea, *Daniel 7–12*, pp. 85–120.

Christian Rome interfered with the work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary in different ways. For instance:

1. *The Eucharist is the sacrifice of Christ.* Through it “the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner.”—*Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), p. 381.

2. *Forgiveness of sin is not exclusively through the work of Christ.* “He [Christ] entrusted the exercise of the power of absolution to the apostolic ministry.”—Page 402. “It is through the sacrament of Penance that the baptized can be reconciled with God and with the Church.”—Page 278.

3. *Confession of sins to priests.* “Confession to a priest is an essential part of the sacrament of Penance.”—Page 405.

4. *Exclusive mediatorial role of Christ is obscured.* Mary “is invoked in the Church under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix.”—Page 275.

5. *Purgatory casts shadows on Christ's work.* After death Christians imperfectly purified “undergo purification [in purgatory], so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven.”—Page 28.

“It required a desperate struggle for those who would be faithful to stand firm against the deceptions and abominations which were disguised in sacerdotal garments and introduced into the church. The Bible was not accepted as the standard of faith.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 45.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Study the above statements regarding the activity of Rome. Make sure you can see for yourself just how these actions, indeed, attempt to usurp the work of Christ as our High Priest.
2. British satirist Jonathan Swift once wrote that we have just enough religion to make us hate but not enough to make us love one another. How can we teach these important biblical truths about Rome while expressing only love and never hate?

SUMMARY: God has informed us about the succession of kingdoms, the persecution of His people, and the effort of the little horn to distract the attention of the world from the work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary.



The Miracle of the Missing Boxes, Part 2

Charlotte Ishkanian

When Carlos Flores arrived in Cuba, he found that several boxes containing Bible lessons had been detained in customs. He showed the customs agent some sample Bible lessons, praying that God would protect the lessons that he hoped to distribute to the thousands of Cuban children who were waiting for them. But when the customs agent asked for a complete set of the Bible lessons, Flores realized that God was using the Bible lessons to reach a young woman's heart.

Flores gave Yolanda a set of the Bible lessons and invited her to evangelistic meetings being held at a nearby church. She agreed to come on Friday but said she would be busy on Saturday. However, after she attended the Friday evening meeting, she decided to cancel her plans and return Saturday night.

Yolanda asked to complete the Bible study course, even though it was for children. She was thrilled to know more about the truth that her grandmother had tried to teach her when she was a child.

But deciding to keep the Sabbath posed serious problems. Yolanda knew that embracing the Sabbath could cost her job, and jobs were not easy to get in Cuba. However, she took her stand and was baptized.

Her mother and sister knew that she was studying with Adventists, but she prayed for a month before telling her father. He was amazed that she would make such an "ignorant decision." But after seeing the peace and joy in her life, he told her, "I wish everyone could be an Adventist Christian!" However, he, too, was concerned that her decision would cost her her job.

Yolanda prayed for weeks that God would provide a proper time to tell her boss. She had invited her two co-workers to witness her baptism, and they understood the importance of religion to her. But they had not indicated a desire to become Christians.

Then one day while Yolanda was busy with a client, her boss came in and told the other two women that the three of them would need to report to work on Saturday. Yolanda heard her boss's orders and cringed. Would this mean the end of her job?

(continued next week)

**Yolanda (left) is a pseudonym.
Charlotte Ishkanian is editor of *Mission*.**



Produced by the Office of Mission
Sabbath School-Personal Ministries department of the General Conference
Email: gomission@gc.adventist.org

Daniel 9: The Coming of the Messiah



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Ezra 7; Daniel 9; Heb. 10:8-10.

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

ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL and most powerful examples of intercessory prayer occurs in Daniel 9, the aged Daniel's passionate petition to God for the restoration of Israel after decades of captivity. Verse after verse sings with Daniel's confession of his sins and “the sin of my people Israel” (vs. 20). His prayer exemplifies our need for God's grace and mercy, because it reveals the gap between a holy God and sinful humanity—a gap that can be closed only by the Messiah, the God who became a human being and thus was the only One who could bridge that gap between humanity and God.

Perhaps that is why this chapter ends with one of the most compelling and intense Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament, one that forcefully predicts the coming of Jesus, who came in order to bridge that gap. And though, in the immediate context, Daniel was concerned with the political and physical restoration of his nation, the prophecy points to the One whose advent would, eventually, lead to the ultimate restoration of sinful humanity to a holy, sinless God.

***(Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, May 4.)**

DANIEL'S PRAYER (Dan. 9:1-19).

What motivated Daniel to pray, what type of prayer did he offer, and what was the immediate context of his prayer? Dan. 9:1-3.

In communal prayers for forgiveness, the prophets—exercising their role as prophetic intercessors—often identified themselves with the people, as Daniel does here. Broadly speaking, Daniel's prayer consists of praise to God and confession (Dan. 9:4-11), recognition that the punishment is deserved (vss. 11-14), and an appeal to God's forgiveness toward His people from Jerusalem (vss. 15-19).

Which specific sins did Daniel confess on behalf of the people? Dan. 9:5, 6, 11.

The request for forgiveness is accompanied by statements about the greatness of God. He is great and awesome, righteous, merciful, forgiving (Dan. 9:4-7, 9), and faithful to the covenant He made with His people. For these reasons, Daniel felt free to approach the throne of grace and request forgiveness. It is the goodness of God manifested fully in Christ that leads sinners to confession and repentance. In this prayer, it is clear that Daniel's hope lies not in himself or in anything he or his people could do but only in God's love and grace for fallen beings.

At the end of this prayer, the angel Gabriel appears to Daniel with an explanation. An important point to remember is that nowhere in the prayer does Daniel ask for any explanation about anything. Nevertheless, in response to this prayer, Gabriel comes and gives Daniel an explanation. An explanation about what?

The next few days' lessons will explain.

Read over Daniel's prayer (perhaps in your own devotion). In what ways are the principles expressed in his petition to God so relevant to us today, not only as individuals but as a church?

DANIEL 8 AND 9: CONNECTING LINKS (Dan. 8:26, 27; 9:23-27).

Gabriel appears to Daniel and says that he has come “to give thee skill and understanding” (Dan. 9:22). Skill and understanding about what? Nothing in his prayer suggested that Daniel needed understanding, at least not about his immediate concern regarding the captivity. What was Gabriel talking about? See Dan. 8:26, 27.

The last time Daniel needed any understanding was in regard to the vision in Daniel 8:14. In Daniel 8:26 and 27, Daniel says that he did not understand the vision about the 2,300 “evenings and mornings” of verse 14 (NRSV). Now Gabriel, in Daniel 9:24-27, comes specifically to give him that understanding.

The Hebrew makes the link between the two chapters obvious. Daniel uses two Hebrew terms in chapter 8 for “vision.” The first one is located in verse 1: “I, Daniel, had a vision [*chazon*]” (NIV); the other appears in verse 26: “The vision [*mar’eh*] of the evenings and mornings . . . is true” (NIV).

Chazon deals with the whole vision, while *mar’eh* deals only with the 2,300 days. In Daniel 8, Gabriel did not explain to Daniel the *mar’eh* of the 2,300 days, which is why Daniel did not understand it (vs. 27). Now, in Daniel 9:23, Gabriel returns to explain to Daniel the “vision” (*mar’eh*) not explained in Daniel 8 (all the rest of the vision was already explained). Gabriel says to Daniel in verse 23, “and understand the vision [*mar’eh*]” (NIV). What *mar’eh*? Obviously, the *mar’eh* of the “evenings and mornings” (NRSV) of Daniel 8:14. Thus, Gabriel is pointing Daniel back to the 2,300 days.

*A*nd the vision [*mar’eh*] of the evening and the morning, which was told is true. . . . I was astonished at the vision [*mar’eh*], but none understood it. . . . At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision [*mar’eh*]” (Dan. 8:26, 27; 9:23).

Take as much time as needed until you are able to see the link between Daniel 8 and Daniel 9. These are crucial texts regarding what we believe; it is important to know them for ourselves.

THE SEVENTY WEEKS.

"Seventy weeks are determined [or "cut off"] upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy" (Dan. 9:24).

In response to Daniel's prayer for restoration of his people, the angel Gabriel appears and—after pointing Daniel back to the *mar'eh* of the 2,300 evenings and mornings (a time prophecy)—immediately gives Daniel another time prophecy, that of the 70 weeks, which are "determined," or "decreed" (NRSV), upon his people.

The verb *chatak*, translated "determined" or "decreed," never appears anywhere else in the Hebrew Bible; thus students cannot compare its use with other texts, a commonly used method for seeking to learn the meaning of words found in the text. Nevertheless, the same verb has been used in other Hebrew sources, and from these sources it is clear that although "determine" or "decreed" is a viable translation, the verb originally expressed the more concrete idea of separation by cutting or cutting off. In fact, in a majority of cases in which it is used, *chatak* clearly means "cut off."

Because the verb could mean either "determine" or "cut off," the context is decisive in choosing the best translation. Gabriel, before even mentioning the 70 weeks, points Daniel back to the 2,300 evenings and mornings; then, in the context of 2,300 days, he says the 70 weeks are *chatak*. The basic meaning of "cut off" fits better than "decreed." The 70 weeks, the shorter time prophecy, is "cut off" from the longer one, the 2,300 days of Daniel 8:14.

In fact, the angel avoids using the verb *to decree* in that specific instance, though he knows the word and, indeed, uses it only a few verses later (Dan. 9:26).

Thus, whatever the meaning of the 70 weeks, this time prophecy is "cut off" from the larger one, the 2,300 days of the previous chapter.

Read carefully the 70-week prophecy and write down where you see the gospel preached in it. Because the 70-week prophecy, a prophecy about Christ's work of atonement, is not only linked to Daniel 8:14 but actually forms the base of it, why, then, must Daniel 8:14 be understood in light of Christ's work of atonement, as well? Use the lines below to jot down your thoughts.

THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH (Dan. 9:25-27).

The meaning of the 70-week prophecy of Daniel 9 is much more challenging to grasp than other passages of Scripture. However, in analyzing the passage, consider the following points:

1. The first thing announced is the coming of the Messiah after 62 weeks plus 7 weeks (69 weeks). See Daniel 9:25. He will initiate His ministry at the end of the 69 weeks as the Anointed One (Mark 1:9-11).

2. Though what will take place during the seven weeks is not clearly stated, the context suggests that the city of Jerusalem will be rebuilt (Dan. 9:25).

3. According to Daniel 9:26, “*after the sixty-two weeks*” (plus the previous seven) the Anointed One will be killed, and no one will help Him (NKJV, emphasis supplied). This will take place during the last week of the 70 weeks—an obvious reference to Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross.

4. During the last week, the Messiah will also “confirm a covenant with many” (vs. 27, NKJV). A better translation could be “he will make a strong covenant.” This is the new covenant firmly established through the blood of Christ (Luke 22:20) and includes Jews and Gentiles who, through faith in Christ, enjoy its benefits.

5. During the middle of the seventieth week, the sacrificial system of the Old Testament would end (Dan. 9:27). The Hebrew word translated “middle” (*chatsi*) does not mean “half” but “midst.” Christ’s sacrificial death brought to an end the Israelite sacrificial system (Mark 15:37, 38; Heb. 10:8-10).

6. The destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies is predicted in this prophecy, even if it is not clearly stated that it will happen during the 70 weeks. The destruction is decreed to take place in the future, but we are not told when (Dan. 9:26). The fate of the city was decreed by Jesus during His ministry (Matt. 24:1, 2) and took place about forty years later.

7. Because the 70 weeks cover the historical period from the time of Persia to the coming of the Messiah, the prophetic period represents 490 literal years, not days (70 weeks, composed of 7 days each, is the equivalent of 490 prophetic days, or 490 literal years).

How interesting that Daniel’s prayer for restoration should precede this amazing prophecy. How do you understand the restoration and forgiveness offered to you, individually, by the Messiah, the Anointed One? Dwell on Christ’s death for you personally (as though no one else existed) and write down what benefits you have received from it now and what you may receive in the future.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE 70 WEEKS (Ezra 7; Dan. 9:25).

What event initiated the prophecy of the 70 weeks? Dan. 9:25.

Gabriel provides information that enables us to identify the specific decree he refers to in the prophecy. The decree authorizes the restoration and the rebuilding of Jerusalem. The verb *restore* refers to the return of the city to the Jews to administer it in accordance with their own laws, while the reconstruction of the city is indicated by the verb *rebuild* (NIV).

Ezra mentions a Persian decree given by Cyrus in 537 B.C. to rebuild the temple (Ezra 1:1-4), which was reaffirmed by Darius in 520 B.C. (Ezra 6:1-12). However, that specific decree does not refer to the one mentioned in Daniel 9:25, because, according to Gabriel's words, the decree involved the rebuilding of the city, not just the temple. Another decree was issued by Artaxerxes in 457 B.C., authorizing the restoration and rebuilding of Jerusalem (Ezra 4:7-23; 7:12-26). This decree allowed the Jews to govern Judah according to their own law (7:25, 26) and is the only decree that meets the prophetic stipulations. Later (444 B.C.), it was reactivated by the king as requested by Nehemiah (Nehemiah 2).

Study the following diagram (using the comments that follow and previous lessons) until you are able to explain it to others.

70 WEEKS (Dan. 9:24)				
457 B.C.	408 B.C.		A.D. 34	1844
7 weeks	69 weeks	1 week		
490 years			1810 years	
<i>2,300 years (Dan. 8:14)</i>				

1. In 457 B.C., Artaxerxes issued the decree; 49 years later (7 prophetic weeks) the city was rebuilt (408 B.C.); Christ was anointed in A.D. 27 (the sixty-ninth week) and died in A.D. 31 (the middle of the seventieth week). Stephen died as a martyr in A.D. 34 (the date we use to end the 70-week prophecy), and from that point the gospel went also to the Gentile world.

2. Because the 70 weeks (490 years) are part of the 2,300 years, 457 B.C. becomes the starting point for the 2,300 years, which ended in 1844, the year the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary was to begin (Dan. 8:14).

3. According to Daniel 7:25, 26, the pre-Advent aspect of the final judgment was to start some time after 1798; we have now the exact year: 1844.

FURTHER STUDY: Ellen G. White, "The Coming of a Deliverer," in *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 681–702; C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares*, vol. 1, pp. 195–265; *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, pp. 94–107; vol. 4, pp. 847–855.

The following material expands on concepts covered this week:

The seventh year of Artaxerxes. Before the discovery of ancient sources, some uncertainty existed concerning the date for the seventh year of Artaxerxes. But now we have Babylonian astronomical texts and papyrus documents found on the island of Elephantine, Egypt, that confirm that Artaxerxes's first full year on the throne was 464 B.C. His seventh year would then be 457 B.C.

Many historians date the seventh year to 458 B.C. because they use the Persian calendar (spring to spring) to calculate the year. But biblical and historical evidence indicate that the Jews used a fall-to-fall calendar, and this fixed the seventh year as 457 B.C. (Neh. 1:1; 2:1). This date is solidly grounded on reliable evidence.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Read carefully Daniel 9:24. Notice the six specific events that were to take place during the 70-week period. What are these events, and how do we understand them in the context of what Christ has done on the cross?
2. If Daniel's time prophecy concerning the coming of the Messiah was that clear, why were His people not waiting for Him at the fullness of time? If God's people were not ready for Him at His first coming, what makes us think they will be any more ready for Him at His second coming?
3. In Daniel 9:24, it says that within this 70-week period the Holy of Holies is to be anointed. What does this mean?
4. The 70-week prophecy points to the Messiah, Jesus. Plug in the dates of the other decrees (520 B.C., 537 B.C., and 444 B.C.) as the starting point of the prophecy. Why, if we believe Jesus is the Messiah, can none of those dates be the one that begins the prophecy?

SUMMARY: The prophecy of the 70 weeks supplements the vision of the 2,300 years; in fact, it provides its starting point (457 B.C.). Numerous links tie these two prophecies together, both of which start in the Persian period. The 2,300 years ended in 1844, when Christ began the closing aspect of His high-priestly work, the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary.



The Miracle of the Missing Boxes, Part 3

Charlotte Ishkanian

The young customs agent read the sample Bible guides and asked if she could study the entire series. She accepted the truth, and in a few months she was baptized. But she faced several hurdles. She had told her family, but how would she tell her boss?

The problem caused her a great deal of stress, and she prayed and cried about it often. Then one day while she was reading her Bible, she found the story of Esther and was convinced that she must trust God for the outcome.

One day while Yolanda was busy with a client, she overheard her boss telling the other customs agents to report for work on Sabbath.

"We will come," one of the agents told the supervisor. "But Yolanda will not be here."

"Why not?" her supervisor asked, surprised.

"She is a Christian now, and she honors the seventh-day Sabbath. Let her have her Sabbath," she added. "We two will get the work done."

Yolanda could hardly believe her ears. She had asked God to provide a way to tell her boss about her beliefs, and God had taken the matter completely out of her hands! But would her supervisor be upset? Then she overheard him tell the other two women that if they agreed to work on Saturday, Yolanda would not have to come. She breathed a prayer of praise and thanksgiving to God for the powerful way in which He had worked on her behalf.

Yolanda's kind temperament impresses the people she works with, and some even ask if she is a Christian. Whenever she can, she shares her faith in Christ. She is fair and honest in her work and has given the government no reason to be unhappy with the way she handles customs questions. Her boss understands her religious stand and supports her in her faith.

Yolanda was so impressed with the *Tu Historia Preferida* program that she began traveling throughout Cuba, promoting the Bible clubs. While visiting one church on behalf of the Bible clubs, she met a young Adventist pastor. A few months later they were married.

Yolanda's mother and sister have followed her steps of faith and been baptized. Her father is happy that she has found Christ. Although he does not attend church, he respects her faith.

Charlotte Ishkanian is editor of *Mission*. Yolanda is a pseudonym.

Produced by the Office of Mission
Sabbath School-Personal Ministries department of the General Conference
Email: gomission@gc.adventist.org

The Eschatological Day of Atonement



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Exod. 25:8; Leviticus 16; Dan. 7:9-11, 13, 14; 8:14; 9:24; Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25.

MEMORY TEXT: "It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these" (Hebrews 9:23, NIV).

ALL THE VISIONS IN DANIEL CULMINATE IN THE VICTORY of God, through Christ, over the forces of evil. Daniel 2 shows the victorious end that comes when the kingdom of God is, finally and forever, established. Daniel 7 reveals that this kingdom will be preceded by a work of judgment in which the Son of man is shown approaching the Father (vs. 13). Daniel 8 emphasizes the priestly work of the Son of man in the heavenly sanctuary; in Daniel 9, the emphasis is on His sacrificial death. In all His roles, Jesus, the Son of man, remains at the center of our salvation.

The Bible stresses two main aspects of Christ's ministry in our behalf: His work as a substitutionary Sacrifice for our sins and His work at the right hand of God in the heavenly sanctuary as our High Priest.

This subject, that of Christ's heavenly ministry, deserves the attention of every Christian, because it deals with the crucial theme of just what Christ has done and is doing in our behalf as both our Sacrifice and our High Priest.

***(Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, May 11.)**

EARTHLY AND HEAVENLY SANCTUARIES.

“Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount” (Heb. 8:5).

What pattern was Moses shown when God told him to build an earthly sanctuary? In other words, what was Moses’ model for the earthly sanctuary? See Exod. 25:8, 9; Ps. 11:4; Heb. 8:2; Rev. 15:5.

To some extent, the earthly sanctuary had for the Israelites the same function as the heavenly has for the rest of the universe.

First, both sanctuaries are God’s dwelling place among His people. God said to Moses, “make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them” (Exod. 25:8, NIV); the heavenly sanctuary, in contrast, is the place in the universe where God has located His presence within creation, where His throne is (Ps. 11:4; Dan. 7:9, 10; Rev. 4:2-7).

Second, both sanctuaries are a meeting place for God and His servants. In the earthly, He met with the Israelites, and they worshiped Him (Exod. 29:42-45; Ps. 43:3, 4). The heavenly is the place where God meets with celestial beings who come to serve and praise Him (Job 1:6; Ps. 103:19-22). God localized Himself there in order to be accessible to heavenly beings, and, from there, His presence is projected throughout the universe.

Third, God rules as King from both sanctuaries: “The Lord reigns . . . enthroned between the cherubim” (Ps. 99:1, NIV). “The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all” (Ps. 103:19, NIV).

When did Christ inaugurate His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary? Dan. 9:24; Heb. 9:11, 12; 10:19, 20.

Hebrews indicates that after His ascension, Jesus “opened/dedicated/inaugurated” (NIV, NRSV) a way for us to have access to God (Heb. 10:20). This passage teaches that after His ascension, Christ initiated His priestly work in the heavenly sanctuary. Daniel 9:24 places this inauguration, or anointing (Exod. 40:9-11), within the time frame of the 70 weeks.

Why should it be comforting to know that Jesus is ministering in your behalf in heaven? What is your understanding of that ministry, and what does it mean for you individually?

DAILY SERVICES (Dan. 8:11, 12; Rom. 8:34; Heb. 5:1; 7:25).

What was the most fundamental task of the priest in the Israelite sanctuary? **Heb. 5:1.**

The priests represented the people before God, and they represented God before the people. Every day they performed the daily services, which consisted primarily in the offering of sacrifices on behalf of the Israelites. "The repentant sinner brought his offering to the door of the tabernacle, and, placing his hand upon the victim's head, confessed his sins, thus in figure transferring them from himself to the innocent sacrifice. . . . The blood was carried by the priest into the holy place and sprinkled before the veil, behind which was the ark containing the law that the sinner had transgressed. By this ceremony the sin was, through the blood, transferred in figure to the sanctuary."—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 354. God, through the process of atonement, forgave repentant sinners by assuming upon Himself responsibility for their sins.

Who is our High Priest, and what does He offer? **Heb. 7:27; 8:1, 2.**

Christ is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29). He came to give His life and His blood as a ransom for the souls of many (Mark 10:45). He who had no sin was made sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21) and "redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13, NIV).

What has Christ been doing in the sanctuary since His ascension? **Heb. 7:25; Rom. 8:34.**

In Christ's atoning self-sacrifice, God assumed responsibility for our sins, and in the heavenly sanctuary Christ applies the benefits of His sacrifice to those who, by faith, come to Him seeking forgiveness. In the heavenly sanctuary, Christ performs, *in reality*, what the daily service taught *in symbol*, which is that, as our High Priest, Jesus continually mediates forgiveness for us (Eph. 4:32), cleanses us from sin (1 John 1:9), and grants us access to God (Eph. 2:18).

Benny loves the Lord and wants to do what is right, but time and again he falls into sin, which he hates with a passion. What is Christ doing in heaven that could give Benny hope that God will not cast him off, even when he fails?

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT—PART 1.

Read Leviticus 16:30; see also Hebrews 9:23.

During the daily services sin was, symbolically, transferred to the sanctuary through the sacrificial system. Once a year, the sanctuary itself was cleansed from the sin and impurity accumulated there throughout the year. Yet, according to Leviticus, not only the sanctuary was cleansed, but the people were too. At the consummation of this service, both the people and the sanctuary were cleansed from sin.

A clean sanctuary, a clean people. No wonder that, at the end of the day, the Hebrew nation was at peace with heaven. (See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 448.)

According to Scripture, however, the cleansing of the earthly sanctuary was only a symbol of a greater reality, a greater cleansing. What is that? See Heb. 9:23.

Bible students have been surprised by the statement that heavenly things need to be cleansed (Heb. 9:23). How is it that something in heaven, so far away, needs to be cleansed? What could have defiled it?

The answer is best grasped once it is recognized that the entire earthly service was a shadow, an image of the heavenly service (Heb. 8:1-5). Just as the earthly was defiled by sin, so is the heavenly. For this reason the Bible, in Hebrews 9:23, talks about the need to cleanse even the heavenly sanctuary. What else would it need to be cleansed from other than sin, even if sinners do not enter directly into it any more than sinners (with the exception of the priest) entered into the earthly sanctuary?

Hebrews 9:23 is, actually, referring to the Day of Atonement. The verse does not state, however, that this cleansing took place immediately after Christ's ascension; the point, instead, is that, *at some point in salvation's history*, heavenly things themselves needed to be cleansed.

According to Revelation, Christ performed in the Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary a work of mediation (Rev. 8:3, 4). Yet, Revelation teaches that He also is performing a particular work in the Most Holy Place. The beginning of this work is introduced in Revelation 11:19, where the Most Holy Place is visible, and it closes, in Revelation 15:8, where there is no longer access to it.

**What does it mean to say that we are now living in the great Day of Atonement? Should we be afraid, or should we rejoice?
Hint: What is atonement, and how is it accomplished?**

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT—PART 2.

"And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed" (Dan. 8:14).

"It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these" (Heb. 9:23).

What link exists between these two verses?

According to Daniel, at the end of the 2,300 years (1844), the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary was to begin. The term he uses for "cleansed," *nitsdaq*, usually rendered "be restored, be cleansed, be vindicated," comes from a root that refers to the restoration of the rights of a person who had been falsely accused. In this particular context, Psalm 7:8 and Psalm 9:4 use that same word, translated in these texts as "righteousness" and "right."

The term is also a synonym for salvation (Isa. 1:27). In the context of the sanctuary, the verb conveys the idea of cleansing and is a synonym for "purity" (for example, see Job 4:17). The restoration or vindication of sinners takes place through cleansing (Isa. 53:11). The verb, then, combines legal, salvific, and cleansing ideas, which, no doubt, is why it was used in Daniel 8:14. The Lord wanted to convey the broadness and large scope of what was happening in the chapter.

Daniel 7

Babylon

Media-Persia

Greece

Rome (pagan/papal)

Judgment in heaven

God's kingdom

Daniel 8

Media-Persia

Greece

Rome (pagan/papal)

Cleansing of sanctuary

God's kingdom

Study the parallels between Daniel 7 and Daniel 8 on this chart. Notice the parallel between the judgment scene in Daniel 7 and the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8. They are the same event. Read carefully what happens in the judgment (particularly Daniel 7:22). From what these texts say, why is the judgment, the cleansing of the sanctuary, good news for God's people?

THE ESCHATOLOGICAL DAY OF ATONEMENT.

What was the purpose of the goat for the Lord and of the goat for Azazel (scapegoat) in the Day of Atonement service? Lev. 16:7-10, 15-22.

Azazel was a personal being, as indicated by the parallelism between "for the Lord" and "for Azazel" (Lev. 16:8, RSV). The name most probably means "a strong god" and refers here to a demonic being. Sin was removed from the sanctuary through the blood of the goat belonging to the Lord. Once the atonement was over, the live goat carried sin to Azazel, to the wilderness where he symbolically resided. Thus, sin and impurity were returned to its ultimate originator and instigator, Azazel, making him responsible. Although the Lord had assumed responsibility for the sins of His people, He was not the originator of sin, which ultimately had to be removed from His presence.

What is the relationship between the sending out of Azazel and the experience of Satan during the millennium? Also, what is the relationship between the all-encompassing cleansing of the Day of Atonement and the new earth? Rev. 20:1-3, 9, 10, 12-15; 21:1-5.

The Day of Atonement emphasizes several aspects of the salvific work of God through Christ:

1. *It points to the last aspect of Christ's work in the heavenly sanctuary.* In order to encourage and prepare us for the final conflict, apocalyptic prophecies inform us about the precise moment when the work of judgment and cleansing is to begin.

2. *It reveals the extermination of sin.* Christ's work in the heavenly sanctuary announces that He will soon return (Heb. 9:28), that the true Azazel will be identified (left in the wilderness of a desolate planet for 1,000 years [Rev. 20:1-3]), that sin will be eradicated, and that our world will be recreated (Rev. 21:1-5).

3. *The connection of judgment and cleansing during the Day of Atonement testifies to the fact that God is the moral Arbiter of the universe.* Everyone is accountable to Him. Those who remain loyal to their faith-commitment to Christ will be vindicated in the judgment and the record of their sins will be blotted out forever from the universe. Since the judgment is a public event, God, through the judgment will reveal His righteousness in cleansing the cosmos from sin and from impenitent sinners. (See lesson 3, "The Son of Man and the Final Judgment.")

FURTHER STUDY: Ellen G. White, "What Is the Sanctuary?" *The Great Controversy*, pp. 409–432; "Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary," *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (Silver Spring, Md.: Ministerial Assoc., General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1988), chap. 23, pp. 312–331.

1. *Nature of the heavenly sanctuary.* No building on earth could reflect the glory and vastness of God's heavenly sanctuary. (See Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 414.) Because the earthly sanctuary was built after the pattern of the heavenly, there must be a correspondence of functions, at least, of the basic structural concept. The basic architectural concept was that of a two-compartment structure, suggesting that the heavenly will have at least two compartments. To say less or to say more is only to speculate. The heavenly sanctuary seems to be the place where the Infinite One touches the finite in order to be accessible to His creatures.

2. *The cleansing of the sanctuary and the little horn.* The attack of the little horn against the sanctuary resulted in profanation (Dan. 11:31). In the Old Testament, rebellious profanation of the sanctuary was redressed through the extermination of the sinner and not through expiatory blood. For instance, the Babylonians destroyed and desecrated the temple (Ezek. 7:22; 25:3). How was this profanation redressed? The Lord destroyed them (Jer. 51:11), and later the temple was rebuilt. Israelites who profaned the temple were put to death (Ezek. 23:39, 46–49). Atonement took place, so to speak, through the death of the culprit (for example, see Num. 35:33). The little horn is treated as a desecrating power, and at the end it is destroyed (Dan. 8:25).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Read the following statement and discuss the questions: "The subject of the sanctuary was the key which unlocked the mystery of the disappointment of 1844. It opened to view a complete system of truth, connected and harmonious, showing that God's hand directed the great advent movement."—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 423.

1. How did the sanctuary message shed light on Daniel 8:14?
2. How did the subject of the sanctuary lead to other truths, such as the Sabbath, the law, and justification?
3. The sanctuary message is really a pictorial representation of the plan of salvation. Explain how the gospel is taught in the sanctuary service.



Maria's Celebration of Joy

J. H. Zachary

When Maria Brozozek retired from her work as a tailor in Poland, she had a burden to help people in her hometown. Her life took a new direction when she learned about a poor family that was not able to pay the rent for their apartment. The owner was about to evict them. Maria asked people in the community to donate used items to be sold and requested the funds be given to this family so they could remain in their apartment.

Her efforts were a success, and Maria began looking for others she could help. She developed a plan to designate a special day for what she called a Celebration of Joy. Then she organized activities that were open to the community. Children prepared a play based on a Bible story; the community was invited to bring used items for an auction following the play. The funds raised were set aside to help the poor.

On one occasion Maria made arrangements for an art exhibition in the city's castle. One of the city's artists provided his art collection for sale. On another occasion actors performed for a benefit show. The proceeds of these events were given to a fund to help the poor.

Maria's program has done a lot to change the attitude of the city's residents toward the Adventist Church. The local Catholic priest has given his blessing for his congregation to support the Celebration of Joy. He even invited the Adventists to present a musical concert in his church to raise funds for the poor.

When people ask Maria why she does this, she tells them how God's love changed her life, and she wants to help change others' lives, as well. Television and radio stations have featured Maria's mission, and the newspaper has begun a column listing places where people in need can go for help. Clothing is collected to be given to needy children, and poor children are taken on special field trips.

Many people in Maria's city want to know more about Adventists as a result of Maria's work. Maria is studying the Bible with 10 people who might never have become interested had it not been for her Celebration of Joy.



Maria Brozozek (left). J. H. Zachary is coordinator of international evangelism for The Quiet Hour and a special consultant for the General Conference Ministerial Association.

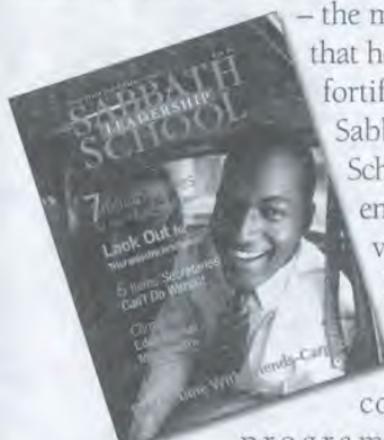


An Essential Vitamin for Stronger Adult Sabbath Schools.

Want fresh ideas to supplement your adult Sabbath School program? Or help in teaching the Sabbath School lesson? Then try *Sabbath School Leadership*

— the magazine that helps you fortify your Sabbath School with energy and vitality. Every issue has complete

programs for Sabbath School superintendents, right down to selections for song service. We're talking about powerful programs crafted by the creative minds of Charles Bradford, Dorothy Eaton Watts, Dick Duerksen, and others.



Sabbath School teachers get ready-made class plans that spark both discussion and spiritual growth.

Subscribe to *Sabbath School Leadership* and find the tonic that will revitalize your ministry.

Sabbath School Leadership includes:

- Small Group Study Helps
- Success Stories From Other Leaders
- Active Learning Suggestions
- Training Courses to Polish Your Skills

US\$28.95 for 12 monthly issues.

Order *Sabbath School Leadership* through your Sabbath School secretary, or call your Adventist Book Center at 1-800-765-6955.

**SABBATH
LEADERSHIP
SCHOOL**



RECIPE FOR MONGOLIAN CHURCH

How to grow a church in a non-Christian country:

- Step 1:** Select a centuries-old Buddhist culture.
- Step 2:** Plunge it into the antireligious beliefs of Communism for a few generations.
- Step 3:** Add several dedicated missionaries.
- Step 4:** Expose to the Holy Spirit.
- Step 5:** Taste their fervor and serve with praise.

The church in Mongolia is comprised of more than 200 dedicated youth and adults. Newborns, in their experience. They are on fire to share their newfound faith, but they need church buildings to establish a physical presence in the cities and towns of this frontier mission field.

Read

MISSION

The Thirteenth Sabbath Offering on June 29
supports projects in the Northern Asia-Pacific Division.

Matthew 24: Jesus' Sermon on Apocalyptic Prophecy



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Matthew 24-25.

MEMORY TEXT: “At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory” (Matthew 24:30, NIV).

ONE OF THE MOST DISCUSSED DISCOURSES OF CHRIST'S LIFE appears in Matthew 24, where Jesus outlines the events that will precede His second coming. Jesus begins His apocalyptic description of the future with events that will happen during the lifetime of the disciples. From there He moves into the future, through what we often call the Dark Ages, and ends with His return in glory.

How interesting that He starts with pagan Rome, the fourth kingdom in Daniel 7. Perhaps He does this because pagan Rome is the kingdom that was ruling the world when Jesus gave His talk. Then comes a period of tribulation and terror (Matt. 24:21) during the Middle Ages (the 1,260 years prophetically depicted in Daniel 7), followed by the signs that indicate that the tribulation has ended (vs. 29). Finally, His talk concludes with the last-days' delusions (vss. 24-27) and the glorious return of our Lord (vss. 30, 31).

Jesus begins His discourse with the political situation of His own time and then follows it up through history until it culminates in His second coming.

It sounds like the historicist approach (see lesson 1), does it not?

***(Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, May 18.)**

JESUS AND THE FUTURE OF HIS PEOPLE (Matt. 24:1-3).

Using Matthew 24:1-3, write down the background setting for Jesus' discourse on the end of the age. Look at such issues as the temple, the time in Christ's ministry when He speaks these words, to whom He was talking and where. How do these factors fit in with what He says about the signs that precede His coming?

Though the immediate subject of this discourse is the fall of Jerusalem, this subject is linked to a much wider one—the signs of Christ's coming and the end of the age. The fall of Jerusalem is, here, a symbol of the world prior to the Second Coming. Notice, too, that the disciples, by their questions in verse 3, reveal some knowledge, even before He left them the first time, that Christ would be coming again!

Based on the questions they asked, what were the main concerns of the disciples? Matt. 24:3.

The disciples asked three questions that Jesus used to develop His apocalyptic message.

The first question—“*When will this [destruction of the temple] happen?*” (NIV)—is addressed by Jesus in Matthew 24:15-20. The second—“*What will be the sign of your coming?*” (NIV)—is discussed in verses 21-31. The third—“*What will be the sign . . . of the end of the age?*” (NIV)—is dealt with in verses 4-14. In other words, Jesus began His talk by answering the last question first (end of the age); then He moved to the first question (fall of Jerusalem); and finally He dealt with the central question, the most important one—Christ's return in glory. Apparently, Jesus' main interest is located not in the fall of the city but in the end of the age and His second advent. The rest of the sermon deals with proper preparation for that event.

Ellen White wrote that “Had He [Jesus] opened to His disciples future events as He beheld them, they would have been unable to endure the sight. In mercy to them He blended the description of the two great crises, leaving the disciples to study out the meaning for themselves.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 628. What can we learn from that principle in how we deal with others?

SIGNS OF THE END OF THE AGE (Matt. 24:4-14).

In Matthew 24:5, Jesus reveals, “For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.” How amazingly have these words been fulfilled! All through history, up through today, people have claimed to be Christ—exactly as Jesus had warned.

In what ways could you use Christ’s prediction about false christians, so accurately and undeniably fulfilled, to help convince someone of Christ’s claim as the Messiah and of the validity of the Bible as a whole? How does this prophecy, so limited and specific, differ from His predictions that there would be famines and wars and earthquakes?

What other religious, social, and natural events did Jesus predict would precede His coming? Matt. 24:4-8.

Two things must be noticed regarding these predicted events. First, they are not signs of the end but events that will happen while God’s people wait for the end (Matt. 24:6, 8). Second, these events contain potential spiritual and psychological threats to the Lord’s servants. For example, Jesus mentioned false messiahs in order to alert His followers to that specific and dangerous deception. Meanwhile, natural disasters could cause doubt about God and His love in the minds of many believers. Christ’s warning of these events beforehand, however, does help alleviate those doubts, because we have been warned about them by God Himself.

What was the one specific sign that Jesus said would lead to the end? Matt. 24:14.

Though Jesus described the various trials and tribulations that His followers would face (persecution, prejudice, apostasy, treason, and absence of love), none of these is “the sign” of the end (in verse 3 His disciples asked for *the sign* [as in only one sign] of the end). The sign is the preaching of the gospel to the world, “and then the end will come” (vs. 14, NIV).

Many people use the exact things that Jesus said would happen—wars, famines, disasters, disease—as reasons not to believe in God. How does Jesus’ warning about events blunt, or weaken, that argument? Or does it not?

FALL OF JERUSALEM (Matt. 24:1-20).

What was Jesus' answer to the question "“When will this [the destruction of the temple] happen?”" (Matt. 24:3, 15, 16, NIV).

Jesus is referring to Daniel 9:27, where the destruction of Jerusalem was predicted. The Lord points, with prophetic authority, to the fulfillment of the prediction, which happened through the Roman armies that would destroy the temple and leave it desolate. The word *abomination* in the Bible refers to idolatrous practices, and even to those who engage in those practices. The idolatrous Roman armies are the abomination that causes desolation, the desolation of the temple and the city (Luke 21:20).

What specific instructions did Jesus give to His followers living in Judea at the time of the fall of Jerusalem? Matt. 24:16-18.

The counsel given by Jesus emphasizes two aspects: first, the need to seek a place of refuge or safety to avoid death or unnecessary suffering as a result of the military attack against Jerusalem; second, the need for immediate action. There will be no time to gather personal belongings; delay could be fatal.

Fortunately, the followers of Jesus heeded His words, and not one believer perished during the destruction of the city (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 630)—a great example of faith that results in works, in obedience. Though these followers of Christ were saved only by faith in Him and not by works, they manifested their faith by obeying Christ's words to leave the city when the armies approached. In short, they obeyed, and that obedience led to their being spared an incredible amount of suffering. All that one has to do is read about the siege of Jerusalem and of the barbarity that ensued (horrendous, even by today's standards) to begin to appreciate how simple obedience had spared these people from suffering.

What examples can you see, either in your own life or in the lives of others, in which this principle—that of obedience to God sparing people great pain—has been manifested? At the same time, what examples, if any, have you seen of those who obey, suffering directly because of their obedience?

A SIGN OF JESUS' COMING—PART 1 (Matt. 24:21-31).

Describe, in your own words, the great tribulation predicted by Jesus in Matthew 24:21, 22.

From the fall of Jerusalem, Jesus points to the great tribulation depicted in Daniel 7:25. Jesus saw "long centuries of darkness, centuries for His church marked with blood and tears and agony. Upon these scenes His disciples could not then endure to look, and Jesus passed them by with a brief mention."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 630, 631.

Two points about this terrible phase of Western history should be noticed: (1) God sets a time limit to it (according to Daniel 7:25, it will last 1,260 years); (2) it is unequaled in world history. "The tribulation of the 1260 year-days was the greatest in history in that it continued for centuries and from time to time produced extremely high percentages of mortality."—C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares*, vol. 2, p. 35.

That specific tribulation, mentioned in Daniel 7:25, is not the same as the one mentioned in Daniel 12:1, 2. This one is also unique but "will occur in connection with the resurrection at the second coming. It will occur after the court of judgment described in Daniel 7:9-14 has finished examining the books. It will bring terror only to the wicked. God's people will be delivered from it, 'every one' of them."—Maxwell, p. 34.

If Satan was defeated at the Cross, why do such times of tribulation and violence still occur? How do the following verses help answer, at least somewhat, this difficult question?

Job 1:8-12 _____

Rom. 16:20 _____

Rev. 12:12 _____

Rev. 14:17-19 _____

Explain, as best as you can, wars, famine, and tragedy in the context of the great controversy between Christ and Satan. How does knowing the great-controversy motif help us understand how we are to relate to these things?

A SIGN OF JESUS' COMING—PART 2 (Matt. 24:29-31).

Which signs will take place before the sign of the Second Coming appears? Matt. 24:29.

Jesus describes a series of cosmic signs associated with the end of the great tribulation. Adventists have identified them with the Lisbon earthquake in 1755, the darkening of the sun on May 19, 1780, and the meteor shower of November 13, 1833. The timing of those events, as well as the order in which they occurred, make them a fitting fulfillment of the prophecy.

It is important to notice that between 1700 and 1844 a series of significant prophetic events occurred. "That sequence can be outlined as follows: (1) a great earthquake—1755; (2) the Dark Day—1780; (3) judgment upon the beast—1798; (4) the falling of the stars—1833; (5) Judgment beginning in heaven—1844."—William Shea, "Cosmic Signs Through History," *Ministry*, February 1999. The Lord was clearly calling our attention to the fulfillment of apocalyptic prophecies.

What was Jesus' answer to the question in verse 3, "What will be the sign of your coming?" (NIV). See Matt. 24:30.

It is difficult to know what Jesus meant when He said "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky" (vs. 30, NIV). This event is followed by the mourning of the nations and His glorious appearance. Bible students have speculated about the nature of that sign but have not provided an acceptable interpretation. Ellen G. White comments, "Soon there appears in the east a small black cloud, about half the size of a man's hand. It is the cloud which surrounds the Saviour and which seems in the distance to be shrouded in darkness. The people of God know this to be the sign of the Son of man."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 640.

"And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matt. 24:31). What is Jesus referring to here? What other verses in the Bible elaborate on this event? Find as many other verses as you can that deal with this topic, place them together, and see what kind of picture the Lord has painted for us on this wonderful promise.

FURTHER STUDY: Ellen G. White, "On the Mount of Olives," *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 627–636; "The Destruction of Jerusalem," *The Great Controversy*, pp. 17–38.

Please note the following points in conclusion to this week's lesson:

1. *Purpose of the signs of the end.* It was not Jesus' purpose to expound upon a series of events that we could use to establish the date of His coming. Instead, He talks about the signs so they will keep fresh in our minds the promise of His return. Jesus mentions events that would happen throughout history, and whenever one of them takes place, His people make the connection with the Second Coming. Second, each event identified as a sign by the community of believers keeps alive the element of expectation and hope. They know that the Lord has not forgotten them and that history is moving toward God's appointed goal. Third, the signs have the purpose of protecting them from deceptions. Satan is going to try to deceive them, but Jesus told them how to distinguish truth from falsehood. They must be watchful while waiting for the true manifestation of Christ in the clouds of heaven.

2. *This generation.* In Matthew 24:34 "this generation" could designate those listening to Him or a type of people ("evil generation") or even a specific ethnic group. Any of the last two makes sense in the context.

3. *The great tribulation.* Matthew 24:21 gives the impression that the tribulation takes place during the fall of Jerusalem, mentioned in the previous verse, but such an impression is not required by the Greek text. The expression "for then," at the beginning of verse 21, is used sometimes to introduce something new in the distant future—in this case, something that took place long after the destruction of the city.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In Matthew 24:35, Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away" (NIV). What a prediction! By reading that verse now, or any of His discourses centuries after He said them, you are taking part in the fulfillment of this prediction. How could a verse like this be used in witnessing?
2. With Christ's words so clear regarding the manner of His coming, why have so many people been deceived by false Christs through the ages? Read specifically Matthew 24:24.

SUMMARY: Jesus' apocalyptic sermon follows the content of the visions of Daniel but puts a major emphasis on the need to be alert against evil deceptions and perseverance in faith.



Village of Thieves

Levi Laput

I stopped to rest in the shade of a tree. I could feel the sweat dripping down my back. As I rested on the mountainside, I saw a familiar man from the lowlands approaching.

"Going to that Manobo village again?" he greeted.

"Yes," I answered.

"I'll never visit that village," he continued. "Those people are thieves, criminals. Whenever animals disappear from nearby villages, their carcasses are found in that village. And when the villagers are confronted with their theft, they answer with bows and arrows, spears, and bolos. Why would you want to go there?"

"I am a student missionary," I said. "I teach in the village school, and I tell them about the love of Jesus."

"Those people are stiff-necked thieves and criminals," he responded. "No good will ever come out of that dirty village." With those words the man turned and left.

As I started up the mountainside toward the village, I pondered the man's words. Then God gently reminded me that no matter how wicked they are, these are His people. Jesus died for them.

Time passed. Later, in October 2000, word went out to believers in neighboring Manobo villages that a baptism would be held in the village of thieves and criminals. One church elder said, "I never thought I would see anyone from this village accept Jesus as their Savior. What a great event!"

The smiles on the faces of the 10 baptismal candidates told the story of changed lives. Then my partner approached with four men. They wanted to be baptized too. But these four were troublemakers, the very thieves my lowlander friend had told me about.

"We cannot baptize them," I whispered to my partner. "They don't know what they are asking or even what we believe." But my partner urged me to interview them anyway.

"While you were giving Bible studies to our families," one man said, "we were outside listening. We are sinners, but with God's help we have gained victory over our vices."

I acknowledged that God had indeed changed these men's lives. Who was I to forbid them baptism when God had already written their names in the Book of Life? That day we welcomed 14 precious souls from the village of criminals and thieves into the kingdom of Heaven!

Levi Laput is a student missionary from Mountain View College to the Manobo village of Log Deck-5 in southern Philippines.

Produced by the Office of Mission
Sabbath School-Personal Ministries department of the General Conference
Email: gomission@gc.adventist.org

The Child, the Church, and the Dragon: Revelation 12



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Revelation 12.

MEMORY TEXT: “ ‘They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them!’ ” (Revelation 12:11, 12, NIV).

BESESIDES OUTLINING THE ATTACKS OF THE ENEMY against Christ and His church throughout the Christian Era, Revelation 12 appears to have several other purposes:

First, it introduces the protagonists in the controversy: the woman, the Child, the dragon, and the remnant. Second, it gives assurance of victory to God's people, because it emphasizes that Christ has, always, defeated the dragon—a victory in which all His followers share. Third, it introduces the final conflict, this time against God's remnant.

Revelation 12 begins with a description of a woman giving birth to a Child, followed by a dragon ready to attack both the woman and the Child. The chapter then ends when the dragon prepares to launch an attack on the remnant of the woman's offspring. The war against the Child, described in verses 2-4, is developed further in verses 7-12; the attack against the woman, introduced in verse 6, is discussed in verses 13-16.

Yet, even amid all the attacks, the struggles, and the battles, the words that cry out from the chapter are those of victory, Christ's victory, which is the victory of those who follow Him by faith, those who “overcame him [the dragon] by the blood of the Lamb” (vs. 11, NIV).

***(Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, May 25.)**

THE WOMAN AND THE CHILD (Rev. 12:1, 2).

What does the symbol of the woman in Revelation 12:1 represent?

The woman is dressed in the splendor of heaven; her garments reflect the light of the “Sun of Righteousness” (Mal. 4:2; Matt. 13:43; 17:2). The twelve stars are a symbol of the people of God whom she represents (see Dan. 12:3). Though celestial bodies, the sun and the moon, in particular, were used to identify the change of seasons (Gen. 1:14, 15); in this case, they may serve to announce the beginning of a new era through the birth of the Child.

The symbolism used in these texts seems also to have Messianic significance. Christ is the morning “star” (Num. 24:17), and the permanency of the sun and the moon could represent the permanency of the throne of David (Ps. 72:5; 89:35-37).

Who was the Child born to this woman? Isa. 7:14; 9:6, 7; Gal. 4:4.

The first good news found in the Bible is God’s promise to send a Redeemer born of “the woman” (Gen. 3:15). Christ is the “seed” of the woman. He was to take our nature and to become one of us, all in order to save us from the deadly wound of sin. Indeed, because of this promise of salvation, first given to Adam and Eve, the human race was not permanently severed from God.

“The Son of God, undertaking to become the Redeemer of the race, placed Adam in a new relation to his Creator. He was still fallen; but a door of hope was opened to him. The wrath of God still hung over Adam, but the execution of the sentence of death was delayed, and the indignation of God was restrained, because Christ had entered upon the work of becoming man’s Redeemer. . . . He became a refuge for man, and although man was indeed a criminal, deserving the wrath of God, yet he could by faith in Christ run into the refuge provided and be safe. In the midst of death there was life if man chose to accept it.”—Ellen G. White, “Redemption,” *Present Truth and Review and Herald Articles* (February 24, 1874), vol. 1, p. 141.

Jesus, the Lord, became a human being in order to save us from the ultimate results of sin. He—the Creator of the universe (Col. 1:16, 17)—became part of the creation in order to save the part of the creation who accepted His gift of salvation, extended to all humanity. Dwell on what these facts reveal about God’s character and about His love for us.

THE CHILD AND THE DRAGON (Rev. 12:3-5).

What are some of the characteristics of the dragon? Rev. 12:3, 4.

One characteristic of this dragon is its seven heads and ten horns (Rev. 12:3). According to Revelation 17:9, 10, the seven heads are the main kingdoms used by this power to oppress God's people. Ten horns appear in Daniel 7:24 as a symbol of a divided kingdom, a diversity of political powers. The same symbolism refers to the totality of the nations that will join God's end-time enemy (Rev. 17:12, 13). The dragon, clearly, has an earthly, even political, manifestation.

The dragon is said to draw “a third of the stars out of the sky [heaven]” (NIV) to the ground. What does that mean? See Isa. 14:12-15; Jude 6.

Revelation 12:4 says that this dragon attempted to kill the woman’s Child, Christ, as soon as He was born. What reason would the dragon have for wanting to do this? See also verses 10, 11.

The attack of the dragon against the Child took place when Herod tried to kill Jesus (Matt. 2:13) and through the temptations to which Jesus was exposed during His ministry (Heb. 4:15). Though the dragon is a symbol of Satan (Rev. 12:9), he will use human instrumentalities when possible, just as he used pagan Rome (one of his seven heads).

In God’s plan, what was the final destiny of the Child? Rev. 12:5.

The Child goes through three experiences. First, as promised by God, He was born of a woman; in other words, He was human. Second, He experienced the attacks of the dragon but defeated him and overcame his attacks. Third, He ascended to heaven, to the throne of God. The movement is from humiliation to glorification and enthronement. He will rule the nations of the earth as Judge and King. The phrase “rule . . . with an iron scepter” (Rev. 12:5, NIV) refers to His judicial function. His judgment is based on unbending truth.

In what ways does our own experience, as Christians, faintly reflect the three phases of “the Child”? Keep in mind the saying, “No cross, no crown.”

WAR IN HEAVEN (Rev. 12:7-12).

What does Revelation 12:7, 8 teach about the nonearthly origins of sin? This is important to understand, because it shows that sin, and the problems raised by sin, have implications that extend beyond the earth.

John combines the two encounters between Christ and Satan to emphasize Christ's total victory over the devil at the Cross. The first encounter was in heaven, when Lucifer rebelled against the government of God (Isa. 14:12-14; Ezek. 28:12-17). He wanted a throne in heaven in order to be "like the Most High" (Isa. 14:13, 14), but he was expelled (vs. 12; Ezek. 28:14, 16) and, then—after being totally defeated in his heavenly rebellion—Satan was cast to the earth.

The second encounter climaxed in Gethsemane and at the Cross. The proclamation of salvation recorded in Revelation 12:10 came about only because of the Cross, when Christ died (see also, Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 761). Christ and Satan faced each other as never before and, again, Christ came out victorious. Satan was then permanently "driven out" from heaven (John 12:31, NIV). Jesus said that Satan fell like lightning from heaven (Luke 10:18). John uses the language of the war in heaven to illustrate what happened at the Cross (see also Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14).

How did celestial beings react to Christ's victory? What, in contrast, was Satan's response? Rev. 12:10-12.

Christ's victory means that, first, no one in heaven is accusing us; Heaven is not searching for reasons to keep us out (Rev. 12:10). Second, we are victorious through the blood of the Lamb. Some have shed their blood for the Lord, but even these are saved only by the blood of Jesus (vs. 11). Third, our redemption is heading toward its consummation. The final fate of Satan is already decided; his time, he knows, is short (vs. 12).

"All heaven triumphed in the Saviour's victory. Satan was defeated, and knew that his kingdom was lost. To the angels and the unfallen worlds the cry, 'It is finished,' had a deep significance. It was for them as well as for us that the great work of redemption had been accomplished."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 758.

If Christ won the victory over Satan, and Christ's victory is ours, why do we still fall into sin?

THE WOMAN AND THE DRAGON (Rev. 12:6, 13-16).

Why did the dragon pursue the woman and for how long? Rev. 12:13, 15.

The woman who gave birth to the Child now becomes the object of the dragon's attack, which suggests that she represents the people of God in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. Satan could not defeat Christ, so he goes after the next-best thing—the people who are supposed to represent Him on earth.

Twice in Revelation 12 a prophetic time period is given (vs. 6 and vs. 14). What does that time period symbolize? What happened during this time, and how long does the event last? See also Daniel 7:23-25; make sure you can see the parallel between those verses in Daniel and what is happening in Revelation 12:6, 14.

In what ways was God involved with the church during the time period depicted in Revelation 12:6, 14, 16?

While Daniel put the emphasis on the persecution and its effect on the people of God, John puts the emphasis on God's protective care for His people. An image taken from the Exodus out of Egypt expresses that protection: God has once more carried His people on "eagles' wings" to the wilderness (Exod. 19:4). Though the church is under attack, God is providing for it anyway. Damage will be done to the church; Daniel makes that clear (see Dan. 7:25), but the church, in the end, will not be destroyed, because Christ will not allow that to happen.

The idea of persecution is also expressed through the symbol of water, like a river, coming out of the mouth of the dragon. Providentially, the earth helps the woman by swallowing it. The Egyptian armies persecuted the Israelites, but the Lord stretched out His arm and "the earth swallowed them" (Exod. 15:12). Here, again, God does not allow the enemy to destroy His people.

However intense and (at times) discouraging the battle against Satan can be (often manifested as a battle against sin and self), it is not often that we engage in a struggle in which we know the outcome from the start. How does the knowledge that Christ, our King, has defeated the foe help us press on ahead, in faith, despite even the most discouraging circumstances?

THE DRAGON AND THE REMNANT (Rev. 12:17).

Revelation 12 describes the attack of the dragon against Jesus (Rev. 12:4, 7) and against the church during the 1,260 years (vs. 13). At the end of the chapter, another group is introduced: “the rest of her offspring [lit., the remnant of her seed]” (vs. 17, NIV). Scripture is explicit: The dragon will make war against these people, the remnant (vs. 17), who appear after the 1,260-year period prophetically represented in verse 6 and verse 14 (after 1798).

Review Revelation 12. What three things are objects of Satan's attack, and in what order do they appear?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What is the first characteristic of the remnant? Rev. 12:17.

In the book of Revelation, the first four commandments seem to be of extreme importance in a book whose central theme is worship: Who should be the true object of worship? Neither the dragon nor the beast, to be sure (Rev. 13:4; 14:9)—but God alone (vs. 7). Worship of the *image* of the beast is also condemned (vss. 9, 10). Among the reasons given to worship God is the recognition that He “‘made the heavens, the earth, the sea’” (vs. 7, NIV), a phrase taken from Exodus 20:11, the Sabbath commandment.

Read Exodus 20:1-11 and compare it to the issues mentioned above until you can see clearly how the first four commandments are involved in what Revelation says will happen in the last days.

Another characteristic of the remnant is that they have “the testimony of Jesus,” a phrase clarified in Revelation 19:10: “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” The expression “spirit of prophecy” was used in the time of John to designate the gift of prophecy. John says that the prophetic gift will still be active in God’s end-time remnant.

What justification do we have as Seventh-day Adventists to name ourselves as this remnant?

FURTHER STUDY: Ellen G. White, "Calvary," pp. 741-757, and "It Is Finished," pp. 758-767, *The Desire of Ages*; C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares*, vol. 2, pp. 315-324, 403-407.

Reflect on the following points in conclusion to this week's study: *Jesus and Michael*. Michael is called the "Archangel" (Jude 9), suggesting that he is an angel, the commander of the angels (Rev. 12:7). The word *angel* designates the function of heavenly beings; they are "messengers." They are created beings, except for one of them: the Angel (Messenger) of the Lord. The fact that this Being is equated with God (see Exod. 3:2, 4; Judg. 6:12, 14) has led many Christians to identify Him with the preincarnated Christ. In Him the Sender and the Messenger are the same Person.

Michael is described as the Prince of Israel (Dan. 10:13, 21), who protects Israel as *Warrior* and *Judge* (vs. 1). Most probably, He is the Prince of the "host of heaven" mentioned in Daniel 8:10, who, as *Priest*, is performing the daily services in the heavenly sanctuary. In Joshua 5:14 that same heavenly being is equated with the Lord Himself (vs. 2). It is this same Being who will come again "with the voice of the archangel," bringing life and final victory over evil powers (1 Thess. 4:16). There is enough biblical information to warrant the conclusion that Michael and Christ are the same Person.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why did God foretell the experience of the church during the Christian Era if those prophecies were to be better understood after they were fulfilled?
2. In what ways, even now, is the remnant experiencing Satan's attack? Does it have to be a violent attack? Can it be a spiritual one? Or both? Do his assaults against the church have to come from without, or can his greatest weapon against us come from within our own ranks? Explain your answer.
3. Read Deuteronomy 4:1-4. What in these verses gives us an answer as to how we, individually, can withstand Satan's attacks on us personally?

SUMMARY: Though the dragon was defeated by Christ in heaven and at the Cross, and though he was, and still is, unable to destroy the church, he is, nevertheless, preparing his last attack against God's remnant people. God's loving providence provided for the needs of the church in the past and will in the future. Our victory is assured.



Cow Herder for Christ

J. H. Zachary

It was a challenging assignment: raise up a new church in a remote Muslim community in Gambia. But Peter Mensah accepted the assignment, and for six years he and his wife lived among the Muslim people. They adopted the food, clothing, and customs of the villagers.

Mensah joined the young men who milked the village cows. He went with them to herd cattle all day. When the herders could not beat the cattle to the only watering hole, they were forced to drink muddy water. And Mensah drank the water with the others. This made a deep impression on his hosts. Because of his actions, the villagers accepted the couple as part of their community.

In the evening after the herders drove the cattle home for the night, Mensah gathered the villagers together and taught them English, reading, writing, basic arithmetic, and told them Bible stories. When the villagers were able to read some, Mensah traveled to a distant city and bought 50 Bibles to use as textbooks. The villagers were thrilled.

One boy commented on the similarities between the Koran and the Bible, and Mensah replied, "Yes, this book [the Bible] is the senior brother of the Koran."

One day the head *imam* (religious teacher) called him to his home. The leader took hold of the hands of his two sons and told Mensah, "I have never seen anyone who has helped our village as you have. I have two sons. The son on my right hand will become the new imam of this village; the son on my left is for you; make him a Christian."

When Peter arrived in Gambia there were only eight Adventists in the entire country. As a result of his work in this area, the majority of the villagers became Adventist Christians. And several years later, Peter met one of the imam's sons. He had become an Adventist pastor.

Mensah credits his success in that area to the methods that Jesus used. He mingled with the people, loved them, lived with them, and helped them. As friendships developed, the people accepted the message of the Bible. The methods used by Jesus still work today.



J. H. Zachary is coordinator of international evangelism for The Quiet Hour and a special consultant for the General Conference Ministerial Association.

Produced by the Office of Mission
Sabbath School-Personal Ministries department of the General Conference
Email: gmission@gc.adventist.org

The Dragon Versus the Remnant—Part 1



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Rev. 13:1-10.

MEMORY TEXT: “If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints” (Revelation 13:10, NIV).

REVELATION 13:1-10 also repeats what was said in Revelation 12:6, 13-16 but adds significant new information. The purpose of the repetition is to indicate that the religiopolitical power that the dragon used during the Middle Ages will rise again to life and will be a key player in the attack against the remnant. Revelation 13:11-18 is a development of Revelation 12:17, which talks about the dragon’s enraged attempt to make war against the remnant, those who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. The beast from the earth (starting in Rev. 13:11) is the second instrument used by the dragon to revive the beast from the sea and to attack the remnant.

At first glance, then, the verses do not paint a pretty picture; however, even amid the rise of this beast, amid its blasphemy and persecution, the Word gives us hope, because even here the Son of God and His death is revealed. Thus, no matter what the dragon and the beast do, Christ has won the victory—and God wants us to know, again and again, not only that He has won but that He has won on behalf of us.

***(Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, June 1.)**

DESCRIPTION OF THE BEAST FROM THE SEA.

“And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion” (Rev. 13:1, 2).

Outline of Revelation 13:1-11:

1. Description of the beast (vss. 1, 2)
2. Experience of the beast (vss. 2-4)
3. Work of the beast (vss. 5-7)
4. Experience and evaluation of the beast (vss. 8-10)
5. Exhortation to God’s people (vss. 10, 11)

Review these verses until the sequence of events is clear.

What does the phrase “coming out of the sea” (NIV) mean? Isa. 17:12; Dan. 7:2, 3; Rev. 13:1; see also Jer. 46:7, 8.

Which elements of this beast in Revelation 13:1 point to the prophecy of Daniel 7? Make a list of the common elements (see Dan. 7:2-7; Rev. 13:1, 2).

One of the first things that John observed about this second beast was its seven heads and ten horns. Because the dragon of Revelation 12:3 had those same features, the vision emphasizes the close connection between these two entities. The ten horns point to Daniel 7, in which ten horns symbolize the division of the Roman Empire (Dan. 7:7).

By pointing to Daniel 7, John helps identify the historical moment when the beast appears within the historical flow of apocalyptic prophecies. In Revelation 13, the beasts of Daniel 7 appear in inverted order: leopard (Greece), bear (Media-Persia), and the lion (Babylon). John moves from his time backward to Babylon and then forward to the future. The great beast he describes here is not one of those three from the past but a different one, the terrible beast of Daniel 7:7, the Roman Empire.

The reference to the ten horns makes the prophecy even more specific. The fact that each of the ten horns has a crown indicates that pagan Rome had already fallen and that the nations that sprang up after its demise are exercising their *political* authority. Thus, the work of this beast happens *after* the division of pagan Rome, which means that, like the little horn in Daniel 7, it represents *ecclesiastical* Rome.

BEASTLY THINGS (Rev. 13:2, 4).

What did the dragon entrust to the beast? Rev. 13:2.

The text describes what could be called an enthronement scene: The dragon is appointing the beast as coregent in his kingdom and as his instrument in the prosecution of his own goals. The dragon is trying to do what God did with Christ: Christ received authority from God and sits on the throne of His Father (Rev. 2:27; 3:21); the dragon imitates this same process. He still, obviously, wants to be like God! (Isa. 14:14).

Read Revelation 1:18, 5:6, and 13:3. What parallels exist between the experience of Christ and that of the beast? Why would these parallels even exist? What point is made by paralleling them?

According to Revelation 13:3, the beast gets a deadly wound. The intention of this wound (Rev. 13:3) was to kill the beast; the wound, however, was healed, and the beast continues on. When Revelation 17:8 talks about a beast that “‘once was, now is not, and will come’” (NIV), it seems to be referring to this specific political and religious power.

What will be the result of the beast’s healing? Rev. 13:3, 4.

The experience of the beast has a universal impact—“the world will be astonished” (NIV) (see also Rev. 17:8). The text also makes it explicitly clear that the beast is not only a political power but also a religious one: The dwellers of the earth *worshiped* the beast and the dragon. The reason given is that there is no one like the beast. But the uniqueness of this power is located in the authority of the beast to impose its will.

Compare this idea that no one was like the beast (Rev. 13:4) with these verses: Exod. 15:11; 1 Sam. 2:2; Ps. 71:19; Ps. 35:10; Ps. 86:8; Ps. 113:5; Jer. 10:6. In what ways can you see the great-controversy theme in this contrast?

Why is whom we worship so important? Why would God even care whom we worship? After all, if we are “good” people, live good lives, and treat our neighbors kindly, why does it matter whom we worship or even how we worship? Discuss.

THE BLASPHEMY OF THE BEAST (Rev. 13:5-7).

For how long did the beast exercise the authority given to it by the dragon? Rev. 13:5.

Revelation 13:5 takes us back to Revelation 13:2, the moment when—after the beast came out of the sea—the dragon gave it his power and authority. Verses 5-7 describe how the beast used that authority and power and for how long, as well. At the end of the 1,260 years (1798), the “deadly wound” (vs. 3) is inflicted.

The parallel with Daniel 7 is significant. Daniel also mentions the 1,260 years (vs. 25), the boastful speech of the little horn against God (vss. 8, 11, 25), and that the little horn persecuted the saints (vs. 25) and prevailed against them (vs. 21). We are dealing here, in Daniel 7, with the same religiopolitical power as in Revelation 13.

Read Revelation 13:5-7 and describe in your own words the nature of the work of the beast. What characteristics of the beast stand out?

The term that predominates in the description of the work of this anti-God power is *blaspheme*. A general statement is made—“opened his mouth to blaspheme God” (Isa. 13:6, NIV)—and then it is explained in more detail:

Blasphemes the name of God. To blaspheme the name of God is to rob Him of His dignity, power, and authority. This happens when humans appropriate for themselves divine functions and prerogatives (see Mark 2:7) or when, through their conduct, God’s reputation is damaged (1 Tim. 6:1). The beast accepts the worship of the dwellers of the earth; what could be more blasphemous than that?

Blasphemes the dwelling of God. Daniel 8 describes the attack of this same power against the mediatorial work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary. Humans are declared to be able to mediate divine grace and to forgive sins. The heavenly sanctuary is blasphemed when it is considered of no effect for humans.

Blasphemes those who live in heaven. In Revelation the people of God are considered to be already dwellers of heaven (Rev. 14:1); perhaps, then, the blasphemy directed against them is manifested as the persecution they face for serving the Lord (vs. 7).

Though most of us who love God would never think of blaspheming Him, in what subtle ways can we be guilty of that sin without even realizing it?

THE BOOK AND THE BEAST.

Please read Revelation 13:8.

Numerous points come through from this verse regarding the activity of the beast. First, it is talking about something universal, "all that dwell upon the earth." The activity of the beast is not limited to any specific geographical area.

Second, the issue of worship clearly comes into play. The world will be divided over the issue of worship.

Third, only those whose names are *not* written in the book of life worship the beast, the implication being that those whose names are written in the book *do not* worship him.

What do the following teach about the book of life and about having our names written in heaven?

Exod. 32:32 _____

Dan. 12:1 _____

Phil. 4:3 _____

Rev. 3:5 _____

Rev. 20:12 _____

Rev. 20:15 _____

Rev. 21:27 _____

After this description of the beast and of those who worship him, Revelation 13 gives a word of exhortation in verses 9 and 10, telling people to heed what is being said. Though opinions differ on the exact meaning of verse 10, it does seem to be saying, in context, that the beast power will one day receive retribution equivalent to the crimes it has committed.

Read again Revelation 13:8. It talks about the "book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Notice the contrast between *life* and the lamb *slain*. How do you understand the relationship between the death of the Lamb and the names being written in the book of life? What does the Lamb's death have to do with our names being in that book? Why are some names *not* in it?

WORDS OF EXHORTATION.

"Here is the patience and the faith of the saints" (Rev. 13:10).

Why is the remnant exhorted to develop some specific qualities? Rev. 13:10.

The phrase "patient endurance" is the translation of the Greek word *hypomone*, whose basic meaning is "to remain under." It seems to express two main ideas. First, to persevere in one's commitment in spite of pressures to the contrary. This is the kind of life not controlled by external circumstances or by the pressure they place on the individual; it is a life oriented to a very specific and central goal, a willingness to endure anything in order to achieve it.

The second idea expressed by *hypomone* is one of expectation. In fact, it is this aspect that makes it possible to "remain under," to endure. Those who possess this Christian virtue anticipate the moment of deliverance. They know that the stressful or even life-threatening circumstances they face are not the permanent mode of Christian existence, and, therefore, they persist by looking forward to the final deliverance at the return of the Lord.

The other virtue that John mentions is "faithfulness." The Greek word used by John is *pistis*, usually translated as "faith." But the Greek term could mean "faith, trust, faithfulness." In this specific passage, the best translation seems to be "faithfulness." John encourages his readers to remain loyal to the Lord under any circumstance. When faith, understood as the total surrender of our lives to Christ, is confronted with temptation, it expresses itself as faithfulness to God (see Heb. 11:17). The remnant must be unwaveringly faithful to the Lord.

In what ways can we, even now, before persecution, learn to develop both patience and faithfulness?

"The Lord will have a people as true as steel, and with faith as firm as the granite rock. They are to be His witnesses in the world . . . to do a special, a glorious work in the day of His preparation." —Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 494, 495.

Most of us, at some point in our Christian experience, have had to exercise both patience and faithfulness. In fact, it often takes faithfulness to be able to exercise patience, and patience is needed to develop faithfulness. Discuss the relationship between these two concepts and why we need both, especially now.

FURTHER STUDY: *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 816–819; C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares*, vol. 2, pp. 324–340.

Note the following in conclusion to this week's study:

The mortal wound. Revelation 13:1–10 indicates that the fatal wound inflicted on the beast took place after the 1,260 years. That specific prophetic period came to an end in 1798, when General Alexander Berthier arrested the pope with the intention of terminating the papacy. "Pius VI, although 81 years old and ill, was seized and taken as a prisoner to France, where he died (Aug. 29, 1799). On this day the total destruction of the Holy See seemed to many to be accomplished."

—*New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. VI, p. 191.

"After stripping Pius VI of his temporal power, the French deprived him of his liberty. His death while a prisoner marked a low point in papal fortunes not plumbed for centuries and gave rise to a prophecy that the apostolic succession had come to a close with the demise of 'Pius the Last.' "—*New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. X, p. 965.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Where would you place the time we live in within Rev 13:1–10? What impact should that have in your Christian life and in the fulfillment of the mission of the church?
2. Satan has been long planning his attack against the remnant. In view of this fact, what should the remnant be doing to protect themselves? What is the only way, in fact, that the remnant can be protected from Satan? What is our only protection, and how do we obtain it?
3. The efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ is placed in the heart of Revelation 13 (vs. 8). Why would John mention this in the midst of a discussion of the enemies of God and their attempt to destroy God's people?
4. We have seen that Satan tries to imitate the work of God the Father and of Christ. What is Satan's purpose in doing this?

SUMMARY: The dragon left to prepare himself for his last attack against the remnant. The unity of religious and civil power he used during the 1,260 years will be established again and used against the remnant. The critical issue will be the true object of worship. There is safety for those who belong to Christ, whose names are written in the book of life. The sacrifice of Christ is powerful enough to preserve them in hope and faithfulness.



Youth Open Doors in Fiji

Jokapeci Tui

Some young people in Fiji have found a fun way to share Jesus with others while they break down barriers of prejudice. They combine puppets, drama, and music to make their message attractive to children.

Once a month the youth, ages 8 to 15, visit a church or a village to tell Bible stories and dramatize the dangers of drugs. Their message is simple: Christians can have fun.

The young people visited one village that was so prejudiced against Adventists that they chased a man, who became an Adventist, from his home.

When the youth arrived, they were given just five minutes to speak with children in the church. Their leader explained that five minutes was not enough time, so they found another place to meet.

Shortly after the program began, the village gong rang, calling everyone to compulsory worship. Most of the children stayed at the meeting. A deacon came to retrieve the children, but still some remained. Finally some parents came to get their children. But one by one the children returned to the puppet performance. The young people told the children Bible stories, presented skits, and taught them new songs. The children were delighted.

Before the puppet ministry entered this village, no organized Adventist work had been allowed there. But after their visit, the villagers' attitude toward Adventists softened. Some asked for information on what Adventists believe.

The Adventist man who had been chased away was invited to return. He asked some Adventist lay preachers to come and hold worship in his home. He hopes that people will hear the singing and stop to listen to the messages. All this has come about because young

people opened the door of a hostile village to the loving Jesus through their puppet ministry.

Some members of the puppet group (left). Jokapeci Tui is a secretary at the Fiji Mission in Suva and a leader of the puppet ministry.



Produced by the Office of Mission
Sabbath School-Personal Ministries department of the General Conference
Email: gomission@gc.adventist.org

The Dragon Versus the Remnant—Part 2



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Rev. 13:11-18.

MEMORY TEXT: "Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads" (Revelation 14:1, NIV).

IN REVELATION 13, A FALSE TRINITY IS FORMED between the dragon, the beast from the sea, and the beast from the earth. They oppose the Godhead—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—and are ready to vent their wrath against the remnant. God reveals to His people the strategy that the enemy will use; He does this so we will not be surprised, discouraged, or deceived by the tumultuous events that unfold around us. God not only knows the future but controls it, a fact that should give us comfort amid situations that, from our limited, sinful perspective, can at times seem hopeless.

Revelation 13:11-18 describes future events that are in the process of fulfillment, with the United States in the forefront of these last-day events. However, we must always be careful not to speculate beyond what we know for sure. We must not create detailed scenarios of last-day events as though we know for certain every detail when, of course, we do not know those details. To think otherwise is to set ourselves up for disappointment, even deception.

***(Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, June 8.)**

DESCRIPTION OF THE BEAST FROM THE EARTH.

"And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon" (Rev. 13:11).

"And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so" (Gen. 1:24).

Characteristics of the second beast: 1. This new beast rises after the first beast was wounded. Because the wound was inflicted in 1798, we should be looking for a power that arises around that time.

2. The beast from the earth is involved in the healing of the beast from the sea. They coexist during the period of the healing and after the beast is healed.

3. The beast from the earth was brought into existence by God. The symbolism of the phrase "coming up out of the earth" (Rev. 13:11) is very important. This is the only apocalyptic beast that comes out of the earth and not out of the sea. Seventh-day Adventists have commonly taken "earth" to mean a scarcely settled area (see Prov. 21:19; Jer. 2:6), which is true. But if we examine the whole phrase "coming up out of the earth," the symbolism is enriched. This beast, like a plant, comes into existence from out of the ground. Only in the creation narrative do we find the same idea: "God said, 'Let the land produce living creatures.' And it was so" (Gen. 1:24, NIV). The symbolism of a beast coming up from the ground indicates that it arose from God's power.

4. The phrase "had two horns like a lamb" (Rev. 13:11, NIV) describes the initial appearance of the beast to emphasize a gentle system of government; later it will speak like a dragon.

The nation we are looking for appeared around 1798 (after the 1,260-year period), was blessed by God, and had a system of government that was initially gentle, like a lamb. Regarding the last characteristic, the United States, at least in certain areas (the context of the chapter), has certainly been lamblike. For these reasons, we interpret this prophecy as the United States.

The second beast looks like a lamb but speaks as a dragon. In the Bible, whom does a lamb represent, and whom does a dragon represent? The Lamb never forces worship, though He alone is entitled to it; in contrast, the dragon seeks to force worship, though he deserves none. Discuss. Also, in what ways can individuals manifest the characteristics of either power?

THE UNION OF THE TWO BEASTS (Rev. 13:12).

How would you define the relationship established between the beast from the sea and the one from the earth? Rev. 13:12.

The phrase “but he spoke like a dragon” (Rev. 13:11, NIV) is explained in 13:12. This verse is a summary of what is more fully described in the following verses. The second beast is one that has the power (political, military, economic) to force the world to worship the first beast. Obviously, this second beast possesses great might and authority.

In *The Great Controversy*, Ellen White unambiguously identifies that second beast as the United States. What is so amazing about that identification is that it was made more than a hundred years ago (1888), at a time when the United States was nowhere near as influential and powerful as it is today. What events, even over the past twenty years, have placed the United States in a unique position to fulfill its tragic prophetic role?

The first beast deputizes power to the second beast, who will act as its representative. Protestant America will exercise “all the power of the first beast.” What power is this referring to? It is the power to blaspheme God and His sanctuary and to persecute God’s people (Rev. 13:5-7). This prediction “plainly foretells a development of the spirit of intolerance and persecution [in Protestant America] that was manifested by the nations represented by the dragon and the leopardlike beast.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 442.

The beast from the earth will be instrumental in persuading the whole world to worship the first beast. Apostate Protestantism will work throughout the world to heal the beast and to persuade all to acknowledge the authority of the first beast; that is, to worship the beast. John is describing a movement of apostasy of global proportions.

Many sincere Christians of other faiths believe that there will be end-time persecution, but very few see it coming from within the church itself. In other words, they see some outside, blatantly anti-Christian power as the persecutor. How can you use Christian history to show people that, historically, persecution often has arisen from *within* the church itself? Make a list of historical examples that prove this specific point, that persecution has often come from within, as opposed to without.

SPIRITUALISM AND THE BEASTS: MIRACLES (Rev. 13:13, 14).

What is the purpose of the miracles performed by the beast from the earth? Rev. 13:13, 14.

In order to accomplish their goal of universal dominion, the dragon and the two beasts use miracles (Rev. 16:13, 14). One particular miracle is mentioned, highlighting its importance: The beast causes fire to come down from heaven.

What does the phrase “so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth” (Rev. 13:13) mean?

In the book of Revelation, fire is a symbol of God's judgment (Rev. 8:5; 14:10) and of God's presence. The Spirit is represented by “seven torches of fire” (Rev. 4:5, RSV), and Christ Himself has “eyes . . . like a flame of fire” (1:14, NRSV) and legs “like pillars of fire” (10:1, NKJV). John's image recounts also the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. There the true God revealed Himself by making fire come down from heaven (1 Kings 18:20-39). Only the Lord, not Baal, could do it. Now, however, in this context, the dragon (using the second beast) will be able to do something similar enough to deceive the unwary.

In the New Testament, fire comes down from heaven on two particular occasions. The first one was at Pentecost, when the Spirit descended from heaven on the disciples in the form of fire (Acts 2:1-4). Revelation 13:13 could be referring to a false outpouring of the spirit that will result in a false revival of worldwide dimensions.

The second reference to fire descending from heaven is recorded in 2 Thessalonians 1:7, 8, “When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, *in flaming fire*” (emphasis supplied). Fire from heaven is a symbol of the return of Christ. Could Revelation be predicting an imitation of the coming of Christ by demonic powers aided by Protestant America? (See *The Great Controversy*, p. 624.)

Philip, an Adventist, has a friend Anthony, steeped in spiritualism. Each time Philip tries to warn Anthony about his beliefs and practices, Anthony rebuffs him by saying that he has witnessed “miracles” that affirmed his beliefs. What does today's lesson teach that should show anyone that miracles alone do not determine truth?

THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST (Rev. 13:14, 15).

What test of loyalty does the second beast, on behalf of the first beast, impose upon the world? Rev. 13:14, 15.

Whatever the exact details of how “the image to the beast” (Rev. 13:15) will be manifested, one thing is clear: The issue regarding this image will center on worship.

Read through Daniel 3, particularly verses 3, 5, 10, 14, 18, 28. What parallels exist between that chapter and that which is depicted here in Revelation 13? Notice, too, which commandment was the particular issue in Daniel 3, in contrast to which commandment will be the particular focus of the final events depicted in Revelation 13. What do these two commandments have in common? (Hint: see Dan. 7:25.)

In the ancient world, an image was considered a representative of the person it depicted. We have seen that the second beast “acts on behalf of the first beast” (Rev. 13:14, NIV), another way of saying that in a way it functions as its “image.”

Revelation 13:15 says the second beast “was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast” (NKJV). What similar language and concepts are found in Genesis 2:7? In the context of the great controversy, as manifested in Revelation 13, what parallels exist between what is happening here and what happened in Genesis?

The symbolism of breathing life into the image of the beast goes back to Genesis 2:7, where God, after creating man, breathed life into him, making him able to function as His representative. The lamblike beast, who came into existence through the power of God, will claim power that belongs only to God: the power to give and take life. Refusal to worship the image or the beast, which means not submitting to its teachings and commands, will be considered an act of disloyalty worthy of death.

It has been said that humanity cannot live without worshiping something. Ask yourself Who, or what, is the true object of my worship? Is it really the Lord? Or maybe it is wealth, power, or something else. How can you know for sure whom or what you worship, and why is it important that you know?

THE MARK AND NUMBER OF THE BEAST (Rev 13:16-18; 14:1).

What is John's purpose in mentioning the mark and number of the beast? Rev. 13:16-18.

The mark of the beast. This mark—equated with the name of the beast—identifies those loyal to the beast. Names in the Bible often designate the character of the individual. Those who receive the mark display the same spirit of rebellion characteristic of the beast, a spirit that reveals itself in their attitude toward the law of God (Dan. 7:25). In contrast, those who receive the seal of God keep the commandments, thus showing their loyalty to God (Rev. 12:17; 14:12). The beast is opposed to God's law and even modified it by changing Sabbath observance to Sunday. It was in that act that the authority of the beast manifested itself. Those who submit to its authority will show it by observing Sunday, the distinctive sign/mark of loyalty to the name of the beast and to what the beast stands for.

Why do we say that those who keep Sunday do not have the mark of the beast now? Why is it important that we make this point clear?

The number of the beast. The mark, the name, and the number of the beast are closely related (Rev. 13:17). Many suggestions have been made to explain the meaning of 666. Here we must be very careful. The Bible does not say that the number is the added numerical value of the letters of a name. Some see in the meaning of 666 a symbol of humanity separated from God. Humans were created on the sixth day, and the number can stand as a symbol for humanity without divine rest (the seventh day). Humans have claimed ultimate independence from God (the cause of their fall), and even now they do not want to find rest in Christ.

Over the years, numerous Bible students have come up with various explanations for the 666. Some found significance in the fact that if you added up the number of letters in the name of a former president of the United States, Ronald Wilson Reagan, it came to 666; others saw meaning in that, years ago, all the buses in Jerusalem had 666 on their license plates. This is futile speculation that adds nothing toward understanding truth. The important point is that God's Word has given us enough information to know what the key issues are and who the players will be in the last days, even if we do not know all the details for now, such as the precise meaning of 666.

FURTHER STUDY: Ellen G. White, "God's Law Immutable," *The Great Controversy*, pp. 438–450; C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares*, vol. 2, pp. 330–349; 377–399; 413–416.

Please note the following points in conclusion to this week's study:

1. *Vicarius Filii Dei* (Vicar of the Son of God). Since the Reformation, this papal title has been used to calculate the number 666. But there are several questions that should make us cautious. First, it is not clear that this title is an official one. Second, there is no clear indication in Revelation 13 that the number is based on the numerical value of the letters of a name. The phrase "it is the number of a man" (vs. 18, NIV) could be translated "it is the number of [humanity]"; that is, of humans separated from God. Third, those who insist in counting the numerical value of letters confront the problem of deciding which language will be used. Because the text does not identify any language, the selection of a particular one will be somewhat arbitrary. At the present time, the symbolism of intensified rebellion, six used three times, and total independence from God seem to be the best option. Time will reveal the full meaning of the symbol.

2. *Sharing with others*. When sharing with others the content of Revelation 13, we should give precedence to the gospel. Then, at the appropriate time, introduce them to the prophecies. We should not attack individuals or denominations but rather call the Christian church back to the Bible as a rule of beliefs and practices. This must be done in a spirit of humility, seeking to gain friends. The spirit of Christ should control what we do.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Prophecy indicates that oppression and persecution will become worldwide. Why, then, should we today be involved in the defense of religious liberty if we know that, inevitably, persecution will come?
2. The Catholic Church, over the past few years, made numerous pronouncements in defense of religious liberty. Does this truth affect in any way what Revelation 13 says? Does it impact on how we witness regarding Rome? If so, how so?

SUMMARY: Revelation 13:11–18 describes the role of Protestantism as it supports and mimics the apostasy of the Middle Ages and legislates and enforces the mark of the beast. It will be through the apparition of demonic powers, even in the form of Christ, that such things will take place around the world. But the remnant are invincible on Mount Zion in the company of the Lamb.



Saved From an Angry Police Officer

J. H. Zachary

Andrew is a literature evangelist in Vinnitsa, Ukraine. One day he was visiting from door to door. In response to his knock, the door opened violently, and a police officer stepped onto the porch.

It was obvious to Andrew that the police officer was angry. But before he could say anything, the officer attacked him, knocking him to the ground and injuring him. Andrew managed to get up and make his way out of the man's yard. But instead of going home, he walked to the next door and continued canvassing until it was time to quit.

As Andrew stood in the railway station waiting for the train that would take him home, a boy called to him. "Please come to my home. My father wants to talk with you."

Andrew followed the boy toward his home. He realized that they were heading straight toward the police officer's home. Andrew began to wonder what the police officer might be planning to do to him. *What can I do? How will I escape if he starts to beat me again?* Andrew wondered.

As the boy led him to the door of the police officer's home, Andrew was praying earnestly for God's protection. He wondered what he would find inside the house. But he was not prepared for what he saw. The police officer sat weeping. When he saw Andrew at the door, he said, "I am so sorry that I attacked you. Please forgive me. I have many problems," he explained. "My wife recently left me, and I have only my son. My heart is filled with so much anger that when you knocked on my door I simply lost my temper."

Andrew tried to comfort the man. Then he offered to show the police officer the literature he had about family life.

"This is just what I need," the officer said. "I want God's help in my life. Thank you for being kind enough to return to my home even after I was so unkind to you."

That night Andrew signed the man up for the Bible correspondence course. Every day Andrew prays that as the police officer reads the literature left with him, he will let Jesus come into his life and make him his friend and Savior.

J. H. Zachary is coordinator of international evangelism for The Quiet Hour and a special consultant for the General Conference Ministerial Association.

Produced by the Office of Mission
Sabbath School-Personal Ministries department of the General Conference
Email: gomission@gc.adventist.org

The Three Angels' Messages: Revelation 14:1-12



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Rev. 14:1-12.

MEMORY TEXT: "He said in a loud voice, 'Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water'" (Revelation 14:7, NIV).

REVELATION 13 ENDS WHEN ECONOMIC SANCTIONS, AND EVEN A DEATH DECREE, are imposed upon God's people, those who refuse to worship the image of the beast. The enemy's intention to exterminate them stems, possibly, from his desire to proclaim himself the rightful owner of this world, which he cannot do as long as there remain those who refuse to pay him the homage that he believes he is due. Satan, as always, still wants to play God.

Though the dragon's movement and message is a worldwide one, in that he wants everyone, everywhere, to worship him, he has competition: A rival, competing message about worship is going around the world, as well—the three angels' messages of Revelation 14.

Revelation shows two global movements running parallel to each other, each with essentially different, even contradictory, goals. Besides Satan's deceptive call for people to worship him, God is sending a last message, the last offer of salvation, to the world—a message that calls His people out of Babylon and into the faith and obedience that stems from the true worship of the Creator.

***(Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, June 15.)**

GLOBAL MISSIONS: ZION AND ARMAGEDDON.

What is Mount Zion and Armageddon? Ps. 27:5; 74:2; Rev. 14:1; 16:14, 16.

Parallels between God's plan and the plan of the dragon:

GOD'S PLAN			
1. Instruments Three angels (Rev. 14:6, 8, 9)		3. Purpose To unmask evil powers (vss. 8-10). To gather the remnant on Mount Zion (vss. 1-3)	
2. Method Proclamation of the gospel (vs. 6). Reaching every nation, tribe, people, and tongue (vs. 6)		4. Final Result Victory (vs. 4)	
THE DRAGON'S PLAN			
1. Instruments Three unclean spirits (Rev. 16:13)		3. Purpose Deceive the world (Rev. 13:13; 16:14) Gather the kings of the earth in Armageddon (Rev. 16:14)	
2. Method Performing miracles (vs. 4) Going to the kings of the earth (vs. 14)		4. Final Result Defeat (vs. 19)	

Among Adventists two main interpretations of the name *Armageddon* exist. Both agree that the *Ar* is a Hebrew word that means "mount, mountain." The first view considers *megiddo* to be a reference to the city of Megiddo in Israel. The name means Mount Megiddo and is taken to designate Mount Carmel, where Elijah confronted the prophets of Baal and where God revealed Himself in fire. Armageddon would then describe the last confrontation between the dragon and the Lord, and the Lord will again reveal Himself as the true and only God.

The second view takes the term *Armageddon* to be a reference to Isaiah 14:14. Lucifer wanted to place his throne on the "mount of assembly" (vs. 13, NRSV) (from the Hebrew *Ar-mo'ed*), where God's throne was located. Armageddon would then refer to Satan's last attempt to occupy permanently the place of God in the world. Any of these two views could fit well into the message of the book of Revelation.

Ever since his fall, Satan has used counterfeits to deceive the unwary. What kind of counterfeits does he use today?

THE SEAL OF GOD AND THE REMNANT (Rev. 7:2-4; 14:1-5).

What is the relation between the seal of God and the name of God? Rev. 14:1; 7:2-4.

Seals had different functions in the ancient world and in the Bible. The term *seal* designates the instrument itself (for example, cylinder seal, a signet ring) and the impression it leaves on the clay or wax. In the Bible a seal was a symbol of ownership (Eph. 1:13), inviolability (Matt. 27:66), and authenticity (1 Kings 21:8). What was sealed was, in fact, preserved and protected.

In the period of the New Testament, the term *seal* was used as a synonym for "sign." Paul refers to the Old Testament "sign of circumcision" as a "seal of the righteousness"; that is to say, as evidence that Abraham was justified by faith (Rom. 4:11). The other sign mentioned in the Old Testament is the Sabbath.

In each of these verses, the Sabbath is seen as a sign. What does it signify in each case?

Exod. 31:13 _____

Exod. 31:17 _____

In Revelation, obedience to the law of God is a sign of submission and loyalty to God (Rev. 12:17; 14:12). The seal put on the foreheads of the remnant (Rev. 7:3) is equated with the name of God and the Lamb. Two ideas are expressed here. First, to have the name on the forehead means that they belong to God and are under His protective care. Second, it means that their lives reflect the character of God, His holiness (Rev. 14:5). In the Bible the name stands for the character of the person who bears it.

The last-day servants of God will reveal in their daily lives their full commitment to Him and to holiness in obedience to the law, particularly to the Sabbath commandment, which is the sign of sanctification. Therefore, the seal of God stands for unconditional loyalty to God, manifested in obedience to His law and, especially, to the Sabbath commandment.

Ellen White once talked about the seal of God in the context of "a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually."
—Ellen G. White Comments: Ezekiel, The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 4, p. 1161. How do you understand that concept, and what does that say to us today about preparing, even now, for the seal of God as opposed to the mark of the beast?

MESSAGE OF THE FIRST ANGEL (Rev. 14:6, 7).

What is the content and target of the message of the first angel? Rev. 14:6, 7.

The message of the first angel is very nicely structured. There is first *the message* itself, then *the audience* to whom it is addressed, and finally *a call*.

1. *The message.* What is proclaimed is the “eternal gospel” (Rev. 14:6, NIV). It is eternal, because it is immutable, permanently valid, forever true. The “gospel” refers to the saving work of Christ in His incarnation, ministry, death, resurrection, and high-priestly work on our behalf. It also includes the last judgment (Rom. 2:16) and the return of Christ (1 Thess. 1:5, 9, 10). We must proclaim today that salvation is only by faith in Christ, a faith that leads to obedience.

2. *The audience.* The proclamation is universal, because the phenomenon of sin is also universal. The gospel belongs to all races and ethnic groups, because we are all sinners.

3. *The call.* This is expressed through three imperatives: “Fear God, . . . give glory to him; . . . worship him.” When confronted by the greatness of God (Ps. 96:4), His justice (Rev. 15:3, 4), and His salvation (Isa. 45:21, 22), a person surrenders to Him in faith and obedience. To fear God is, in fact, to keep His commandments (Deut. 8:6).

This call also tells us to give glory to God, to acknowledge Him as the most loving and important factor in our lives. There is no one like Him, and by glorifying Him, we declare our alliance to Him and not to the forces of evil. To give glory to Him is not to give Him something He does not have, but it is to give Him His rightful place in our lives. This call is motivated by the fact that the final judgment, announced by Daniel, is already in progress. This is Christ’s last work on behalf of sinners; it represents the last opportunity to join and follow the Lamb.

The call also deals with worship, which is central in the great controversy. Only God, not the dragon, is worthy of adoration, because only God (not the dragon) is the Creator. This call takes us back to the Sabbath as a sign of Creation; this call is a clear and blatant rejection of idolatry and the theory of evolution.

Notice, the first angel’s message begins with the “everlasting gospel” (Rev. 14:6). Why does it start with this specific truth, that of the good news of what Christ has done to save us? What validity, if any, does the rest of the angel’s message have, apart from the great truth of salvation by faith alone in Christ?

MESSAGE OF THE SECOND ANGEL (Rev. 14:8).

What was the result of the interaction between Babylon and the nations of the earth? Rev. 14:8.

In the Old Testament, Babylon was the archenemy of God and His people (Jer. 50:24, 28, 29); in Revelation, it functions in that same role. This enemy is represented as a city in order to emphasize its political power and as a prostitute (Revelation 17) to emphasize its religious power, as well. Babylon's origin is associated with a spirit of human arrogance and rebellion against God (Gen. 11:1-9). The Bible interprets the name *Babylon* to mean "confusion"—the confusion produced through evil and deception.

What other symbol does the Bible use to describe Babylon, and why is that symbol used? Rev. 17:1-4.

Babylon is also described under the symbol of a woman (Rev. 17:1-4). In the Scriptures, a pure woman is a symbol of God's people (Rev. 12:1), while a prostitute represents those unfaithful to God (see Exod. 34:15; Isa. 1:21; Jer. 2:20; Ezek. 16:41).

Spiritual unfaithfulness manifests itself in two complementary ways. First, there is a rejection of truth that leads to idolatry, as well as to a mixture of truth with error (Jer. 2:23-25; Hosea 1-3). In this case, here in Revelation, the woman gives to the nations its own wine rather than the wine that represents the blood of Christ. Second, political alliances are established between those who were part of God's people and the nations of the earth (Ezek. 16:26-29). Babylon, as a woman, became a fitting symbol of the church when it took over civil power and cast the truth to the ground.

The Christian apostasy predicted by Paul, which began soon after the Apostolic Age and developed during the Middle Ages, will reach universal dimensions with the support of apostate Protestantism. As a religiopolitical power, it will attempt to control the world before the return of the Lord. Therefore, Babylon designates a process of apostasy in the Christian world that will culminate in the crisis described in Revelation 13:15-17. Then the beast and its image will form a world alliance that will unite religious and political powers. The final fall of Babylon is in the future.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 390.

Do you have to be living in "Babylon" to be "Babylonian"? Can people be living in "Jerusalem" and yet have "Babylon" in them? If so, what does that mean, and how can they change?

MESSAGE OF THE THIRD ANGEL (Rev. 14:9-12).

What is the purpose of the third angel's message? Rev. 14:9-12.

The message of this angel proclaims the total defeat of the beast and its image. Several times in this message the beast, the image, and the mark of the beast are mentioned, which suggests that the preaching of this third angel's message takes place during, and even after, the healing of the beast.

What is the fate of those who do not heed the warning?

1. They drink from the cup of God's wrath. The cup of God's wrath expresses the idea that God compels His enemies to drink His wine; that is to say, to receive His judgment. The severity of the judgment is expressed through the idea that the wine/wrath is unmixed. The reference is not only to the seven last plagues (Revelation 16) but also to the final destruction of the wicked. The remnant do not have to drink from the cup of God's wrath, because Christ drank from it on their behalf (Mark 14:36).

2. They face eternal punishment. The phrase "the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever" (Rev. 14:11, NIV) means that they will be totally destroyed. The same phrase is used with respect to Edom (Isa. 34:9, 10), but Edom is no longer burning. The fire is eternal, because its consequences are eternal. What it destroys will be destroyed forever.

3. They have no rest. Those who worship the beast and its image will not experience rest. Rest is a gift of God for His people, available through Christ (Matt. 11:28-30). The eternal rest promised to God's people will not be enjoyed by the wicked.

How is the remnant defined in Revelation 14:12?

The faith of Jesus could be referring to the teachings of Jesus or to the believers' faith in Jesus. The first one will stress commitment to the truth as it is in Jesus; the second, to their dependence on Jesus for their justification. Perhaps both ideas are being communicated here.

The three angels' messages present a clear contrast between the saved and the lost. What is the best advice you can give to someone who wants to be on the right side, even now, but fears that he or she might not be?

FURTHER STUDY:

Ellen G. White, "A Warning Rejected," *The Great Controversy*, pp. 375–390.

Please note the following points in conclusion to this week's study:

1. Centrality of the Sabbath. "Seven times in chapters 13 and 14 the word 'worship' is applied to the unholy trinity. 'They worshiped the dragon.' 'Worship the beast.' 'Worship the image of the beast.' Only one time in this whole section is there a call to worship the true God. If true versus false worship is the central issue at the end, *this passage (Rev. 14:7) is the central text of the section, perhaps of the entire book. When Revelation finally gets around to calling on people to worship the true God, it does so in the context of the fourth commandment, the Sabbath command. In a special sense, therefore, the author of Revelation understood the Sabbath to be the crucial issue in the final crisis.*"—Jon Paulien, *What the Bible Says About the End-Time* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Assoc., 1994), p. 126; author's emphasis.

2. Babylon and Euphrates. "The angel's interpretation of the Euphrates ('peoples, multitudes, nations and languages') guards us against a relapse to the Middle East application of Babylon's river. Whenever God dried up a literal river or a 'flood' of enemies in Israel's history . . . , it always signified a providential judgment on the enemies of God's people. The drying up of Babylon's great river during the future sixth plague (Rev. 16:12) will be no exception. The judgment is set in motion when political rulers and multitudes of all nations suddenly realize God's verdict on religious Babylon and unitedly withdraw their support from her."—Hans K. LaRondelle, "Armageddon," in *Symposium on Revelation—Book II* (Silver Spring, Md.: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), pp. 386, 387.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why does the message of the first angel begin with the proclamation of the gospel and then is followed by a call to fear, give glory to, and worship God?
2. What does Revelation 14:13 mean when it says about those who died in the Lord that "their works do follow them"? What does that say about the importance of works? What does it *not* say about them, as well?

SUMMARY: God's plan includes a final call to the world to return to Him in love and loyalty. Through the three angels' messages, God unmasks the plan of the dragon and announces its final defeat. It is God's purpose to gather His remnant out of Babylon before it is too late.



The Gambler's New Passion

Sandy Dee

John* and his wife live in Myanmar. John's wife is a caring Christian nurse; John was a passionate and compulsive gambler. He enjoyed the excitement of gambling and was proud that he made a lot of money by taking chances. When his wife warned him that gambling would eventually lead them into poverty, John dismissed her comments, saying that he was born lucky.

Then one day John began losing games. In order to win back his money, he took bigger chances, risking more money. In one game he lost more than he had made in all of his earlier gambling wins. John went home broke. But instead of quitting his gambling, he began selling his possessions in order to continue playing, confident that with one more game he could win back all that he had lost.

But John continued to lose, and soon all the money he had obtained from selling his possessions was gone. He sold more and gambled more and lost more. Soon he had sold all the family's furniture, his watch, even his bicycle, which was his only mode of transportation. The family was penniless; his wife was terrified. But still John continued to gamble.

Desperate for something more to sell, John saw his wife's radio—the only thing left in their home. "Let me sell the radio," he pleaded with her. "I'll win this time!" But John's wife protested, "How can you sell my radio? It is all we have left, and I must listen to the news!" What she did not tell John was that she had begun listening to a new program on the radio called *The Voice of Hope*, broadcast on Adventist World Radio. From this program she had learned new things about the Bible. She was convinced that if her husband would only listen, Jesus would change his life.

Grudgingly, John agreed not to sell the radio. And since there was nothing else to do, he sat and listened to Adventist World Radio with his wife. He found that he enjoyed the gospel music, and for the first time he really understood the story of Jesus. He could feel a change come over him.

After ten days of listening to Adventist World Radio programs with his wife, John found a new passion in his life. He turned his life over to Christ and stopped gambling. John and his wife were baptized together. Today John and his wife are active, committed Seventh-day Adventist Christians.

*Not his real name. Sandy Dee is president of the Myanmar Union Mission.

Produced by the Office of Mission
Sabbath School-Personal Ministries department of the General Conference
Email: gomission@gc.adventist.org

The Climax of Apocalyptic Expectation: The Blessed Hope



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Isaiah 35; Matt. 24:30; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:10, 11; 1 Cor. 15:51-57; 1 Thess. 4:15-17; Rev. 21:1-7.

MEMORY TEXT: “He who testifies to these things says, ‘Yes, I am coming soon.’ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people. Amen” (Revelation 22:20, 21, NIV).

ANCIENT GREEK DRAMATISTS often used in their plays a device called *deus ex machina*, meaning “a god from a machine.” In the play, the characters are facing some seemingly unsolvable dilemma when suddenly—lowered onto the stage via a machine—a god appears out of the sky and saves the day.

However faintly, the idea of God coming out of the sky to “save the day” represents the ultimate—and final—hope of all Christians everywhere, which is the second coming of Jesus.

The return of our Lord assures us that peace, justice, and love will prevail and that the disruptive presence of evil—which has caused so much pain, so much fear, so much doubt—will come to a final and irreversible end. It is this glorious hope that inspired believers in the past to press on in the Christian pilgrimage, to keep on waiting “for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13, NIV), and it is this same hope that should do no less for us today, who wait for that same promised return, as well.

***(Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, June 22.)**

THE ONE WHO IS COMING.

"Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

The scripture makes it clear that the One who is coming back is Jesus Himself, not someone else. While Christ was ascending, the disciples had feelings of sadness and joy. To encourage them, two messengers came to reaffirm the certainty of Christ's return. Their words emphasized the continuity of the ascending Lord and the returning King. "*This same Jesus [not a different one], who has been taken from you into heaven [the Same who ascended], [He] will come back [He Himself will return] in the same way you have seen him go into heaven*" (Acts 1:11, NIV, emphasis supplied).

How did Paul reaffirm the certainty that the One who is coming is the Lord Himself? 1 Thess. 4:16. Why is it important that it be Jesus Himself who returns?

The fact that the Lord will descend from heaven means that the event is not under our control. It is impossible for us to mandate what happens in heaven. It also means that only at the present time is Christ hidden from the human eye. We now walk by faith, not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). It finally means that there is going to be a revelation, a revelation of Christ Himself to us. Now we are waiting "for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed" (1 Cor. 1:7).

Read Revelation 1:7 and Matthew 24:30. Do they teach that the second coming of Christ is going to be some secret, spiritual event understood and seen by only a select elite, or will it be a physical, concrete event that happens before all the world? What other verses can you find to buttress your answer?

The Greek word *parousia* is a technical term used in the New Testament to refer to the coming or presence of the Lord in glory. It refers to the presence or physical arrival of a person (1 Cor. 16:17; 2 Cor. 7:6). Applied to the Second Coming, it expresses two ideas: the physical presence and the arrival of Jesus (1 Thess. 2:19; 4:15-17).

How important is the Second Coming to our beliefs? In other words, try to imagine our faith without the Second Coming and all the promises it contains. Does our faith even make any sense without the promise of the Second Coming? If not, why not?

A GLORIOUS AND GLOBAL PRESENCE.

"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

What is the one word the following verses all use to describe Christ's return? Mark 8:38; Titus 2:13; 1 Pet. 4:13.

Glory is a word used sometimes in the Bible to designate the luminous and visible presence of God (Luke 2:9; Acts 7:55; 1 Tim. 6:16). It also designates God's character, the mystery of His person (John 1:14). Christ will return in the *glory* of His Father, the glory He had from the beginning (John 17:5). During His incarnation He hid it and humbled Himself by becoming "a man" (Phil. 2:5-9). At His return the glory of His divinity will irradiate through His humanity in an indescribable display of power. We will experience a divine epiphany: "The glorious appearing [epiphany] of the great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13, NIV).

Read 1 Kings 19:9-13 and Exodus 19:10, 11, two instances in which God appeared to individuals or to a group. What difference exists between His appearance then and what it will be like at the Second Coming?

The appearance of Christ at the Second Coming knows no limits. The world will be filled with the brightness and glory of His presence from one end to the other, making it possible, somehow, for every human eye to see Him. It will be impossible for anyone to avoid this encounter with Jesus. His coming will be of a global nature, because sin also is globally present. It was not a region of our planet that fell into sin but the whole planet. There will not be a place on this world where one could hide from the glorious presence of Jesus. He comes in the company of mighty angels and with the liberating music of heaven. He is not coming secretly or alone but with those who ministered on our behalf. What a magnificent saving show of sound and music that will be! (Matt. 24:31; 1 Thess. 4:16).

According to prophecy, at the return of Christ the wicked will flee, crying out for the mountains to fall on them rather than face the presence of our returning Lord. What more subtle ways do the wicked, even now, attempt to flee from the presence of God? In what ways do we, as professed followers of Christ, do the same thing—that is, try to flee from God, even now?

A POWERFUL PRESENCE FOR HIS PEOPLE.

Read these verses: Matthew 24:30; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17; 2 Thessalonians 2:8. What do they all have in common?

At His first advent, Jesus arrived as a baby, a helpless infant who had to be skirted away by His parents because of the danger from an earthly king. Now He will return as King of kings, fully displaying glory and power. In fact, the purpose of His return is a positive one: He is coming “to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him” (Heb. 9:28, NIV).

What happened at Christ’s first coming that has made the promise of His second coming sure to be fulfilled?

The Second Coming is unlike anything the world has yet experienced. Here are a few things to expect:

Through His sacrifice He defeated Satan, who had the power of death (Heb. 2:14), and Christ is coming back to consummate His victory over death. His voice is so powerful that it accomplishes what no human voice can achieve; namely, it is heard by those who died in Him. It will wake them up from the sleep of death, and death itself will be “swallowed up in victory” (1 Cor. 15:54; see also 1 Thess. 4:16).

When Jesus returns, He will destroy our sinful nature without—in the process—destroying us. This would be impossible but for the Cross of Christ. The power of the sacrifice makes it possible for Christ to manifest the power that transforms our nature to a glorious one, free from the corrupting presence of sin. This will happen in a moment, “in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye”! (1 Cor. 15:52, NIV).

At the moment of Christ’s return, the coalition of evil power will be ready to exterminate God’s people. But Christ is coming with power: “‘They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers’” (Rev. 17:14, NIV). The angels who come accompanying Jesus “will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other” (Matt. 24:31, NIV). For the redeemed ones, the presence of Christ will be permanent and eternal.

What does the Second Coming—specifically the things that happen when it occurs—teach about humanity’s helplessness and the utter inability to save ourselves from our own otherwise inevitable doom?

A POWERFUL PRESENCE AGAINST HIS ENEMIES.

Read these verses: 2 Thess. 2:8; Rev. 19:19-21; 20:1-15. What do they say about the fate of the wicked?

Evil is temporal, a fleeting phenomenon. It has a beginning and, also, an end. It does not defeat or destroy itself; God has to intervene in order to end it. In His presence, the powers of evil recoil in terror and are consumed. Revelation 19:11-21 describes the Second Coming under the image of Christ as a warrior who fights those who gather together against Him.

While the people of God are being gathered by the angels, the beast, the false prophet, the kings of the earth, and all the people who supported them are destroyed by the presence of the Rider of the white horse (Rev. 19:11-21). The bodies of “kings, generals, and mighty men, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people” are to be left on the field, dead (vs. 18, NIV; see also vs. 21).

What is the fate of the dragon? Rev. 20:1-3; 7-10.

The following events take place in conjunction with the Second Coming and during and after the millennium:

1. The righteous are resurrected, transformed, and taken to be with Christ. This is the first resurrection (Rev. 20:4, 5).
2. Satan is bound alive and circumscribed to this planet, reduced to a state of chaos. There is no one else alive whom he can deceive (vs. 3).
3. During the millennium, the righteous function as judges in the kingdom of Christ (1 Cor. 6:2, 3; Rev. 20:4, 6).
4. After 1,000 years the wicked are raised again and, united with Satan, they launch an attack against the Holy City, which had descended from heaven (vss. 7, 8; Rev. 21:2).
5. The battle is never fought, because at that moment Satan and his hordes are confronted by God, judged, and condemned to eternal destruction (Rev. 20:9-15).

Sadie draws great comfort from her faith in Christ. It has given her hope, peace, and promise for a future much better than her sad lot now. One great sorrow, however, concerns her about her dead parents, who (at least as far as she knows) never accepted Christ but, in fact, openly rejected Him. Though grateful to know that the lost are not eternally burning in hell, she is still saddened by what she believes will be her parents' fate, as depicted in Revelation 20:9-15. What, if anything, can a person say to comfort her?

BACK TO EDEN.

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea" (Rev. 21:1).

Read Revelation 21:1-7 and write down some of the details given, concerning postmillennial life. How do you understand what they mean? For instance, what does it mean that God will wipe away all our tears?

How can we imagine or describe a world in which there is perfect harmony in essence and form when the only world we now know is fragmented, chaotic, and in disarray? Obviously, our experience in the new earth will be filled with the unimaginable and the inconceivable.

The Bible often describes the new world by telling us what it will not be like. That is to say, it takes what we know in a world of sin and excludes it from heaven. So, the new earth is a place where there will be no death or mourning or crying or pain (Rev. 21:4). There will not be separation, estrangement, or what the Danish writer Søren Kierkegaard called *angst*. All of these belong to the old order of sin, and sin will be no more.

What does Romans 8:18-22 add to our understanding of the future glory that awaits us?

Read also Isaiah 35. It describes the effects of the presence of God in a world of death and sickness. His presence transforms nature, returning it to its original fertility, and frees human nature from the deformities of sin. There is an explosion of life followed by an explosion of joy. The indescribable produces joy and gladness. But even this joy is of a somewhat different quality than what we experience now as joy. Today we experience only moments of joy among spans of sadness. But the prophet is describing a limitless joy that has become an intrinsic part of human nature and will last forever. That which will not be—death, mourning, sorrow, suffering, and pain—is supplanted by joy in a multiplicity of dimensions and experiences that we could hardly anticipate.

English writer Henry Fielding wrote that a man may go to heaven with half the pains that it cost him to purchase hell. How do you understand the meaning of these words?

FURTHER STUDY: Read the following chapters in Ellen G. White's *The Great Controversy*, "God's People Delivered," pp. 635–652; "Desolation of the Earth," pp. 653–661; "The Controversy Ended," pp. 662–678.

Please note the following in conclusion to this week's study:

Studying in eternity. "There immortal minds will contemplate with never-failing delight the wonders of creative power, the mysteries of redeeming love. There will be no cruel, deceiving foe to tempt to forgetfulness of God. Every faculty will be developed, every capacity increased. The acquirement of knowledge will not weary the mind or exhaust the energies. There the grandest enterprises may be carried forward, the loftiest aspirations reached, the highest ambitions realized; and still there will arise new heights to surmount, new wonders to admire, new truths to comprehend, fresh objects to call forth the powers of mind and soul and body. . . . And the years of eternity. . . as they roll, will bring richer and still more glorious revelations of God and of Christ. As knowledge is progressive, so will love, reverence, and happiness increase. The more men learn of God, the greater will be their admiration of His character."—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 677, 678.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. If Christ is returning in the glory of His divinity, how will we be able to see Him and not want to flee from His overpowering presence? Is our transformation related to the ability to see Him in His glory? What about the wicked? Will they also be able to see and recognize Him? Why is their response so different from that of the saved?
2. What answers will you give to those who teach that Christ's return is an invisible one, impossible to apprehend with the human eye?
3. Wednesday's lesson states that during the millennium the righteous function as judges in the kingdom of Christ (1 Cor. 6:2, 3; Rev. 20:4, 6). What does this mean? What will we be doing in that role?

SUMMARY: The Christ who is coming is the same who ascended and promised to return. He comes displaying the glory of His divinity to save His people. Everyone will see Him. His people will be resurrected and transformed, and the wicked will die, leaving the planet in desolation. After 1,000 years the wicked will be resurrected and, together with Satan, will face God as Judge. Their destruction ends the cosmic conflict.



Somali Refugee Finds Christ

Samuel Misiani

Awil Hasan fled his homeland of Somalia and was living as a refugee in Ethiopia. One day he received word that his brother, who lived in Canada, was coming to visit.

Awil welcomed his brother, who stayed for a week. During their visit, Awil learned that his brother had become a Christian. Awil knew virtually nothing about Christianity and listened with interest to his brother's testimony. Then his brother left to visit the rest of the family in Somalia. Unfortunately, while crossing the border, he was caught in crossfire and was killed.

Awil was devastated by his brother's death. One day while he was looking through his brother's things, he found a Bible. He began reading it in secret, for he knew that his friends would despise him if they knew he was reading the Christian Bible. But as he read, he became convinced of its truth and God's power. He thought of becoming a Christian but worried what would happen to him if he did. In Somalia one could be put to death for changing religions.

Awil moved to Uganda in search of a better life. There he heard a Somali-language radio program broadcast by Adventist World Radio. Awil was fascinated by the program and wrote to the AWR offices in Nairobi, Kenya. He received a letter in response, offering him encouragement. Soon letters, faxes, and sometimes even telephone calls flew between Awil and the AWR staff. Awil decided to visit the AWR studio in person.

As he visited with the radio-program producer, he learned that when Adventist World Radio began broadcasting in the Somali language, there were no Adventist Christians who could speak Somali. So the station invited a Christian who was not an Adventist to produce the program. He was the first convert to be baptized as a result of the Somali broadcasts.

Awil travels back and forth between Uganda and Nairobi to complete his Bible studies with the AWR staff. He has begun producing radio scripts for the Somali-language broadcasts and looks forward to being baptized.

Awil can hardly wait to see the surprise and joy on his brother's face when he learns that the Bible he left behind on his ill-fated trip to Somalia became the means by which God touched Awil's life.

Samuel Misiani is region director for Adventist World Radio in Nairobi, Kenya.

Produced by the Office of Mission

Sabbath School-Personal Ministries department of the General Conference

Email: gmission@gc.adventist.org

Preparing for the Apocalyptic Consummation



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Gen. 5:18-24; Isa. 53:5, 6; Acts 2:38; 2 Cor. 5:18-21; 1 John 1:9; 2:1, 2.

MEMORY TEXT: "He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. . . . Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household" (Ephesians 2:17, 19, NIV).

THE RETURN OF CHRIST MEANS OUR ULTIMATE FULFILLMENT as Christians. All that we believe leads to this event, the consummation of all our hopes as believers in Jesus and benefactors of His atonement. Without it, what could being a Christian mean? When we die, our fate would be no different than that of a lion, a frog, or even a tree. It is only the hope of the Second Coming, made real by what Christ did at His first coming, that gives our faith meaning, purpose, and a direction.

Thus, Christ calls us, even now, to be prepared for the moment when He comes. Yet, the invitation does not come alone; the means of accepting it are provided, as well. Not only does Jesus call, but the Spirit comes to enable us to heed that call. For our part, we must answer that call and bring our lives into harmony with God through surrender of ourselves to Christ's work of reconciliation and justification. This surrender is to be followed by a growth in grace and by a life of communion and constant fellowship with our Savior.

**(Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, June 29.)*

AN INVITATION.

"That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory" (1 Thess. 2:12).

"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God" (Rom. 3:25).

The invitation to prepare to meet our Savior in glory comes directly from God (1 Thess. 2:12); it was most forcefully, and dramatically, extended to us at the cross of Christ (Rom. 3:25). The gospel, then, is not just our invitation to the kingdom but our only means of access to it.

Sent originally from God, the gospel does reach us in different ways. God could send the invitation through a friend or a relative; He may use a radio or TV program, a magazine, or any other agent. Right now He could be using this lesson to invite you to prepare to meet Him, to accept His call to salvation. Among the many things that Christians have in common, perhaps the most important one is that they have all accepted the invitation.

What is the role of the Holy Spirit with respect to this invitation? John 16:8.

What persuades people to accept the invitation is not human reasoning or a natural disposition of the heart. On the contrary—the human heart, by itself, would spurn the invitation. Therefore, God has a supernatural agent working in the heart of every person, moving each one to accept God's call. This is the Holy Spirit, who Jesus said “will convict the world of guilt” (John 16:8, NIV).

The Greek verb *elencho*, translated “to convict,” means “blame, punish, correct.” The Spirit awakens the conscience and makes us feel guilty, lost, and separated from God (some theologians call it a sense of “estrangement”). Then the Spirit points to the Cross and invites us there, to find the answer to our deepest needs.

The Spirit has the difficult task of confronting us with our true condition and, then, and even more importantly, with the remedy for it. And though the Spirit will convict, He never forces. The choice to heed or to reject is always left up to the individual.

What is it about the human heart that makes it so resistant to salvation? Why does everyone not immediately, and positively, respond to the offer of eternal life?

ANSWERING THE INVITATION.

"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38).

The human problem is located at the very essence of our existence. Thus, it is not an exterior phenomenon, some mere cosmetic aberration that can easily be removed, like warts. Some individuals tend to be indifferent to spiritual matters; others consider Christ irrelevant for their lives. Still others are in open rebellion against God, denying even His existence and rejecting those who follow Christ. All need a change from within. That change is called "repentance." The Greek verb *metanoeo* means "to change one's mind." Our preparation for the coming of Christ begins with a change from rebellion to submission. Repentance is a gift from God, but like all gifts, it can be rejected.

What was David's reaction when confronted with his sin?
2 Sam. 12:1-6, 13.

Repentance and confession are inseparable. Those who accept the gift of repentance will confess their sins. To confess sin is to break with it, to acknowledge that our sins offended and inflicted pain on Christ and, perhaps, others. How encouraging to know that God's answer to our confession is the forgiveness already made available by Christ's death. Indeed, there is no sin that cannot be washed away by Christ (Acts 2:38) when we come to Him in faith and repentance.

What invitation did Christ extend to the human race? Matt. 11:28.

Repentance and confession describe our attitude toward sin; they show that we have rejected it through the blood of Christ. Conversion describes the positive side of that experience. Christians are not only against something but in favor of something. We say *No* to sin but *Yes* to Christ. Conversion is returning to God; it is turning around and going back to the One who is our Creator and Redeemer.

Does repentance happen only at the beginning of the Christian life, or is it a spiritual state that should constantly accompany the believer? If you believe that repentance is ongoing, what function does it play in our lives?

IN HARMONY WITH GOD.

"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18, 19).

It has always been God's intention to resolve the sin problem peacefully. He offers to all of us reconciliation; He tells us that there is no reason to perish. God is not interested in charging our sins against us; He'd much rather forgive us those sins (the Cross proves that). Forgiveness becomes a reality in our lives the moment we accept it; only then are we ready for the Second Coming.

How is it possible for God to forgive our sins? Isa. 53:5, 6; Mark 10:45; 2 Cor. 5:21.

God had a problem: how to eradicate sin without eradicating sinners. Through the Cross, God solved that problem. "God made him [Jesus] who had no sin to be sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21, NIV). God placed our sin on Christ, who died in our place, as a ransom for our sins (Isa. 53:5, 6; Mark 10:45). In other words, God has already punished our sin, but He did it in the person of Jesus Christ. Consequently, God can declare that those who put their faith in Christ are righteous, innocent, free of condemnation (Rom. 3:23, 24), which is why we can face the Second Coming with hope and confidence, not because of ourselves but only because of Jesus. Those who are waiting for the return of Christ have put their faith in Him as the only means of salvation.

What do each of these texts tell us about what Christ has done for us at the Cross, and why should they give us confidence that we can be ready to meet Jesus when He comes?

Isa. 53:11 _____

1 Cor. 5:7 _____

Gal. 2:20 _____

1 Pet. 2:24 _____

GROWING IN CHRIST.

Read the following texts—John 14:15; Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 6:11; Philippians 3:12; Hebrews 12:14; 2 Peter 3:18—and then answer the question, Is sanctification a past or a present experience? Or both? Give reasons for your choice.

When we are justified by faith, we also receive the gift of the Spirit (Gal. 3:2), and the process of sanctification begins. However, as we understand the process of sanctification, a few points need to be remembered:

First, sanctification, or holiness, is a state in which Christians exist. Consequently, it is described as a past event, granted to us when we believed (1 Cor. 1:2; 6:11). By accepting Christ we were separated for Him, and He cleansed us from sin (Eph. 5:25, 26).

Second, sanctification is also a process of spiritual and moral growth (Heb. 12:14). We will always need to be in constant spiritual development (Phil. 3:12).

Third, the two main goals of sanctification are (1) to restore in us the image of God (Col. 3:9, 10) and (2) to reveal to others, through our lives, the love, kindness, and wisdom of our God (Eph. 3:10; 1 John 4:7-13).

Fourth, sanctification requires our willingness to accept God's will for us, but it is never meritorious. Sanctification is *always growth in God's grace*, never anything apart from it (Heb. 13:20, 21; 2 Pet. 3:18).

What are we advised to do if during our growth in holiness we still fall into sin? 1 John 1:9; 2:1, 2.

The Christian is a person who is led by the Spirit and is no longer a slave of sin (Rom. 8:9). With His power we can overcome sin in our lives (Gal. 5:16). Before, we were unable to obey God's law (Rom. 8:6), but now we are enabled to fulfill it (vs. 4). Submission to the law of God is a humble expression of our love to Christ our Savior (John 14:15) and to our neighbor (Rom. 13:8-10). *Obedience* is not subjection to the law in an effort to be accepted by God; it is, rather, *God Himself trying to express His love through those who are freely justified by faith*. If during this time we fall, the biblical admonition is to repent and confess our sin.

If we already are, at conversion, ready for the Second Coming, why is growth in grace so important as we await the Lord's return?

WALKING THE WALK (Gen. 5:18-24).

How was Enoch's life different from that of his contemporaries? Gen. 5:18-24.

There has been a lot of discussion in the church over the years about the final generation, the 144,000, the generation that lives to see Christ return. Much of it has been useless banter, excessive speculation about things we can, in the end, only speculate about.

The bottom line for all who love God, who seek after holiness, is that we walk with God—every day. Wherever we go and whenever we get there, regardless of whether or not we live to see Christ return in the clouds of glory, we should seek to have the same walk with the Lord that Enoch had.

What does it mean to “walk with God”? How have you, personally, understood what that means? Could you honestly say that you “walk with God”? If so, write out what that means. If not, ask yourself what changes you need to make in order to be able to have that walk. Can those who walk with God sometimes stumble in that walk?

The Bible combines in different ways the verb *to walk* with God. One of those is “to walk before/in the presence of the Lord” (see, for example, Gen. 24:40). The phrase expresses God’s providential care for His people. The image is that of a child who wants to walk by herself, and the father allows her, with the understanding that she will walk only in front of him. He wants to keep his eyes on her in order to protect her in case of danger.

We also find the phrase “to walk behind/after the Lord” (see, for example, Deut. 13:4). It was customary to carry the image of a god in a procession while the worshipers followed it. To walk after God was considered an act of worship. The Israelites were expected to walk only after the Lord.

The third phrase, “walking *with* God,” came to express intimacy, communion, fellowship. Now God is placed at the center of the life of the individual. The expression suggests that God and His human companion will go together to the marketplace, to the mall, to the school, to church, to recreation places, to the home, and to work. Life is a walk, we are pilgrims, and our companion is Christ.

The remnant people of God will develop a strong bond of communion with Christ and, like Enoch, they will walk with God every day of their lives . . . even if, at times, they stumble or fall along the way.

FURTHER STUDY: Read the following chapters in Ellen G. White's *Steps to Christ*: "Repentance," pp. 23-36; "Confession," pp. 37-46; "Consecration," pp. 43-48; "Faith and Acceptance," pp. 49-55.

Please note the following in conclusion to this week's lesson study:

Holding communion with Christ. "By prayer, by the study of His word, by faith in His abiding presence, the weakest of human beings may live in contact with the living Christ, and He will hold them by a hand that will never let go."—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 182.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Read Revelation 3:14-22 and meditate on the following questions.

1. There is an interesting paradox in the message to Laodicea. They are totally blind to their spiritual condition, thinking that they have need of nothing, because they believe themselves to be rich. Yet, they are told to buy "gold tried in the fire" (Rev. 3:18), that they may "become rich" (vs. 18, NIV). Why should they heed the message to acquire gold when they already believe that they are rich?
2. Hebrews 5:14 reads, "But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." How does one understand this text in light of the message to Laodicea?
3. Does the fact that, at the center of the message, there is an invitation to obtain our wealth (justification by faith) from God suggest to you that your only security is found in Christ and not in yourself? Explain your answer.
4. What does it mean to open the door to Christ when He knocks? How do we do that? Does Jesus ever break down the door and barge in uninvited? If not, what role does free will play in whether the door is open or remains shut?

SUMMARY: Our preparation to meet Christ at His second coming consists of a surrender of our lives to Him, who died for us. Out of that faith commitment will develop a transformed life that will reveal the goodness and love of our God to the world and even to the forces of evil. The extent to which God will use us as channels of His love will depend on the quality of our daily walk with Him.



Escape From God's Army

J. H. Zachary

As a young man, Jeorge Ratarciuc joined a radical religious group in Romania called God's Army. For some 30 years he and his wife were active members. Jeorge sincerely tried to understand and follow the teachings of the Bible, but as he studied, he discovered that the organization to which he belonged did not follow God's commandments. Jeorge wondered if any religious group followed everything the Bible taught.

He asked his priests, "Why do we not follow the Bible in our church?" The priests had no satisfactory answer, so Jeorge asked other priests. Again he received no clear answers.

Jeorge's study convinced him that reverencing the icons, pictures of saints, violated the second commandment. He asked his priests for scriptural support for this practice. But they could provide none.

As a lay preacher in his church, Jeorge presented sermons when the priests were not available. He could not conscientiously teach others to follow traditions he himself did not believe in. So when he preached, he urged his listeners to search the Bible for answers to their questions. But soon Jeorge decided that he could no longer be a leader in his church. He decided to leave God's Army.

Jeorge knew a few Adventists in his village, but he did not at first consider seeking them out, for he was not convinced that they kept all of the Ten Commandments. After all, they did not honor Sunday, the day he understood to be the Lord's Day. Jeorge visited other Protestant churches, but he could not find one that followed the Bible and honored the Ten Commandments.

Then he attended some evangelistic meetings, and there he discovered that the Adventist Church honored all of the Ten Commandments and ordered their lives and worship according to the Bible. Jeorge joyfully called his family together and told his 11 children and their spouses that he planned to become an Adventist. After studying together, Jeorge rejoiced when all of his children and their spouses joined him in his decision. Recently, the entire family were baptized together.

Jeorge is reaching out to his friends in God's Army, praying for them and inviting them to become soldiers in the Lord's real army.

J. H. Zachary is coordinator of international evangelism for The Quiet Hour and a special consultant for the General Conference Ministerial Association.

Produced by the Office of Mission
Sabbath School-Personal Ministries department of the General Conference
Email: gmission@gc.adventist.org

Bible Study Guide for Third Quarter, 2002

Kings and Chronicles: Rebellion and Reformation, by James Zackrison, begins with a study of the days of the monarchies under David and Solomon. It follows the split of these two kingdoms and the separate path each took, ending with the Babylonian captivity of the southern kingdom.

Lesson 1: A Rough Start (June 29–July 5)

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:

Sunday: “I Will Be King.”

Monday: Forgiven Sin.

Tuesday: The Wages of Forgiven Sin.

Wednesday: The Plot Uncovered (Read 1 Kings 1:11-27).

Thursday: The Plot Foiled (1 Kings 1:28-53).

MEMORY TEXT: Genesis 18:18.

SABBATH GEM: Kings and Chronicles are, in many ways, a family history of those descended from faithful (but flawed) Abraham. Interspersed amidst the failures recorded in Kings and Chronicles are glimpses of divine light.

Lesson 2: The Wisdom of Solomon (July 6-12)

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE:

Sunday: Deathbed Admonition.

Monday: Adonijah Revisited.

Tuesday: Abiathar, Joab, and Shimei (Read 1 Kings 2:26-45).

Wednesday: Solomon’s Dream (1 Kings 3:1-10).

Thursday: An Understanding Heart (1 Kings 3:10-16).

MEMORY TEXT: 1 Kings 3:14.

SABBATH GEM: How thankful we should be that God is still willing to work with us, no matter how much we have messed up along the way.

Lessons for the Visually Impaired

The regular Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide is available free each month in braille and on audiocassette for visually impaired and physically handicapped persons who cannot read normal ink print. This includes individuals who because of arthritis, multiple sclerosis, paralysis, accident, old age, and so forth, cannot hold or focus on normal ink-print publications. Contact the Christian Record Services, Box 6097, Lincoln, NE 68506-0097.

ANGEL MANUEL RODRIGUEZ

SABBATH
SCHOOL
HELPS
BOOK,
SECOND
QUARTER
2002



0-8280-1630-5
Paperback
US\$8.99,
Can\$13.49

Price and availability
subject to change.
Add GST in Canada.

Future Glory

The 8
greatest
end-time
prophecies
in the
Bible

Apocalyptic prophecies can be so confusing. What do all those symbols mean? When are prophecies conditional? Why does God need a judgment if He already knows? Why are we saved by faith but judged by works? What is "the daily"?

Angel Manuel Rodríguez brings the latest scholarship to bear on the end-time prophecies of Daniel, Revelation, and Matthew 24. *Future Glory* will help you unlock their secrets and discover how you can be sure to have a part in God's glorious future.

AVAILABLE AT YOUR LOCAL ADVENTIST BOOK CENTER.
1-800-765-6955 • www.adventistbookcenter.com

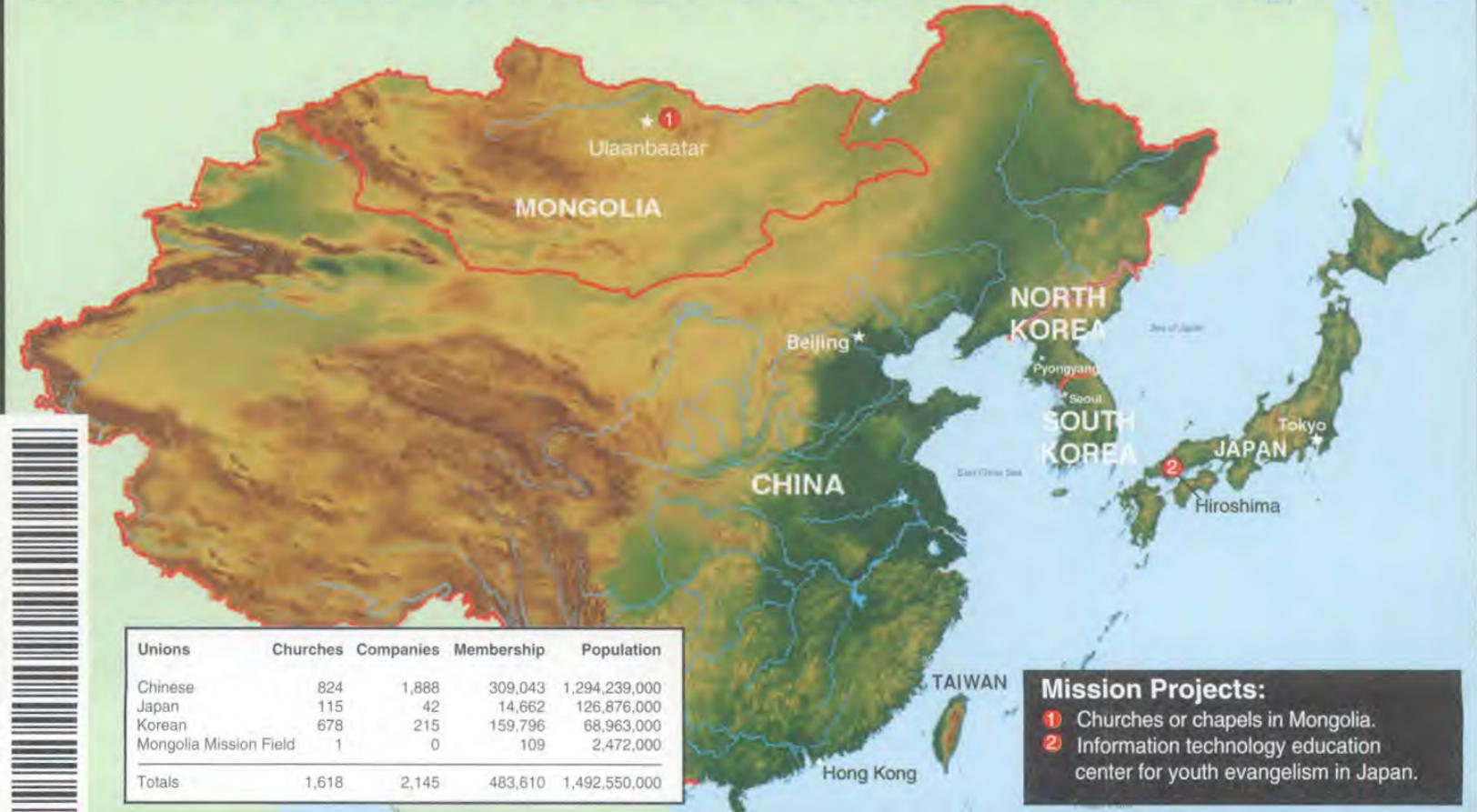


Review and Herald®
Publishing

Helping Others
Prepare for Eternity



NORTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC DIVISION



EAQ020401