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BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

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"Money has great value, because it can do great good. In the hands of God's children it is food for the hungry, drink... for the oppressed, and a means of help to the sick. But money is of no more value than sand, only as it is put to use in providing for the necessities of life, in blessing others, and advancing the cause of Christ."

—Christ's Object Lessons, p. 351

When the mission offering is taken this Thirteenth Sabbath remember to put your money towards God's work in the Eastern Africa Division.

The Certainty of the Second Coming

We began this new millennium with the first quarter's study of one of the crucial Message and Mission themes: Our assurance of salvation in Christ. It is fitting that in the second quarter of this new millennium our study will touch on another Message and Mission theme: The certainty of the Second Coming in the context of the everlasting gospel.

In this Bible Study Guide, we will examine some of the distinctive doctrines of the church as they relate to the certainty of our Lord's second advent. Such doctrines will include the authority of the Bible, Creation and the Sabbath, salvation, the sanctuary and the judgment, the witness of the remnant, death and resurrection, the millennium, the end of evil, and the beginning of the new earth. We will discover that the doctrine of the Second Coming does not stand in isolation, but it is the grand climax of the everlasting gospel and is intertwined with many of its teachings. When we question any fundamental Bible teaching, we also raise questions about the Second Coming.

We also will explore the meaning of doctrine itself. We will see that doctrine is not an end within itself but is an essential element in establishing our relationship with God. What is central to Christianity is the message that we can be reconciled and restored to fellowship with God through Jesus Christ.

Christianity is a relationship with God that matures when it is built upon biblical teaching and lifestyle. We will see that our relationship with Him does not do away with law and doctrine; rather, it establishes them. May our study this quarter bring certainty and peace to our hearts as we joyously anticipate the imminent return of our Lord. May it affirm our faith in the blessed hope as the culmination of the gospel message for planet Earth.

"The second coming of Christ is the blessed hope of the church, the grand climax of the gospel. The Saviour's coming will be literal, personal, visible, and worldwide. When He returns, the righteous dead will be resurrected, and together with the righteous living will be glorified and taken to heaven, but the unrighteous will die. The almost complete fulfillment of most lines of prophecy, together with the present condition of the world, indicates that Christ's coming is imminent. The time of that event has not been revealed, and we are therefore exhorted to be ready at all times."—"Fundamental Belief, 24" in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines*, edited under the direction of the Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists from materials compiled by P.G. Damsteegt (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1988), p. 332.

What Makes Christianity Christian?



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Gen. 1:26; Eph. 2:8; 3:9; Isa. 59:2; Ezek. 14:7; Hos. 2:19, 20; Rev. 19:7, 9; John 5:39.

MEMORY TEXT: "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3, NKJV).

KEY THOUGHTS: The goal of Christianity is our restoration to a right relationship with God. This relationship will be culminated at the Second Coming when we will have face-to-face communion with God.

MAJORING IN MINORS. What is the basic idea that makes Christianity work? What is the goal toward which Christians strive? The following story shows how far human beings will go to answer these questions and to seek salvation on their own.

Simeon Stylites, a dedicated, third-century recluse, sold his inherited estate upon his conversion. He gave a portion to his sister for her sustenance, donated the remainder to the church, and took up the life of a monk. To escape the distractions of society, he lived in a cave and devoted himself to meditation. Soon, nearby villagers and would-be disciples sought the presence of the pious monk. He moved farther into the wilderness and built a tower to separate himself from the world. However, disciples built towers around him. According to tradition, he finally built a tower sixty-feet high in order to meditate without interruption. As you study this week's lesson, decide how you would answer the questions raised at the beginning of this introduction.

CREATED FOR FELLOWSHIP (Gen. 1:26; 5:1; Jer. 3:14; 1 Cor. 1:9; Eph. 3:9).

Why were Adam and Eve able to fellowship with God? Gen. 1:26; 5:1. What close relationship does God wish to have with us? Jer. 3:14.

By the act of creating us in His image in the Garden and by redeeming us in Christ at Golgotha, God showed His great love to us. Human beings, created and re-created in His image, have the opportunity for fellowship with Him.

The primary purpose for our creation was for us to live in intimate fellowship with God. He was there for communion with our first parents from the moment He created them. That was the way He started with humankind, and that is the way He wants to continue for all eternity.

"Man, created for fellowship with God, can only in such fellowship find his real life and development. Created to find in God his highest joy, he can find in nothing else that which can quiet the cravings of the heart, can satisfy the hunger and thirst of the soul. He who with sincere and teachable spirit studies God's word, seeking to comprehend its truths, will be brought in touch with its Author; and, except by his own choice, there is no limit to the possibilities of his development. . . .

"The central theme of the Bible, the theme about which every other in the whole book clusters, is the redemption plan, the restoration in the human soul of the image of God. . . .

"The science of redemption is the science of all sciences. . . . As no other study can, it will quicken the mind and uplift the soul."
—*Education*, pp. 124-126.

The Bible is the story of God's love for us and of His desire to restore His relationship with us. Immediately after sin entered the world, God was in the Garden speaking with Adam and Eve, giving them the promise of the Savior. Through prophets and apostles, God continued to tell us of His pursuit. He brought Israel out of Egypt into the Promised Land. He sent Judah into captivity so the people might come to their senses and return to Him. Christ was sent into the world to restore face-to-face communication with God, and *Christ will return the second time to re-unite us with Him.*

The Bible story of Hosea's marriage to Gomer illustrates God's love for us. Gomer left her husband for other men. Time and again Hosea sought out his wife, only to be forsaken again. Finally, he found her on the auction block, waiting to be sold as a slave. Even in her depraved condition, he bought her back and restored her as his wife.

Do I think of Christianity as a mere concept or an activity, or do I think of it as a maturing relationship with God through Jesus Christ?

SEPARATED THROUGH SIN (Isa. 59:2; Ezek. 14:7).

What caused the disruption in the face-to-face fellowship between God and humanity? Gen. 3:8-23.

What picture does the Bible present about our current condition? What does this tell about the consequences of separating ourselves from God? Isa. 64:6; Rom. 1:21-32; 3:10-19, 23.

Face-to-face communion between God and His new creation was broken by the entrance of sin into the world. As a result, we have been separated from Him.

Sin is transgression of the law, the transcript of God's character of love. It is going against His will and following our own self-centered inclinations. It is evidence of a broken relationship with our God. However, God is not vindictive. He does not isolate Himself from us in order to get back at us for breaking the law. "God is the fountain of life; and when one chooses the service of sin, he separates from God, and thus cuts himself off from life. He is 'alienated from the life of God.' Christ says, 'All they that hate Me love death.' Eph. 4:18; Prov. 8:36. God gives them existence for a time that they may develop their character and reveal their principles. This accomplished, they receive the results of their own choice."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 764.

When we sin, we are going against the character of God. The result is deterioration or destruction of our relationship. We cannot remain in fellowship with God and constantly go against His character and His loving will for our lives.

Sin is not only overt transgression of the law; sin also seeks to be independent from God, even in the effort to do right. Whatever does not proceed from faith and love is sin (Rom. 14:23). We sin whenever we have the opportunity to do what is right, just, and loving, yet we choose not to (James 4:17). We are helpless in sin (Rom. 3:10; Isa. 64:6; Dan. 9: 7, 11, 20; 1 Cor. 1:30). Nothing we can bring to God will restore our broken relationship. We are like a tree cut off from its roots, like a branch severed from the vine (John 15:1-8). The branch can do nothing to restore itself. By the grace of God, we can be grafted back into the vine, we can be adopted into the family of God.

Take the time to examine your attitude toward God when your sins separate you from Him. Don't be afraid to really explore how you feel. Do you view God as a loving parent or as a tyrant just looking for an excuse to cut you off from the family tree? Why do you view Him that way? If you view Him as a tyrant, what can you do to change your view?

FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD THROUGH SALVATION (Isa. 62:5; Hos. 2:19, 20; Matt. 22:34-40; John 17:3; Rev. 19:7, 9).

How did Jesus define salvation? John 17:3.

The goal of Christianity is to restore us to a saving relationship with God through Jesus Christ. In Western cultures, knowledge is usually thought of as technical information. If we spoke with a good press manager at a print shop, he could inform us what grade of paper this study guide is printed on and describe the technical requirements for printing it. However, technical information is not the same as a knowledge of relationships. In the biblical culture, knowledge was often thought of as personal. We know people when we have a personal relationship with them. Christ defined salvation in terms of personal acquaintance with God, as contrasted with mere technical information.

To what does the Bible compare our restored relationship with God? Isa. 62:5; Rev. 19:7, 9; Hos. 2:19, 20.

What does it mean to die to the law in order to belong to Christ? Rom. 7:1-6. Does the love of Jesus destroy the law? Explain. Matt. 22:34-40; Rom. 13:10.

Christianity is not Christian if its primary goal is doctrinal knowledge, works, meditation, or any other human effort. We are majoring in minors if such things rather than Christ become the focus of our religion. Christianity is fulfilled when we are restored to a right relationship with God through Jesus Christ, the center of all doctrine.

"The very first and most important thing is to melt and subdue the soul by presenting our Lord Jesus Christ as the sin-pardoning Saviour. Never should a sermon be preached, or Bible instruction in any line be given, without pointing the hearers to 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' John 1:29. Every true doctrine makes Christ the center, every precept receives force from His words.

"Keep before the people the cross of Calvary. Show what caused the death of Christ—the transgression of the law.... Then point the people to Christ, telling them that immortality comes only through receiving Him...."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 53, 54.

Why is information about doctrine not enough to bring salvation? James 2:19. What was Paul's prayer for the Ephesians, and how can it be fulfilled in your life? Eph. 3:16-19.

SALVATION IS THE GIFT OF GOD (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; 2 Cor. 5:19; 9:15; Eph. 2:8; 3:7).

How is salvation totally God's initiative? Eph. 2:8; 3:7; 2 Cor. 9:15.

Life eternal comes from knowing God. Yet, we cannot bring about a restored relationship with God on our own. We cannot come to God and say, "Let's be friends. There are certain things in my personality that I think you would enjoy, and I suspect that there are aspects of your personality that I would enjoy. Let's get together!" We can do nothing to commend ourselves to God. The grace of God alone brings hope. "When we come to him in sincerity pleading for pardon, he forgives. We need not wait to make ourselves acceptable; for we can never. We cannot do works that will commend us to God when we have sinned. We must come to the cross, and lay our burden of sin upon Jesus Christ, and believe that we are pardoned for Christ's sake who died for us."—*Ellen G. White Articles, Signs of the Times* (Sept. 30, 1889), vol. 2, p. 325.

As you study 2 Corinthians 5:19 and Romans 5:8, what do you learn about God's character?

While it is true that we have nothing within ourselves to win God's favor, yet God gives Himself to us. Jesus came into this world to acquaint us with the Father (John 1:18). "Have I been with you so long," He asked, "and you do not know the Father?" (John 14:7-9, paraphrased). Christ came to save us from our sins (Matt. 1:21). He also came to abolish that which had separated us from Him, to remove our filthy rags, and to clothe us in the garments of His righteousness (2 Cor. 3:13; Eph. 2:15; 2 Tim. 1:10). Thus we are restored to relationship with Him (Zech. 3:1-5).

Christ came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). He is like Hosea who sought His estranged wife (Hos. 3:1-5). He is the shepherd who went in search of the lost sheep. He is like the woman in the story of the lost coin, and He is like the father who restored his wandering son (Luke 15). No longer are we foreigners and strangers. Here and now, we are members of the household of God! (Eph. 2:19). The life and death of Christ constitute our adoption papers into God's family (Rom. 8:15, 23; 9:4; Gal. 4:5).

If we were adopted into an earthly family of royalty, we might feel out of place. How can we feel at home in the royal family of God?

THE INTERRELATEDNESS OF DOCTRINE (John 5:39, 40; Luke 24:27; 2 Tim. 3:16).

What golden thread unites the Scriptures? Why were the Scriptures given? John 5:39, 40; Luke 24:27; 2 Tim. 3:16.

Some look at particular doctrines in isolation from other aspects of Christianity. Often the doctrines themselves are seen in isolation from each other. It is tempting to pick and choose the doctrines that appeal to us. For example, some may say that we must accept the seventh-day Sabbath and the Second Coming, essential doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but that we need not accept a literal six-day Creation as recorded in Genesis.

Come with me to a beautiful beach of white sand. On each side of us are rocky cliffs. The waves roll in before us and splash high on the cliffs beside us. The sky is fleeced with clouds, and the setting sun glistens on the wet sand and sparkles in the splashing waves. What a great sight!

Now watch as the scene changes. We are looking at the same beach and rocks and waves, but the clouds have rolled in. It is windy, cold, and drizzling. The sky is dark gray. No glistening of the sun on the sand, no tint of pink in the sky delights our eyes. We are sitting in the same place, but are we viewing the same scene?

So it is when we behold biblical doctrine. When we remove or distort one of the doctrines from the scene, it is as if the sun is blocked by the clouds. We might be sitting in the same place, but the picture is not the same. What is most important is that the "Son" shines through all doctrines.

"The truth for this time is broad in its outlines, far reaching, embracing many doctrines; but these doctrines are not detached items, which mean little; they are united by golden threads, forming a complete whole, with Christ as the living center. The truths we present from the Bible are as firm and immovable as the throne of God."—*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 87.

"It was a whole sacrifice that was made for us, and it is a full salvation we may receive as the result. Christ is our living Center. Divine truth, which is shining upon us in its bright, clear, distinct rays, is not detached atoms of doctrines, loose and disconnected. . . . Christ's mission and work are threads of gold binding all together and constituting a complete whole."—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 19, p. 91.

Consider specific Bible doctrines, such as the Second Coming, and discuss ways in which they interrelate with one another. How is Jesus the center of each one?

FURTHER STUDY: For more biblical insight into this week's topic, read Job 13:16; Isa. 12:2; Jer. 3:14; Matt. 25:1-13; Rom. 5:10, 15-18; 6:23; 13:10; 2 Cor. 5:18-20; Eph. 4:7; 5:21-32; Col. 1:21; 2 Tim. 2:10; 1 John 5:12; Rev. 21:2, 9.

Read "Growing Up Into Christ," in *Steps to Christ*, pp. 67-75.

This week we studied how Christ is the center of all biblical teachings. The following account will help us appreciate how our desire for the Second Coming and heaven needs to be centered in Christ: A teacher once asked a class what comes to mind when they think of Christ's second coming and heaven. They mentioned the sound of the trumpet, the majesty of the Advent that every eye would see, and the resurrection of the dead. Heaven brought to mind pearly gates, streets of gold, mansions they would build, and vineyards they would plant. Then, yes, of course, the privilege of being reunited with loved ones. After a long pause someone spoke up and said, "You know what I am looking forward to most of all? I want to see Jesus and live with Him and with loved ones throughout eternity!"

"I want the eternal weight of glory; I want to see Jesus, who suffered and died a shameful death on the cross of Calvary. I want to cast my crown at His feet and I want to touch the golden harp and fill all heaven with sweetest music."—*Sermons and Talks*, vol. 2, p. 34. "We can afford to toil here, afford to be pilgrims and strangers. If I lose heaven, I lose everything. Oh, I do want to see Jesus and live in His presence and I do want you should see Him."—*Manuscript Releases*, vol 7, p. 34.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What is uppermost in your mind when you think of the Second Coming?
2. When you think of meeting Jesus, do you view that event with rejoicing or some apprehension? Explain.
3. What is the most important thing you can do to ensure that you will be ready? How can you best share the joy of His near coming with others?

SUMMARY: The goal of Christianity is the restoration of our relationship with God and with our fellow human beings. This begins the moment Christ becomes the heart of all our doctrines and conduct. In lesson two we shall see that doctrine and lifestyle, anchored in God's grace, are essential to a mature relationship with Jesus. Our face-to-face relationship with Him will take place at His second coming, when the righteous will live in the presence of God for eternity.



God's Taxi

R. R. Tornalejo

The summer sun beat down on Myrna Manta, literature evangelist working in a Muslim area of the Philippines, as she struggled with a heavy carton of books she was delivering to workers at the power plant in her territory. No public transportation serves the power plant, since workers ride the company bus to work. She would have to walk several miles from the highway to the plant, carrying her heavy load. She stopped every few meters to rest and soon realized that she would never make it to the plant without help. But since no vehicles passed by her on the road, she struggled on, stopping often to rest.

"I can't manage this," she admitted as she set her carton of books down beside the road. "Lord, please send someone to help me carry these books."

A few minutes later a white taxicab appeared and stopped several feet from her. "Where are you going?" the driver asked.

"To the power plant," she replied as she loaded her carton of books into the trunk and slid into the cab. In a few minutes the cab stopped at the gate of the power plant. Mrs. Manta retrieved her books and set the carton beside the security guard's gate. But when she turned to pay the taxi driver, the cab was gone. She looked around the corner to see if the driver was turning around, but the cab was nowhere. Puzzled, she asked the security guard which way the taxi had gone.

"I did not see a car drive by," the guard answered.

"But a white taxicab just delivered me here," she explained.

"No, madam, I saw no cab, just you carrying that carton," he said.

"But I could not carry this box. I came in a cab," Mrs. Manta insisted. "You must have seen it." But the guard just smiled, as if the summer sun had taken its toll on the woman.

Then it dawned on her. *If a person had brought me to the gate, the guard would have seen him. It must have been an angel! The Lord sent that angel to help me carry my books!* Overwhelmed with gratitude, she thanked the guard, picked up her precious burden, and went inside the plant to deliver the books to waiting customers.



Myrna Manta (left). R. R. Tornalejo is dean of the literature ministry seminary in Cagayan de Oro, Philippines.

The Authority of the Bible and the Second Coming



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Deut. 29:29; Ps. 111:10; Isa. 66:2; Jer. 8:9; Matt. 7:24-29; Luke 24:25-27; John 5:39; 1 Cor. 1:20, 21; 2 Tim. 3:15; 2 Pet. 1:19-21.

MEMORY TEXT: "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4, NKJV).

KEY THOUGHTS: God reveals the promise of the Second Coming in His Holy Word. Apart from the Bible, we would be clueless about the future and God's role in it.

THE CERTAINTY ABOUT THE SECOND COMING AND THE CERTAINTY OF GOD'S WORD. How do we know about the future? People desire to know what lies in the future, and they wish to control it so as to secure their own best interest. They attempt to discover the future in many ways. Some seek information from supposed spirits of the dead and from fortunetellers. Others tend to go to science and various human disciplines to try to predict the future. Thus, it is the goal of many in our day to discover the future without seeking any special word from the Lord.

Without the Word of God, our concepts of the future will be just as varied and flawed as the attempts to control it. How can we, then, know the future? God has revealed it to us! We can know that Jesus is coming again only because of what He has revealed to us in His Word, as we shall study this week.

THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE (2 Tim. 3:15; 2 Pet. 1:19-21; 3:2-16; 1 Cor. 10:11).

Many people view Scripture as they would any other piece of literature. They see the Bible as arising out of bits and pieces of Hebrew and Christian folklore. They assume that it is simply the result of the merging, collecting, and editing of these early traditions. They suppose that Scripture reflects the cultures of the time. Therefore, biblical predictions about the Second Coming of Christ become for them little more than the collective dream of past generations.

The Bible is unique because it is not of human creation. Although prophets participated in the process, the result is the Word of God. To be sure, God communicated His message to people living in a specific time and place. His message was relayed through the prophets' own language, culture, and thought forms. The result was guided by the Holy Spirit in such a way that the Bible conveys God's trustworthy message. The Bible is the Word of God.

"It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man's words . . . but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts. . . . The divine mind and will is combined with the human mind and will; thus the utterances of the man are the Word of God."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 945, 946.

How does the Bible view its own authority? 2 Pet. 1:19-21.

How much of the Bible is inspired, and what is its function?
2 Tim. 3:15-17; 2 Pet. 3:2-16; 1 Cor. 10:11.

Some wish to disregard the authority of the Bible when they develop their concepts of the future and their ways of resolving problems. They wish to make the future conform to their own dreams of the ideal life by any means at their disposal. In many other ways we are tempted to act independently of God in our efforts to control the future. However, we must always allow our all-loving and all-wise God to guide us now and in the future.

What difference does your view of the Bible make in your understanding of the future? What difference does it make in your life if you do not accept the biblical promise of the resurrection at the Second Coming? (1 Cor. 15:19). Do you feel the need to control the Bible, or are you willing to submit your life and future to its authority?

GOD IS KNOWN IN HIS SELF-REVELATION (Deut. 29:29; 1 Cor. 1:21; Isa. 44:9-19).

How can we know who God is? Deut. 29:29; 1 Sam. 3:21; Matt. 11:27; 1 Cor. 2:6-10.

Why is it that the heathen do not know God? Rom. 1:21, 22; 10:14; 1 Cor. 1:21.

Some religions attempt to gain their knowledge of God by observing the natural world. They study historical events, catastrophes in nature, chance happenings, relationships, and then attempt to develop concepts of God that fit their observations. If they view the world as harsh, then they see God as harsh. If the world is mysterious, then God is mysterious. If their world is erratic, then God is erratic.

How does Isaiah 44:9-19 illustrate fallen humanity's tendency to put God last in life and to create a god who is in harmony with their observations of the natural world?

"Human talents and human conjecture have tried by searching to find out God. Many have trodden this pathway. The highest intellect may tax itself until it is wearied out, in conjectures regarding God, but the effort will be fruitless, and the fact will remain that man by searching cannot find out God. This problem has not been given us to solve. All that man needs to know and can know of God has been revealed in the life and character of His Son, the Great Teacher. As we learn more and more of what man is, of what we ourselves are, in God's sight, we shall fear and tremble before Him."—*Medical Ministry*, p. 95. "No mortal mind can penetrate the secrecy in which the Mighty One dwells and works. . . . Heart and intellect must bow to the great I AM."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 438.

What distinguishes Christianity from other religions? God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ and in the Bible. Praise God we *can* know Him because He has revealed Himself to us. We do not have to walk in darkness, for the light has come (John 1:1-10).

Professing to become wise, many become fools. They exchange the truth of God for a lie (Rom. 1:18-28). By contrast, the gospel reveals the fullness of God, including His righteousness (Rom. 1:16, 17).

God created us in His image. In what ways are we tempted to "create" Him in our image? What is the remedy?

THE BIBLE ALONE THE BATTLE CRY OF THE REFORMATION (Isa. 8:20; Matt. 21:42; 26:54-56; Luke 24:25-27; John 5:39).

The apostolic church accepted Jesus Christ and Scripture as the foundation for their theology and their lifestyle (Eph. 2:20). A century down the highway of history, emphasis on the authority of the Bible as the Word of God began to fade as the church turned to pagan philosophy in order to reach the pagans.

Gradually, the authority of the Bible was supplemented by other sources. It was the Bible and philosophy, the Bible and church authority and tradition, the Bible and church councils, the Bible and nature.

The Reformation responded to this diminished role of the Bible with its restoration as sole authority. The slogan “the Bible alone” did not mean that God could not speak through nature, reason, or ecclesiastical authorities. Rather, it meant that the Bible was the authority for determining how and when God had spoken or would speak elsewhere.

How did Jesus Himself relate to the authority of the Scriptures? What impact does this have on your view of its authority?

Matt. 21:42 _____

26:54-56 _____

Luke 24:25-27 _____

John 5:39 _____

Martin Luther's insistence on the sole authority of the Bible became the rallying cry of the Reformation. “Fearlessly did Luther defend the gospel from the attacks which came from every quarter. The word of God proved itself a weapon mighty in every conflict. With that word he warred against the usurped authority of the pope, and the rationalistic philosophy of the schoolmen, while he stood firm as a rock against the fanaticism that sought to ally itself with the Reformation.

“Each of these opposing elements was in its own way setting aside the Holy Scriptures and exalting human wisdom as the source of religious truth and knowledge. . . . True Christianity receives the word of God as the great treasure house of inspired truth and the test of all inspiration.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 193.

Is it possible to study the Bible in such a way as to impose the biases of culture and tradition upon it, rather than allowing it to transform the mind and behavior?

THE BIBLE AND HUMAN STUDIES (Jer. 8:9; 1 Tim. 6:20; Matt. 7:24-29; Ps. 111:10; 1 Cor. 1:20).

Our age is enamored with science. Science has put people on the moon, performed miracles on the operating table, and revolutionized our world with the computer chip. Science apart from God defines what we should believe and how we should live. Science has been so successful that disciplines such as history, psychology, and even theology would like to model themselves after it. Disciplines such as archaeology, geology, etc. can be helpful in confirming the Bible as long as they do not become the *basis* of our faith. They should never become the factor that determines whether the Bible is true. If we take such an approach, the Bible would no longer remain our authority, as it was in the apostolic church and in the Reformation. The basis of our faith and the guide to our life must always be Jesus and His Word.

What causes the wise to become ashamed and dismayed? Jer. 8:9; 1 Tim. 6:20.

How does Jesus' parable in Matthew 7:24-29 affirm your faith in and make you more dependent on God's solid Word?

A house is built upon a foundation, and its design and structure follow a set of plans. It has doors, windows, a kitchen, a dining room, bedrooms, and a roof. Without these, it would not be a house. Without its foundation, it would not long stand. So it is with our lives. They are composed of many elements, social circles, talents, reasoning abilities, emotions, etc. All contribute to making our lives worth living. If, however, we attempt to build upon the foundation of our reason or our emotions instead of the Word of God, our lives would crumble as did the house built upon the sand (Matt. 7:26).

What do the following texts teach you about the Source of truth and understanding?

John 14:6 _____

Col. 2:3, 4 _____

Ps. 111:10 _____

How can we build our lives upon the solid rock of God's truth instead of upon the shifting sands of human knowledge?

THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE AND ITS INTERPRETATION (2 Cor. 4:2-6; 2 Tim. 2:15; Isa. 66:2).

What warning does Paul give about the way we handle the Word of God? 2 Cor. 4:2. What counsel does he give Timothy in this regard? 2 Tim. 2:15.

How can our minds be blinded to understanding the gospel, and what is the remedy to such blindness? 2 Cor. 4:3-6.

The Reformation emphasis upon the sole authority of the Bible brought with it the need to allow the Bible to be its own interpreter. The Reformers meant not only that one portion of the Bible is useful for interpreting other portions of the Bible but also that the Bible is to provide its own context for interpretation. To start with and focus on philosophy, science, or tradition is to rob the Bible of its authority.

"How shall we search the Scriptures? Shall we drive our stakes of doctrine one after another, and then try to make all Scripture meet our established opinions, or shall we take our ideas and views to the Scriptures, and measure our theories on every side by the Scriptures of truth? . . . Many give the words of Scripture a meaning that suits their own opinions, and they mislead themselves and deceive others by their misinterpretations of God's word. As we take up the study of God's word, we should do so with humble hearts. All selfishness, all love of originality, should be laid aside. . . .

"Those who sincerely desire truth will not be reluctant to lay open their positions for investigation and criticism, and will not be annoyed if their opinions and ideas are crossed. . . .

"As long as we hold to our own ideas and opinions with determined persistency, we cannot have the unity for which Christ prayed." —"Search the Scriptures," *Ellen G. White Present Truth and Review and Herald Articles* (July 26, 1892), vol. 2, p. 585.

In order to reach our culture with the gospel, we sometimes try to impose it upon the Bible. While we need to make the message of the Bible clear and applicable to daily life in different cultures, we must not try to make it fit our mold. The role of the Bible when read under the guidance and the power of the Holy Spirit is to bring about transformation of our thinking and our lives.

Do I sincerely want to know God's will for my life when I study His Word, or do I simply want to defend my own preconceived ideas? Am I willing to submit my mind to the Word of God in order to be transformed by it?

FURTHER STUDY: Exod. 14:18; Josh. 3:10; Ps. 119:98-100, 105, 130; Isa. 1:1; 40:12-28; 54:13; Dan. 11:32; Zeph. 1:1; John 10:35, 36; 14:6-11; Rom. 1:20; 1 John 1:1-3; 2:5.

For more on the role of Scripture in preparation for the Second Coming, read "The Scriptures a Safeguard," in *The Great Controversy*, pp. 593-602.

The principles of the Bible and grace alone parallel one another. Salvation is the gift of God. Not a shred of human devising adds to its foundation. Also, the Bible is a gift of God to be accepted by faith. Such faith itself is another gift of God. Just as salvation is not founded upon or manipulated by human effort, so the Word of God is not founded upon or manipulated by human wisdom. Just as salvation comes by the grace of God alone, so does God's self-revelation in the Bible come by grace alone. Just as human works have their proper place as the outgrowth of salvation, so also does reason have its proper place when it is founded upon God's Word. When Christianity loses one of these principles, it invariably loses the other. If we lose the principle of the authority of the Bible, we also will lose our understanding of the principle of salvation as the gift of God, for they go hand in hand as God's gifts.

The relation of the authority of the Bible to the certainty of the Second Coming is as follows:

1. We would not have knowledge or assurance of the Second Coming without the Bible.
2. The Bible brings knowledge of God and salvation, which prepares us for the Second Coming.
3. The Bible provides the message of the everlasting gospel to be preached at the end of time.
4. The Second Coming is linked to the biblical theme of the great controversy. Those who properly prepare for and proclaim Christ's return are loyal and obedient to the Word of God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why is it important for us to have sound biblical doctrine? (See 1 Tim. 4:6; 2 Tim. 4:3; Titus 1:9.)
2. What role will the authority of the Bible play in end-time events leading to the Second Coming?

SUMMARY: The certainty of the Bible as God's Word is the foundation of our belief in the Second Coming. Without the Bible we would be without knowledge or hope of being reunited with God at the end of time.



The Warrior Bees

J. H. Zachary

Enemies seemed determined to destroy the village of Laiagam, in the highlands of Papua New Guinea. For several weeks warriors from two neighboring villages had terrorized the community, burning houses, slaughtering animals, and destroying crops. Several people had been killed. Laiagam was located between the two warring tribes. Burning arrows, aimed at the fighting villages, sometimes fell in Laiagam, destroying several homes. The villagers feared for their lives.

A little Adventist church stood amidst the carnage in Laiagam. The little group of believers met at their beloved church to decide what to do. They agreed that it would be best if they left the village until the fighting ended. As they left their little church, they felt that this would be the last time they would see it standing. However, one young member decided to stay in the village and watch over the church.

Shortly after the believers left, Alo, the young man, heard the sounds of an advancing war party. He could see the glow of their lighted torches as they neared the church. He knew that within minutes the church would be burned to the ground.

Alo fell to his knees, praying for God's help. "Lord, help me do what I can to save this church." Quickly he picked up a piece of plastic pipe with a funnel attached to one end. The believers used this homemade trumpet to call worshipers to church. He blew into the trumpet, which made a loud blast, and again asked God for help. By now the mob had advanced to a few meters from the church. Then they stopped.

The sky seemed to darken as a huge cloud of bees swarmed over the warriors and attacked them. The warriors dropped their weapons and fled through the ruins of the village and into the bush, swatting wildly at the stinging bees.

Word of the warring bees that saved the Adventist church spread through the highlands of Papua New Guinea. The believers returned and held a praise service in their beloved church. The believers testify, "We know that God sent bees to fight against our enemies and save our church!"

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Creation and the Second Coming



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 2 Pet. 3:1-16; Isa. 65:17; Rev. 21:1; 22:1, 2, 13.

MEMORY TEXT: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last" (Revelation 22:13, NKJV).

KEY THOUGHT: Our concept of the origin of the world and life upon it affects our concepts of God and the Second Coming.

THE BIBLE AND THE THEORY OF EVOLUTION. The most popular theory of origin is the theory of evolution. It asserts that life on this earth evolved from matter by chance over a period of millions to billions of years. Some Christians (theistic evolutionists) accept the theory of evolution with modifications. They believe that life did not evolve by chance but that it came into being as a small cell by divine miracle and that life has evolved from that cell over long ages by God's direction.

The theory of evolution has brought about drastic changes in our view of the origin of life and in our moral values. Do we live by the golden rule or by the survival of the fittest? Acceptance of evolution even changes our view of salvation, why it was necessary, and what it accomplishes; and it destroys assurance in the Second Coming.

This week, let us keep in mind that a belief in a biblical Creation is essential for the certainty of the Second Coming. The purpose of Christ's coming is to restore humanity to its original state. Unless there were an original Creation of six literal consecutive days, as described in Genesis, there would be nothing to which to restore humanity.

THE BIBLICAL ACCOUNT OF CREATION (Gen. 1:1–2:3; Ps. 33:6, 9; 1 Cor. 15:53, 54; Col. 1:16, 17; Rev. 21:3).

How does the biblical concept of origins differ from the long evolutionary processes that we hear about today? Gen. 1:1–2:3; John 1:3; Col. 1:16, 17; Ps. 33:6, 9.

Though some interpreters wish to give the first eleven chapters of Genesis a figurative meaning, the rest of the Bible takes these chapters seriously. Christ and the New Testament writers referred to Adam as a historical figure (Matt. 19:4–6; Luke 3:38; Rom. 5:14; 1 Cor. 15:22, 45; 1 Tim. 2:13; Jude 14). They understood the Flood to be a literal event (Matt. 24:38, 39; 2 Pet. 2:5). The most radical critics, even though they do not take the Bible seriously, believe that the Bible writers thought they were recording a literal event.

The Creation account sets the stage for the relationship between God and His human creation. God and humankind were in face-to-face communion with each other.

Creation provides an important parallel to Christ's second coming when we will be restored to our original state and relationship with God. As you look up the following texts, write down in your own words what this restoration will mean. 1 Cor. 15:53, 54; Rev. 21:3.

The apostle Peter makes a connection between the Second Coming and Creation. In the last days scoffers will come saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation” (2 Pet. 3:4, NKJV). They do not recognize that the same Word of God that brought about the Creation of the world will also bring about the events taking place at the Second Coming (2 Pet. 3:5–7).

“Before the Flood God sent Noah to warn the world, that the people might be led to repentance, and thus escape the threatened destruction. As the time of Christ's second appearing draws near, the Lord sends His servants with a warning to the world to prepare for that great event. Multitudes have been living in transgression of God's law, and now He in mercy calls them to obey its sacred precepts. All who will put away their sins by repentance toward God and faith in Christ are offered pardon.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 102.

What connection do you make between Creation and the Second Coming? Do you long to be reunited with God face to face? How can you help others this week to meet Him?

**CREATION, THE BIBLE, AND THE SECOND COMING
(2 Pet. 3:1-16; Isa. 65:17; Rev. 21:1; 22:1, 2, 13).**

What does Peter warn the believers about, and what does he counsel them to do? 2 Pet. 3:15-18.

How would acceptance of theistic evolution affect what we think of the Bible? The evolutionary concept of origins calls the teachings of the Bible into question. Jesus, who Himself is the Truth, took Genesis and the rest of the Scriptures seriously; so should we. For example, if we have problems with the miracle of Creation, then we might also have problems with other biblical miracles such as the crossing of the Red Sea, the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, and His second coming. If God either could not or did not act at the beginning of human history in the way described in Genesis 1 and 2, then why would we think that He will act to end human history by His second coming?

**How does the promise of the creation of a new heaven and new earth affirm our faith in the doctrine of Creation and the Second Coming?
Isa. 65:17; Rev. 21:1; 22:1, 2.**

If Christ did not create by the word of His mouth, then why would we think that He will do so in the creation of a new earth and a new heaven? If we accept theistic evolution, we have already begun to question the biblical accounts and promises of God's miraculous activities.

Theistic evolution alters our concept of the nature of the Bible itself. It would lead to the idea that the Bible did not come by the Word of God to the prophet, but it came by social evolution. The Bible would be viewed as the evolving literature of many ancient Near Eastern societies. Over many generations and in many different social contexts various editors and schools of thought brought the pieces of literature together in the form in which we now find them in the Bible. According to this theory, the Bible is the result of human genius rather than the Word of God. This, however, is not so.

"The deepest students of science are constrained to recognize in nature the working of infinite power. But to man's unaided reason, nature's teaching cannot but be contradictory and disappointing. Only in the light of revelation [Scripture] can it be read aright."—*Education*, p. 134.

Recall times in your spiritual walk when God's revelation in the Scriptures helped you to view things in the right perspective. Why is such light so essential to guard you against Satan's deceptions?

CREATION, GOD, AND THE SECOND COMING (Ps. 139:4; John 16:30; Acts 1:11; 1 John 4:7, 16; Jude 25; Rev. 16:7).

What do the following texts tell you about our Lord's characteristics?

Ps. 139:4 _____

John 16:30 _____

1 John 4:7, 16 _____

Jude 25 _____

Rev. 16:7 _____

God is not only a God of power and intelligence but also a God of love. Would a God of love drag His creation through such a long process of evolution—with all the suffering that comes through the survival of the fittest—finally to bring forth a creature in His own image?

Some mistakenly suppose that if God is a God of love and power, maybe He is not very intelligent. After all, how smart could He be if only through the process of suffering could humanity be created? With theistic evolution, suffering is not the result of sin. Accordingly, since humanity came into being through a process of the survival of the fittest, it is implied that suffering is inherent in God's process of creation.

Another unacceptable possibility we are left with is that God is a God of love and intelligence, but lacking in power. The best that He could do was to create humankind through evolution. He could not bring us into being by the word of His mouth. Thus, we cannot choose the biblical notion of God as all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-loving and also hold the notion of theistic evolution.

Furthermore, theistic evolution raises questions about God's actions in history. If God operated only in the shadows of history while creating life, we must ask whether He will step decisively into history in the Second Coming. If He did not create us by the word of His mouth, will He re-create us in the resurrection of the dead at the Second Coming? Theistic evolution, in actuality, is stating either that God does not or cannot act in the way the Bible says He has acted in history.

"Our little world is the lesson book of the universe. God's wonderful purpose of grace, the mystery of redeeming love, is the theme into which 'angels desire to look.' "—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 19.

CREATION, HUMANITY, AND THE SECOND COMING (Gen. 2:7; 1 Cor. 15:42-55).

How was humankind created? Gen. 2:7. How do you relate this creation to the resurrection and Christ's second coming? 1 Cor. 15:42-55.

The Bible presents Adam as one. The soul is not a separate entity; rather, it is an integral and indivisible part of what it is to be a living being.

Theistic evolution challenges this biblical concept of human nature. It does not allow our creation as a living soul. It states that we evolved from nothing over many years and were at some point given a soul. It teaches that the soul is an essence separate from us (that we are not a unity). Thus, room is left for the concept of the immortal soul and its preexistence.

At this point, the concept of theistic evolution is self-contradictory. First, it questions whether God steps into history at all and whether miracles actually take place. Then it states that some animal was infused with a soul and became a human. Is not the infusion of a soul, at some point in time, however, a historical and miraculous event? If so, why not simply accept the biblical account rather than create another?

Theistic evolution also raises questions about the resurrection. If God either cannot or does not create by simply uttering His creative word, why should He do so in a resurrection? Furthermore, if He does bring about a resurrection by the word of His mouth at the Second Coming, why not acknowledge His original creative act?

"These philosophers would make us believe that man, the crowning work of creation, came by slow degrees from the savage state, and that farther back, he was evolved from the race of brutes. They are so intent upon excluding God from the sovereignty of the universe, that they demean man, and defraud him of the dignity of his origin. Nature is exalted above the God of nature; she is idolized, while her Creator is buried up and concealed from sight by science falsely so-called." —"Science and the Bible in Education," *Ellen G. White Articles, The Signs of the Times* (March 20, 1884), vol. 1, p. 419.

Humans were originally created in God's image (Gen. 1:26, 27). How does this concept contrast with the evolutionary concept of human development? Many believe that humans are becoming better and better. Contrast this optimistic notion with the biblical concept of sin (2 Tim. 3:13). What blessings result from trusting God's Word and His plan in our creation and ultimate restoration?

CREATION, SALVATION, AND THE SECOND COMING
(Rom. 5:6-12, 14, 21; 6:23; 1 Cor. 15:21, 22; Heb. 2:9-18; 9:15, 16).

What does the Bible teach about the origin of sin and its effects upon all of humankind? Rom. 5:12, 14, 21; 6:23. How does this biblical concept contrast with the ideas of evolution?

The biblical concept of sin is called into question by theistic evolution. Accordingly, human beings did not fall from the image of God into sin, for they were never created in the image of God. Rather, they were and are evolving into the image of God.

If, perchance, theistic evolution accepts the biblical concept of sin, it must assert that humanity was created sinful in the process of evolution. If so, what might we be led to assume about a God who would create sinful human beings?

Such theory calls into question the biblical concept of the substitutionary death of Jesus. If we are in the process of progressive evolution, then there was no event of sin; and if there was not a fall into sin, then there is no need of a savior from sin. Jesus might play the role of a moral, visionary leader, a catalyst to speed up the process of progressive evolution, but not the role of our substitute, for no substitute would be needed.

What does the Scripture say about the basis of our salvation from sin? Rom. 5:6-11; 1 Cor. 15:21, 22; Heb. 2:9-18; 9:15, 16. How does the biblical teaching on salvation from sin and ultimate restoration contrast with evolutionary concepts?

The themes of the great controversy and the plan of salvation are crucially important to Seventh-day Adventist theology. Theistic evolution would reinterpret these themes: The great controversy would be replayed out in the process of evolution, rather than between Christ and Satan. The plan of salvation would be worked out as evolutionary progress, rather than as God's communication, presence, incarnation, suffering, death, resurrection, ascension, sanctuary ministry, second coming, re-creation of the new earth, etc.

How would I regard myself and my role in life if I thought my origin were found apart from God? How would this vision of self affect my morals, my treatment of others, and my concept of the future? Compare your answers with those given as you regard yourself as a son or daughter of God, created in His image, restored to His image by His grace, and destined to eternal life in glory at His second coming.

FURTHER STUDY: Read the entire chapters of Genesis 1; Romans 5; 1 Corinthians 15.

Read the chapter "Science and the Bible," in *Education*, pp. 128-134.

Adventism will not be Adventism if it accepts theistic evolution. We must always affirm our faith in the active God who created by the word of His mouth and who communicated through the prophets and apostles. The Savior who lived among us, died in our place, and was resurrected and ascended to minister for us in the heavenly sanctuary. Our Lord will return the second time to receive us unto Himself, will bring about the resurrection of the dead and the recreation of the new earth, and will finally destroy sin. This is the God we worship. We worship the God of Creation, a personal God who desires to fellowship with us, dwell among us, and finally receive us into His eternal kingdom of glory.

"The warnings of the word of God regarding the perils surrounding the Christian church belong to us today. As in the days of the apostles men tried by tradition and philosophy to destroy faith in the Scriptures, so today, by the pleasing sentiments of higher criticism, evolution, spiritualism, theosophy, and pantheism, the enemy of righteousness is seeking to lead souls into forbidden paths. . . . The work of higher criticism, in dissecting, conjecturing, reconstructing, is destroying faith in the Bible as a divine revelation. It is robbing God's word of power to control, uplift, and inspire human lives."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 474.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How does our view of God's activities in the past affect our concept of how God will act in the future?
2. How does it strengthen your faith to know about God's activity in Creation and His plans for the future?
3. How does the fact that you came from God's creative hands, that you have accepted His salvation, and that you are anticipating the Second Coming impact your relationship and witness to others?

SUMMARY: We do not need to reinterpret the biblical concept of the Second Coming and the New Earth. The Bible teaches us that God did break into history in Creation, and He surely will do so in a literal, visible second coming. He did create by the word of His mouth, and He will re-create in the resurrection. He did originally create the Garden of Eden, and He will re-create the new earth. Thank God we can have hope in the future Second Coming, because God is our Creator and Redeemer!



The Church on Spirit Hill, Part 1

Khut Chouen

Mr. Eae (ee) couldn't wait to share with his neighbors what he was learning about the living God, who hears and answers prayers. Soon four families in his village in Cambodia were meeting together in a tiny house to worship. The group continued to grow, and soon they needed a larger place to worship.

As they began searching for suitable land on which to build a church, they realized that all the suitable land in or near their village had been claimed and built upon. The only land not already claimed was low land which often was under water during the rainy season.

There remained one place where no one had built. It was the highest land in the area and was located at the edge of the village. No one had built on the land because a spirit lived in the banyan tree on the property. The land belonged to one of the new believers, who suggested, "Let's ask God to chase the spirit away so we can build the church there." The believers agreed.

The following morning the men gathered around the little spirit house that stood in front of the banyan tree. They sang praises to God and claimed God's promise to "resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7, 8, NIV). They moved the spirit house to the foot of the hill, where the other villagers could still worship at it. Then they leveled the ground and built a temporary chapel from palm thatch.

Before they could build a permanent church, the group had to get permission from several government leaders in the area. The village chief willingly agreed, but the district officer, a strong Buddhist, refused. The believers asked their district pastor to appeal to the officer on their behalf, but still the man refused. "I do not want any other religion, especially Christianity, to come into this district," the official said. "Buddhism is the state religion; it has served the people for centuries. Why should I allow this foreign religion to disrupt the peace in the area? Besides, what can a small group of Christians contribute to the happiness of the people here?"

Nothing the believers or the pastor said convinced the official to change his mind. All the believers could do was pray.

(Continued next week)

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The Sabbath and the Second Coming



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Gen. 2:3; Exod. 20:8-11; Deut. 5:12-15; Isa. 58:13, 14; Heb. 3:16-4:10; Rev. 14:6, 7, 12.

MEMORY TEXT: “‘For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before Me,’ says the Lord, ‘so shall your descendants and your name remain. And it shall come to pass that from one New Moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me,’ says the Lord” (Isaiah 66:22, 23, NKJV).

KEY THOUGHTS: The Sabbath reveals God's nature to be personal. It also illuminates our entire relationship with Jesus, from Creation and redemption to reunion with Him at His second coming.

THE SABBATH IS GOD'S INVITATION TO ENTER A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM. Why did God give us the Sabbath? The Sabbath is a sign between God and us, that we may know that He is our God (Ezek. 20:20). God is a personal Being who desires to have a relationship with each of us individually. The Sabbath is God's invitation to spend sacred time with Him. As with all Bible doctrines, the Sabbath tells us about God and about ourselves and the proper way for us to relate to Him. Our relationship with God is spelled out for us in His gift of the Sabbath. It signifies our rest in His acts of Creation and of redemption in our behalf. This is a foretaste of the heavenly Sabbath rest that awaits us at Christ's second coming. Jesus came on time the first time, and we can be sure He will come on time the second time.

**THE SABBATH MEMORIALIZES GOD AS THE CREATOR
(Gen. 2:1-3; Exod. 31:17; Mark 2:27; Rev. 14:6, 7).**

Compare what the Sabbath tells us about:

1. God as our Creator (Gen. 2:1-3; Exod. 20:8-11) _____

2. Ourselves as God's creatures (Mark 2:27) _____

3. Our relationship with God (Exod. 31:17) _____

The biblical concept of the Sabbath is, first of all, associated with Creation. God is to be distinguished from all other gods because He is the Creator. Since Creation took place through Jesus Christ, the Sabbath points to His power, authority, and Lordship. We do not have to be left in doubt as are the heathen. We know who He is. Everything that exists originated from Him and is dependent upon Him.

By pointing to God as the Creator, the Sabbath helps us to understand ourselves. We do not exist by chance; we are the creation of God. While, as human beings, we are creative, we are not the Creator. We do not sustain ourselves; we are sustained by God. In the twentieth century man sees himself as the creator. He is the maker of the automobile, the designer of moon and planet rockets, the developer of home conveniences, the conqueror of disease, and the creator of his own destiny. Forgetting his true origin, he now sees himself as the autonomous ruler of the world, if not the universe. What message does man need more today than to be reminded that he lives in dependence upon the Creator God? The Sabbath, when kept meaningfully, is a tie between Christ and His people, because it demonstrates man's recognition of his dependence upon God as Creator and Sustainer.

What role does the Sabbath play in the proclamation of the gospel prior to Christ's second coming? Rev. 14:6, 7.

Think of ways in which the Sabbath enhances your walk with God. In what way is it a foretaste of heaven for you?

THE SABBATH AND REDEMPTION (Deut. 5:15; Exod. 31:13; Ezek. 20:12).

Explain the relationship between redemption and the Sabbath in the experience of the children of Israel. Deut. 5:15.

The Sabbath is the Christian's memorial of deliverance from sin. Just as God created us out of nothing by the power of His word, so He is able to deliver us from sin by re-creating us in His own image. When our mind is in harmony with that of another person, we are able to enter a fuller relationship. So also, when we are re-created in the image of God, we can be restored to full relationship with Him. Thus, the Sabbath represents God's desire to bring us back into His fellowship by restoring us to His own image.

Explain how the Sabbath and sanctification are linked together. Exod. 31:13; Ezek. 20:12.

Pagan religions are filled with rules and regulations that must be observed in order to appease the gods. Rituals, set prayers, penance—all are stepping-stones to celestial bliss. Even the history of Christianity is littered with examples of Christians who have attempted to make their own way into the kingdom. The Bible is unique in its teaching that we cannot lift ourselves into heaven.

Some think of Sabbath keeping as a form of legalism. They see God as a stern judge just waiting to bring down judgment on those who do not properly keep the Sabbath. However, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark. 2:27, NKJV). But does that mean we should make void the Sabbath because it was made for our benefit? No, we establish the Sabbath. It was not meant for our own independent, selfish pleasure. It was given so that we might delight ourselves in the Lord (Isa. 58:14).

The Sabbath reaffirms that the Lord of the Sabbath becomes our redemption and sanctification. It brings assurance of deliverance from the bondage of sin: "Sabbath" (rest) to our soul. Just as the Sabbath is set apart for holy use, so are we set apart for God. Such redemption and sanctification in Christ is the bliss that we experience walking with Him here, awaiting our walk with Him in heaven.

"And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him" (Gen. 5:24, NKJV). How do you identify with Enoch's walk with God as you await Christ's soon coming? How can you have a closer walk with Him?

THE SABBATH, A PROMISE OF THE SECOND COMING (Isa. 66:22, 23; Heb. 3:16–4:10).

Explain how Isaiah 66:22, 23 is related to the Second Advent. What future hope does the Sabbath give us?

"The Sabbath is an eternal institution. It would have been rightly honored in the restored Jewish state, and in the new earth to come it will be observed by all. . . . All will observe the Sabbath in eternal recognition of Christ as the Creator of the world in its Edenic bliss, and as the re-Creator of the new heavens and the new earth of righteousness and holiness."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 338.

The future impacts the present. Our vision of a completed degree, a future position, a vacation, a promise of a future relationship, all have a major impact upon the way we think and live in the present. Since the future impacts the present, it is important that we view the future from God's standpoint. Without His revelation of the future, we are left either in despair or with a false hope of a better future.

The Sabbath points not only to the God of Creation and redemption but also to the God of the future, to the God of the Second Coming, and to the Creator of the new earth. If we truly live the Sabbath, not merely observe it, we will rest confident in the hope of Christ's second coming and a new creation.

Compare the rest that we enter by faith, the heavenly rest, and the rest on the Sabbath. Heb. 3:16–4:10.

Just as in courtship, the intent of a date is to foster a relationship between two people; so, the intent of the Sabbath before sin was to nurture and encourage a deeper relationship between God and our first parents. After sin, the intent was not only to nurture that relationship but also to restore it. Unfortunately, the Sabbath sometimes becomes misused as a tool of legalism rather than as a balm for the soul. At the other extreme, the Sabbath is not taken seriously, and thus it cannot play its intended role of bringing us back into God's intended relationship. The Sabbath also foreshadows that which it is intended to foster—the time when humankind will again be blessed by face-to-face communion with God.

How would you explain to someone that meaningful Sabbath observance shows complete trust in God? How does attempting to obtain salvation by observing the Sabbath destroy true Sabbath keeping? Think of two ways to help you spend more quality time with God.

SABBATH OBSERVANCE (Gen. 2:3; Exod. 20:11; Luke 4:16; 23:55–24:1; Isa. 58:13, 14).

List the three things associated with the seventh-day Sabbath that set it apart from the rest of the week. Gen. 2:3; Exod. 20:11. How does this enrich your view of this special day?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

How does the way in which Jesus and His followers regard the fourth commandment encourage us in our love and obedience to His will? Luke 4:16; 23:55–24:1.

Since God Himself requested the weekly appointment with us, it would seem appropriate that He be the One to establish its activities and parameters. God delights in meaningful observance of the Sabbath, because it testifies of a meaningful relationship with Him. Observance of the Sabbath is not an end in itself; rather, it is giving God priority in our lives.

How does God want us to enjoy keeping the Sabbath? Isa. 58:13, 14? What does this tell us about God's character?

Meaningful Sabbath observance recognizes God's love and His intent to banish all traces of sin from the earth made new. Sabbath observance demonstrates one's faith that Christ is preparing a home where our relationship with Him will be fully restored.

"As the Sabbath was the sign that distinguished Israel when they came out of Egypt to enter the earthly Canaan, so it is the sign that now distinguishes God's people as they come out from the world to enter the heavenly rest. The Sabbath is a sign of the relationship existing between God and His people, a sign that they honor His law." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 349, 350.

What activities honor God in keeping holy the day He established as a memorial of Creation, redemption, and the expressed hope of reunion with Him? Share a couple of ideas with your class members. On what principles do you decide the appropriateness of Sabbath activities?

THE SABBATH AND GOD'S AUTHORITY (Exod. 20:11; Deut. 5:12; Rev. 14:12).

Compare the fourth commandment with the others. List some of its distinguishing characteristics. Exod. 20:1-17.

The Sabbath commandment is unique among the commandments, for it contains the seal of God's law. It alone "brings to view both the name and the title of the Lawgiver. It declares Him to be the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and thus shows His claim to reverence and worship above all others. Aside from this precept, there is nothing in the Decalogue to show by whose authority the law is given."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 452.

The Sabbath is to be kept simply because God has declared it to be holy. No movements in the solar system establish the Sabbath as a special day. No biological rhythms set it apart. Nothing in history, psychology, math, the sciences, or human law argues for the sanctity of the Sabbath. It is kept on the foundation of faith in God's Word.

Some argue about the why or the why not of Sabbath observance. What is the fundamental reason for the Sabbath to be kept? Deut. 5:12.

Sabbath keeping acknowledges the absolute sovereignty of God. The Sabbath command comes nearer to being a true measure of spirituality than any other of the commandments, and, as in the days of Israel of old, it is often more of a test of loyalty to God than is any of the others. To be willing on the Sabbath day to withdraw from the tyranny of the world of things in order to meet the Lord of heaven and earth in the quiet of our soul means to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and body. The Sabbath is thus a tree of knowledge of good and evil in the midst of the garden. It is a test of and a witness to true allegiance to the God of the universe. It is an indication that God is God and we are not.

How is the Sabbath a test in the last days, dividing between the loyal and disloyal to God's Word? Rev. 14:12.

"The Sabbath will be the great test of loyalty, for it is the point of truth especially controverted. When the final test shall be brought to bear upon men, then the line of distinction will be drawn between those who serve God and those who serve Him not."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 605.

FURTHER STUDY: Exod. 16:1-30; 35:1-3; Deut. 5:1-22; Ezek. 44:24; John 1:3; Col. 1:15-18.

Read *The Great Controversy*, pp. 613-621.

"The Sabbath is a sign of the relationship existing between God and His people, a sign that they are His obedient subjects, that they keep holy His law. The observance of the Sabbath is the means ordained by God of preserving a knowledge of Himself and of distinguishing between His loyal subjects and the transgressors of His law."

"This is the faith once delivered to the saints, who stand in moral power before the world, firmly maintaining this faith."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 198.

The Sabbath is a reminder of God's total plan for us. It is a great arch, spanning time from a perfect Creation to a perfect re-creation. It represents Christ's activity in our creation, in our redemption, and in the re-creation of our original home. When we meaningfully observe the Sabbath, we are faithfully looking for the true God, who has revealed Himself to us in His Word and who is coming the second time to take us home.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Explain the possible implications of the following situations for our relationship with God:

1. Someone who understands the God-given significance of the Sabbath rejects it or fails to observe it.
2. Someone who says: "God, if I am going to enter a relationship with You, it will be upon my terms. And when it comes to observing the Sabbath, I will observe it the way I want." How would such an attitude affect our relationship with God and thus our preparedness for the second coming of Christ?

SUMMARY: The Sabbath is like a hedge protecting our friendship with God. God has given it to us because He knows that those who worship Him meaningfully on that day will mature more and more in their love relationship with Him. The Sabbath becomes a hedge around our relationship with God by: (1) providing the quality time essential for development of that relationship; (2) clarifying the relationship He desires to have with us. In giving the Sabbath to us, Christ gives Himself. Such a gift lifts us above the humdrum of mechanical living to the abundant life we have in Him, and it prepares us for the eternal life awaiting us when He comes again.



The Church on Spirit Hill, Part 2

Khut Chouen

When a new group of believers in Cambodia needed a place to worship, one of the members offered a prime piece of land. But first God would need to chase away the spirit that lived there before they could build. The group prayed, the spirit left, and the believers built a simple thatch church. They tried to get permission from the local government to build a permanent church, but one official steadfastly refused to allow a Christian church in his area. Without his permission, the believers could not build.

The yearly rains brought severe flooding to the area, and people were going hungry. When the district official told a Christian that he had not eaten that day, the Christian gave him 10 pounds of rice from his own meager store. "If that's the kind of people Christians are," he said, "you are welcome in my community."

The floodwaters receded, and the villagers could plant their crops. The rice grew quickly in the fertile soil. But one day cut-worms invaded the area. They ate the tender roots of the rice plants, killing them. The villagers tried flooding the fields to drown the worms, and pesticides to kill them, but nothing worked. In days the once-green rice fields looked dry and brown. That is, all except for those belonging to Mr. Eae. His rice stood out like green jade on a golden bracelet.

People came from throughout the country to see the only green fields among the devastation. They asked Eae, "How did you keep the worms out of your rice?"

Eae replied simply, "I sprayed my fields with tithe." Eae told the people about the living God who had power to keep evil away. He showed them the rotting spirit house on the hill.

The villagers replanted their fields after the plague of worms had passed, and a good harvest saved them from starvation. When Eae harvested his fields, he found that God had given him twice as much yield as other years. He brought nearly a ton of "tithe rice" to the church, as well as several more families from his village who wanted to join God's family. The seeds of truth that he had scattered sprouted in other villages as well, and two Branch Sabbath Schools have opened as a result. Today, thanks to help from others, a beautiful new Adventist church stands on top of what was once called Spirit Hill.

Khut Chouen works in the Cambodian Mission.

The First Coming Prepares for the Second Coming



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Matt. 4:1-11; John 1:1-14; Acts 1:1-11; Gal. 4:4; Heb. 2:10; 4:15; 9:28; Rev. 3:20, 21.

MEMORY TEXT: “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11, NKJV).

KEY THOUGHTS: The incarnation of Jesus fulfilled the promise inferred in the everlasting gospel, for it restored face-to-face communion between God and fallen human beings. He came to reveal the Father, to live His life in harmony with His will, and to die in our place in order to restore us completely to Himself when He comes back.

THE MYSTERY OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS. “How wide is the contrast between the divinity of Christ and the helpless infant in Bethlehem’s manger! How can we span the distance between the mighty God and a helpless child? . . . Divinity and humanity were mysteriously combined, and man and God became one. It is in this union that we find the hope of our fallen race. Looking upon Christ in humanity, we look upon God, and see in Him the brightness of His glory, the express image of His person.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1130.

He became the bridge connecting heaven and earth. He became one with us in His incarnation, and He will be one with us for eternity when He returns. He will retain humanity forever.

JESUS WAS FULLY DIVINE (John 5:21, 26; 8:58; Eph. 1:13, 14).

What does the Bible say about Christ's nature? John 8:58; Col. 2:9. What did He possess within Himself? John 5:21, 26.

"It was Christ who from the bush on Mount Horeb spoke to Moses saying, 'I AM THAT I AM. . . .' Ex. 3:14. . . . When He came 'in the likeness of men,' He declared Himself the I AM. The Child of Bethlehem, the meek and lowly Saviour, is God 'manifest in the flesh.' 1 Tim. 3:16."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 24.

Jesus was fully one with God. He was with the Father in the beginning. Creation took place through Him because He had life within Himself. He shared glory with the Father before the world began (John 17:5). If we have seen Jesus, we have seen the Father (Matt. 11:27; John 14:9). Therefore, Christ came into the world to reveal the Father (John 1:18). The climax of the Gospel of John recognizes Jesus as fully God when Thomas exclaims, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28, NKJV).

What is the relationship between Jesus and the Holy Spirit and our glorious inheritance? Eph. 1:13, 14.

Jesus was God's emissary from heaven to earth at His first advent, making possible for Him to take us from earth to heaven at His second advent. He sent the Holy Spirit at the first coming as our guarantee for our total restoration when our glorious inheritance in Christ is acquired. Christ's incarnation is the down payment that verifies the surety of the Second Coming. Just as surely as the promises of Christ's first advent were fulfilled, so will the promises of His second advent also be fulfilled.

Christ's appearance in human form expresses His supreme interest in our ultimate redemption when He comes again. Our Lord intervened in human affairs when He created us and when He redeemed us, and He will intervene again when He returns to take us into His glory. Now He lives to make intercession for us. Our creation and redemption make it certain that our final restoration will be a reality.

His victory over death, His resurrection, guarantees our victory over death and our resurrection. Christ's resurrection is the "firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming" (1 Cor. 15:23, NKJV).

"By His life and His death, Christ has achieved even more than recovery from the ruin wrought through sin. It was Satan's purpose to bring about an eternal separation between God and man; but in Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 25.

JESUS WAS FULLY HUMAN (John 1:14; Acts 1:9-11; Gal. 4:4).

What does the Bible say about Jesus' humanity? John 1:14; Gal. 4:4; 1 Tim. 3:16.

Many Bible passages refer to Jesus as a man (Rom. 5:15; 1 Cor. 15:21). Normal human emotions and activities are ascribed to Him. Jesus grew and became strong. He increased in stature and in favor with God and man (Luke 2:40, 52). He was tempted (Heb. 2:18), and He suffered (Heb. 5:8). He showed the full range of human emotion: He agonized in Gethsemane (Matt. 26:38), was sorrowful and wept at the death of Lazarus (John 11:34, 35), and showed righteous indignation (Mark 3:5). "Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death . . ." (Heb. 5:7, NKJV).

Jesus also manifested the physical traits of humanity. He was weary (John 4:6), thirsty (John 4:7), hungry (Matt. 4:2), took bread (Matt. 26:26), slept (Matt. 8:23, 24), his sweat became like great drops of blood in Gethsemane (Luke 22:44), breathed His last at the crucifixion (Luke 23:43-46), and was buried (John 19:38-40). He took upon Himself flesh and blood (Heb. 2:14). He was not a spirit; He was flesh and bones (Luke 24:38-43). Christ did not "make believe" He had human nature, He really took it.

How do Luke and Paul link Christ's first coming in the flesh to His second coming in glory? Acts 1:9-11; Titus 2:11-14.

The ascension of Jesus into heaven illustrates the connection between heaven and earth, divinity and humanity. Beholding His disciples' faces at His ascension, He was soon to behold His Father's face in heaven. The angels comforted the disciples in emphasizing that this *same* Jesus will come back from heaven to earth the second time. That was their firm assurance that one day they would gaze into heaven and see their precious Redeemer come back in like manner. The grace of God so abundantly manifested in Jesus at the cross for our salvation leads us to walk with Him in this world and prepares us to welcome Him at His glorious appearing.

"In taking our nature, the Saviour has bound Himself to humanity by a tie that is never to be broken. Through the eternal ages He is linked with us."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 25. What link can you discern between the first and the second coming of Christ, implied in this statement?

"HE WAS TEMPTED AS WE ARE..." (Heb. 4:15; 9:28; 2 Cor. 5:21).

What makes Jesus uniquely qualified as our sympathizing High Priest? Heb. 4:15; 2 Cor. 5:21; Ps. 51:5.

Christ was tempted in all points as we are. His temptation was real. If He could not have fallen, then His temptation had no power. "Many claim that it was impossible for Christ to be overcome by temptation. Then He could not have been placed in Adam's position; He could not have gained the victory that Adam failed to gain. If we have in any sense a more trying conflict than had Christ, then He would not be able to succor us. But our Saviour took humanity, with all its liabilities. He took the nature of man, with the possibility of yielding to temptation. We have nothing to bear which He has not endured. . . . In man's behalf, Christ conquered by enduring the severest test."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 117.

Christ was the spotless Son of God. In Him was no sin. He lived the life that God originally intended for us—a life in harmony with the life of God. He lived in constant communion with His Father.

Compare Christ bearing the sins of the world at His first coming and appearing "apart from sin" at His second coming. Heb. 9:28, NKJV.

The expression "'without sin'" is "in contrast with the phrase 'to bear the sins of many.' At His first advent Christ took upon Himself the sins of the world. . . . He was made 'sin for us, . . . that we might be made the righteousness of God in him' (2 Cor. 5:21). But the work he [sic] came to do for sin is all completed ere He comes the second time."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 457.

Jesus passed through the pangs of temptation not only to sympathize with us but also to be our delivering substitute. His success in this world opens for us the gates of heaven, for in His merits we are reconciled to God through His grace. Thus, His first coming is the basis for His second coming. He, indeed, has every right to save us.

Living in this modern age, we have the tendency to take something, dissect it, examine, and reconstruct it according to what makes sense to us. To dissect a rose, however, is to destroy it. Much more so with Christ's incarnation. We can only marvel at the mystery that the eternal God of the universe would humble Himself to become one with us. It is time for us to lay aside the scalpel and stand back in awe and wonder and worship Him!

CHRIST CONFRONTED CONFLICT AND CONQUERED (Heb. 12:2; 2:10; Matt. 3:16, 17; 4:3, 4).

What relationship is there between the suffering of Christ in this world and the joy of the world to come? Heb. 12:2; 2:10. How does this apply to our experience?

Christ confronted and defeated Satan's temptations in perfect obedience to His Father's will. It is in the light of His coming kingdom of glory that we find purpose in what He endured in this sinful world. It was no abstract experience for Him, but the practical requirement necessary to guarantee eternity for all of us who give ourselves wholly to Him. As we by grace remain in Christ, we learn through the indwelling Spirit to resist temptation and endure suffering so that we may be found perfect in Him at His second coming.

"To share eternity with the ransomed of all ages and the unfallen beings of other worlds was a prospect that brought utter joy to our Lord as He suffered in Gethsemane and on the cross of Calvary."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 482.

Compare what Jesus heard His Father tell Him after His baptism with what He heard Satan tell Him during the first temptation in the wilderness. Matt. 3:16, 17; 4:3. What significance does Christ's answer to Satan have? Matt. 4:4.

"Christ, in the wilderness of temptation, stood in Adam's place to bear the test he failed to endure."—"The Temptation of Christ," *Ellen G. White, Present Truth, and Review and Herald Articles* (July 28, 1874), vol. 1, p. 143.

Satan led our first parents to doubt God's Word and trust their own senses. Also, Christ's temptation was to doubt His Father's Word that had been spoken at His baptism. Christ could have reasoned: "Is it logical that God would leave His Son in the wilderness for forty days and nights without food and companionship? I will prove my divinity by an undeniable miracle!" Instead, He relied wholly on the Word of God. "It is written," He replied. The Savior's temptation translates into the desire to live independently from God. In contrast to our first parents, Christ gained the victory by depending totally upon the power of His Father's word.

As Christ's coming draws near, "are the people of God now so firmly established upon His word that they would not yield to the evidence of their senses?"—*The Great Controversy*, p. 625.

VICTORY IN JESUS (James 4:7; 1 John 4:17; Rev. 3:20, 21).

How are Christ's temptations and victory related to ours? How does our abiding in Him affect our view of the judgment and the Second Coming? 1 John 4:17; Rev. 3:20, 21.

We can never honestly say that our temptations are more powerful than Christ's. He met temptation when He was emaciated from hunger and when He was abandoned by humans and felt abandoned by God in Pilate's courtroom, in Gethsemane, and at Calvary. "It was in the time of greatest weakness that Christ was assailed by the fiercest temptations."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 120. He sank to the depths of human temptation to win the battle for the weakest of us, so that in His victory we may become like Him and enter into His glory. "Notice, however, that this description of our being like Christ in the world is conditional upon our dwelling in love and in God (v. 16). It is love that links us to the Master and makes us like Him."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 670. Those who love Christ overcome in Christ and will share in His glory when He comes.

"Those who are truly like the Judge need not fear the judgment! The believer's ground for confidence is not his own imperfect attainments, but the faultless character and propitiatory sacrifice of Christ his Saviour."—Page 669.

The temptations of Christ actually were greater than those of humankind, for none of us have ever been tempted to use our "divinity" to our advantage. When Christ was before Annas, the High Priest, "He knew that in a moment, by the flashing forth of His divine power, He could lay His cruel tormentors in the dust. . . . By a word, by a look, He could compel His persecutors to confess that He was Lord above kings and rulers, priests and temple. But it was His difficult task to keep to the position He had chosen as one with humanity."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 700.

Christ did not overcome through the use of His own divine power. "Jesus gained the victory through submission and faith in God."—Page 130. "He exercised in His own behalf no power that is not freely offered to us."—Page 24. We must first submit ourselves to God, because we "cannot save ourselves from the tempter's power. . . ." For "when we try to stand in our own strength, we shall become a prey to his devices. . . ."—Page 131.

Have you applied these promises for spiritual victory? (Phil. 4:13; James 4:7). Remember that "Satan trembles and flees before the weakest soul who finds refuge in that mighty name [of Jesus]."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 131.

FURTHER STUDY: John 1:4, 6-8; 11:43; 14:30; Rom. 5:8; 9:5; 1 Cor. 15; Phil. 2:5-8; 1 Pet. 2:22; Jude 23, 25.

Read "The Lord Is Risen," in *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 779-787. Also read pp. 24-26.

"The voice that cried from the cross, 'It is finished,' was heard among the dead. It pierced the walls of sepulchers, and summoned the sleepers to arise. Thus will it be when the voice of Christ shall be heard from heaven. That voice will penetrate the graves and unbar the tombs, and the dead in Christ shall arise. At the Saviour's resurrection a few graves were opened, but at His second coming all the precious dead shall hear His voice, and shall come forth to glorious, immortal life. The same power that raised Christ from the dead will raise His church, and glorify it with Him, above all principalities, above all powers, above every name that is named, not only in this world but also in the world to come."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 787.

"God has adopted human nature in the person of His Son, and has carried the same into the highest heaven. . . . In Christ the family of earth and the family of heaven are bound together. Christ glorified is our brother. Heaven is enshrined in humanity, and humanity is enfolded in the bosom of Infinite Love."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 25, 26.

"The humanity of the Son of God is everything to us. It is the golden chain that binds our souls to Christ, and through Christ to God. This is to be our study. Christ was a real man; He gave proof of His humility in becoming a man. Yet He was God in the flesh."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 244.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Explain why, when we approach the subject of Christ's humanity, "we would do well to heed the words spoken by Christ to Moses at the burning bush, 'Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.'"—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 244.
2. What risks do you think were involved in the mission Jesus undertook among us? Explain.
3. Why is death called "the last enemy"? (1 Cor. 15:26).

SUMMARY: Jesus was Heaven's emissary to bridge the gulf between God and fallen humanity. His first coming is the guarantee of ultimate restoration at His second coming. He accomplished all that was necessary in this world in order to have us inherit the world to come. Every facet of His earthly ministry should lead us to dwell on our heavenly inheritance.



Eager to Serve

J. H. Zachary

The evangelism training seminar in Germany had just ended. As Uwe Wiesenbergs, one of the participants, drove home, he was eager to share his faith with someone. But this was Germany, where people's materialistic focus makes witnessing for Christ difficult. As he drove, he asked God to help him find someone who needed to know Him.

He stopped to visit his uncle Paul, a hospital nurse who also had attended the seminar. As Uwe stood in the hospital foyer, an old man walked up and began talking to him. He told Uwe that he had decided to end his life.

Uwe guided the man to a bench and listened as the man unburdened his heart, telling a story of heartache and disappointment. Uwe could understand why the man was deeply depressed.

When the man stopped talking, Uwe shared his faith in God and his confidence in the power of prayer. He shared the story of Jesus and the love of God that led Jesus to die on the cross. "God loves you very much," Uwe offered. "He will forgive your sins and fill your heart with joy and peace. He will make you a new man." Then the two men prayed.

Hope flickered in the man's eyes, and a smile crept across his face. Then the man asked, "May I go to church with you?"

As Uwe began to explain that he does not live in Neustadt, his uncle Paul walked up. Uwe introduced him to the old man and relayed the man's request to go to church. Paul promised to take him the next Sabbath and then for a walk in the Black Forest where they could commune with God. Paul arranged with the man to begin Bible studies.

"I have never met such wonderful people in all my life!" the old man smiled. Uwe and Paul gave him a copy of *Steps to Christ*, then the three men prayed. The old man said, "I wanted to end my life today; now I have been born anew!"

Uwe's enthusiasm bubbled over as he shared how, in just one hour, God had answered his prayer for one soul by bringing this man to him. "He came in despair, and now he has hope," Uwe said. "I thank God for the power of the Holy Spirit. Souls can be won to Jesus even here in Germany."

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

Salvation and the Second Coming



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Gen. 3:1-7; Ezek. 18:4; Matt. 27:46; John 11:49-52; Rom. 3:21-26; 5:8-11; 1 John 2:2-6.

MEMORY TEXT: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16, NKJV).

KEY THOUGHTS: God manifested His love to us by sending His only Son to live and die for us. This is central to the plan of salvation and is the key to the certainty of the Second Coming. Without the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, there would be no hope of His second coming.

THE DEATH OF CHRIST REVEALS THE HEIGHT OF THE LOVE OF GOD AND THE DEPTH TO WHICH SIN WILL GO. In the council of peace, even before our creation, the Godhead made the decision to send Jesus to this world if humankind should sin. “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

The Cross also reveals the magnitude of sin. At every turn, Satan and his agents sought to destroy the Son of God and His mission of saving fallen humanity. No longer must the universe wonder about either the love of God or the awfulness of sin. The events of Calvary stand as an eternal witness to the magnitude of both. Calvary made it possible for us to be rescued from sin and death and for us to be fully restored to God at the Second Coming.

THE CROSS REVEALS GOD'S JUDGMENT ON SIN (Ezek. 18:4; Matt. 27:46; Rom. 3:26; 6:23).

The Cross tells us that God takes sin very seriously. Sin is rebellion, and it goes contrary to the character of God. It is the desire to establish other gods ahead of the loving, creating, and life-giving God of the universe. It is rooted in the desire to live our lives independently of God. God's judgment is that "the soul who sins shall die" (Ezek. 18:4, NKJV). God does not desire to bring that judgment upon us sinners. Rather, Jesus chose to take that death sentence upon Himself so that He may give us life eternal at His return.

What caused Jesus to cry out in anguish to His Father? Matt. 27:46.

"He feared that sin was so offensive to God that Their separation was to be eternal. Christ felt the anguish which the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race. It was the sense of sin, bringing the Father's wrath upon Him as man's substitute, that made the cup He drank so bitter, and broke the heart of the Son of God."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 753.

For the first time, the universe fully understood God's judgment on sin. The Cross tells us how intensely sin matters to God. No wonder He will not deal lightly with sin. God's judgment on it must be understood so that it will never arise the second time. The Cross makes it possible for God to be understood as a God of love when He destroys evil and evildoers at the end.

Yet, God does all in His power to draw them to Himself before the end comes, when it is too late. Jesus took the penalty for sin upon Himself. In place of eternal death, He offers eternal life. Only the Life-Giver can make such an offer. Only He who has life within Himself can stand in our place.

God did not lower the standard for eternal life. Perfect harmony with His character and with the universe as He created it is necessary. Any other standard would result in anarchy. Yet, Christ took the result of transgression upon Himself in order "that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26, NKJV). God revealed His character of love and justice. Of justice, because He did not lessen the seriousness of sin by removing its results; of love, by taking the results of sin upon Himself.

Imagine living in a universe without any trace of sin. Do you look forward to the time when sin will be finally eradicated? How do you prepare yourself and others to welcome that day?

CHRIST OUR SUBSTITUTE (John 11:49-52; Rom. 3:21-26; 1 John 2:2; 4:9, 10; 2 Cor. 5:21).

What did the high priest unknowingly prophesy about the role that Christ would take on our behalf? John 11:49-52.

Jesus took our place in this sinful world in order that we might take our place next to Him in the world to come. The righteous One died to save many from sin unto righteousness and from death unto eternal life. Christ came to reveal who His Father is and what He is like. That God is love was revealed in the healing of the sick, in the offer of forgiveness, in the gentle touch, and supremely on the cross. Christ also revealed the justice of God. On the cross He showed that God will not tolerate sin in the universe, that one day sin will be eradicated. At the Cross, God was revealed to be a God both of love and of justice. Christ took our judgment upon Himself so that He could make it possible for us to enter His glory.

How did God reveal His love and righteousness to us? 1 John 4:9, 10; Rom. 3:21-26.

God made Jesus, who knew no sin, to be sin for us! This is great news! The God of the universe condescended to take our sin upon Himself. To see what love means, we must see ourselves as sinners, the objects of God's wrath, and yet as people whom Christ loves and for whom Christ died. "It is one of the NT's resounding paradoxes that it is God's love that averts God's wrath from us, and that indeed it is precisely in the averting of this wrath that we see what real love is."—D. Guthrie and J. A. Motyer, editors, *The New Bible Commentary*, third edition (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), p. 1267.

Explain why God sent His Son into the world. 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 John 2:2.

Echoing through the ages comes Jesus' question: "‘When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?’" (Luke 18:8, NKJV). The question echoes today, When Jesus returns, will He find faith in my heart? In what ways do I allow Him today to build up my faith and to prepare me for His appearing? In what ways do I actively work with Christ to build up the faith of others?

GOD'S REVELATION AND SALVATION (Gen. 3:1-7; Rom. 5:8-11).

What was at the heart of Adam's and Eve's rebellion against God? Gen. 3:1-7.

At the tree in the garden, the serpent asked, "Has God not said?" Adam and Eve believed the tempter's words, which were in direct contradiction to God's words. Will we, too, develop our own concept of how God will behave? Such distrust in God's Word led them out of Eden and plunged the human race into sin and destruction. Nothing else but trusting God's Word and His plan of salvation will show us the way to Eden restored.

What can we learn from God's revelation in His Word about His initiative in our salvation?

Rom. 5:8-11 _____

2 Cor. 6:1, 2 _____

How can we know about the plan of salvation? How can we have knowledge of the role of Christ in our salvation? Can we discern God's plan of salvation in observing the world around us? Can we determine how God will save us by our philosophy and research?

It is in our human nature to try to develop our own concept of God apart from His self-revelation in Jesus Christ and the Bible. It is then tempting to measure the biblical concept of God by our own human yardstick. We begin to ask, What kind of god is God? Will He really execute judgment on sin and sinners when His Son returns? Did He die on the cross to actually take our place? Is it moral for one person to die in place of another? Maybe Christ came only to demonstrate the love of God, not to take our penalty upon Himself.

But according to God's Word, Christ did come to take our place. He did come to pay with His life for our sins. His great love was supremely demonstrated on Calvary's cross as He became our reconciliation, substitute, and assurance of salvation. Such concepts of Christ's life and death come not from humanity but from our unchangeable God and His trustworthy Word; and they do not have to harmonize with the moral sensibilities of our age.

What are the implications for the certainty of the Second Coming if we do not trust the biblical truth that Christ died in our place, becoming our Substitute and Surety? Why not gratefully accept God's plan of salvation just as it is revealed in His Word?

SALVATION IS THE GIFT OF GOD (John 5:24; 17:3; Rom. 8:4; Eph. 2:8-10; Titus 2:11-13; 1 John 5:11-13).

What is salvation, and how do we receive it? John 17:3; Eph. 2:8-10.

What role do our righteous deeds and works play in our salvation? Titus 3:4, 5.

It was God's decision to become one of us and to die in our place. Our great need alone and utter helplessness motivated His decision. No work we can perform merits His grace. God's grace originates in His desire to restore us to Himself. In His great love, He longs to restore us to the Edenic face-to-face communion with Him for eternity.

The tragedy is that Christ, the Creator of the world, came to those whom He had created, and they did not receive Him. As the Creator, He was the true light, and His human creation preferred darkness to light. Yet, those who did receive Him by believing in His name received the right to be called the children of God (John 1:6-11).

What is our only way to confront and deal with fear of condemnation and judgment? Rom. 8:1; John 5:24. Explain.

Christ did not come to condemn the world but to save it. He came to bring us eternal life. He came to restore us to a knowledge of God, so that we might live with Him throughout eternity in perfect fellowship. Those who believe in Christ are not condemned, but those who do not are condemned already, because they have not believed in Christ. They loved darkness rather than light and would not come to Jesus, the Light of the world. (See John 3:17-19.)

What is the determining factor for us in receiving eternal life now? 1 John 5:11-13.

Christ wants to have fellowship with us (Rev. 3:20). He has taken our place on the cross in order to remove every barrier erected by sin. On the cross, He has taken the separation from God that was ours in order to give us the eternal relationship with the Father that is His.

How do you react when God confronts you with your sinful situation? Have you considered Christ's death as your substitute good news? How does this give you hope in the judgment and certainty in the Second Coming?

RESURRECTION TO NEWNESS OF LIFE (1 John 2:3-6; 5:2-5; Rom. 6:1-5; Eph. 2:1-10).

What is the relationship between Christ's resurrection and our walk in newness of life? Rom. 6:1-5.

God's purpose in salvation is to restore us to Himself. By faith in the death of Christ, God removes the sin that has separated us from Him, so that we might live with Him forever. If we continue in sin, we will continue to be separated from God. Grace is not given in order that we might continue to live in sin, but it is given to free us from sin.

"Those who have risen with Christ to walk in newness of life are the elect of God. They are holy unto the Lord, and are acknowledged by Him as His beloved. As such, they are under solemn covenant to distinguish themselves by showing humility of mind. They are to clothe themselves in garments of righteousness. They are separate from the world, from its spirit, its practices, and they are to reveal that they are learning of Him. . . ."—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 133.

How do we become free from the slavery of sin to live unto God? Eph. 2:1-10. How do we overcome this world to enter His world? 1 John 5:4, 5; John 3:3.

Jesus came to this fallen world to "save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21, NKJV). He died for our sins, but He was resurrected that we might live for Him. He died to remove what was separating us from Him, but He was resurrected to give us His life. God wants us to enter into the newness of His life, because He wants us to walk with Him. This is the preparation we need to walk with Him throughout eternity.

What does John say about our character if we claim to know Christ but do not keep His commandments? Explain what loving obedience is. 1 John 2:3-6; 5:2, 3.

Remember that eternal life is defined as knowing God and Jesus Christ (John 17:3). Thus, a claim to know God is a claim to eternal life.

What is the relationship between the resurrection of Christ, the life you live by the power of that resurrection, and the resurrection of the righteous dead at the Second Coming? Mention specific ways in which you may live by the power of Christ's resurrection.

FURTHER STUDY: Luke 23:39-43; John 14:1-3; Rom. 8:31-39; 1 Cor. 15:20-22; Col. 2:1-12; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; Heb. 9:14.

Read chapter 78, "Calvary," in *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 741-757.

"Upon Christ as our substitute and surety was laid the iniquity of us all. He was counted a transgressor, that He might redeem us from the condemnation of the law. The guilt of every descendant of Adam was pressing upon His heart. The wrath of God against sin, the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation. All His life Christ had been publishing to a fallen world the good news of the Father's mercy and pardoning love. Salvation for the chief of sinners was His theme. But now with the terrible weight of guilt He bears, He cannot see the Father's reconciling face. The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. So great was this agony that His physical pain was hardly felt."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 753.

Here is one way to illustrate how to walk in the newness of life and the power of Christ's resurrection: Birth is not the only thing that has to do with life. It is true that we had nothing to do with our birth; it was totally a gift upon which we will always be solely dependent. However, birth does not define all of life. It describes entrance into life. Life is not very meaningful if we do not move beyond birth into the fullness of life.

So, entrance into salvation is totally the gift of God. We can do nothing to deserve it. Nonetheless, God invites us to enter into the fullness of salvation, to flex our spiritual muscles, to breathe the fresh air of the Spirit, to carry out His earthly work. Christ came that we might have life and that we might have it more abundantly. As Christ was resurrected from the dead, so He invites us to be resurrected to newness of life now and to look forward to its fullness throughout eternity.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How should my life demonstrate that I am saved from wrath through the blood of Christ? (Rom. 5:8-10).
2. How do I accept all that God reveals about Himself in His Word—that He is a God of love and of justice?
3. What is our motivation to be part of God's plan for a re-created heaven and earth?

SUMMARY: God's plan of salvation is complete. It accounts for our situation in sin, as well as for God's character of love and justice. It makes our eternal reconciliation with God possible through the death of Christ. It gives us the hope and the certainty of the Second Coming.



A Mistaken Landing

J. H. Zachary

Pastor Thomas Davai, president of the Western Highlands Mission in Papua New Guinea, boarded the mission plane to visit a remote congregation. In a few minutes the plane circled the tiny jungle landing strip to announce its approach. By the time it landed, the entire village had gathered to greet the visitors.

But Pastor Davai did not recognize anyone in the crowd. "Can you tell me if there are Seventh-day Adventists here?" he asked.

"What are Seventh-day Adventists?" one man replied. During the conversation that followed, Pastor Davai and the pilot learned that they had landed at the village of Tawa instead of their intended destination. Before they climbed back into the plane, Pastor Davai asked, "May we return sometime to visit you?"

"Yes, you are welcome to return," the villagers answered.

Several months later a man entered the mission office and asked if he could speak to "the big fella." He was shown into Pastor Davai's office. As they talked, Pastor Davai realized that the man had come from the village of Tawa.

"How did you know where to find us?" Pastor Davai asked. The man told the pastor that he had remembered the three angels emblem on the mission plane. He walked through the streets of the city until he found a sign with the same logo. The sign was on the mission office.

"When can you come to Tawa village?" the man asked. "We have been waiting for you." Pastor Davai recognized God's call, but he explained to his visitor that the village is quite distant from the mission headquarters and that there is no access by land. However, he promised to send someone as soon as he could.

Pastor Davai asked Casenov, a lay missionary, to go to Tawa to survey the people's interests and needs and to help them.

The people of Tawa welcomed the lay missionary. They built a simple church and house for their pastor. Casenov remained in the village seeking interests, studying daily with those who wanted to learn about God, and teaching simple health remedies to these isolated villagers. Today the little church has 16 baptized members and 40 more preparing for baptism. Pastor Davai is convinced that God had a hand in guiding the mission plane to the wrong airstrip and thus opening the village of Tawa to the gospel.

J. H. Zachary is international evangelism coordinator for The Quiet Hour. He works in cooperation with the Ministerial Association of the General Conference.



Will it include Jesus?

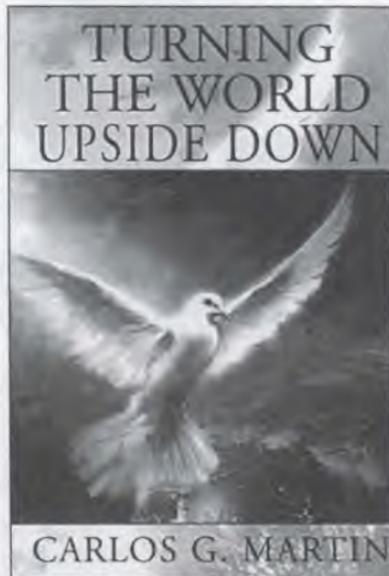
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The Sanctuary and the Second Coming



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Dan. 7:9, 10; Ezek. 33:11; Zech. 3:1-7; Rom. 8:1-4; Heb. 4:14-16; James 2:22, 23; Rev. 22:14.

MEMORY TEXT: “‘For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed’” (Daniel 8:14, NKJV).

KEY THOUGHT: The judgment is good news for those who have accepted the blood and righteousness of Jesus as cleansing for their sins and as assurance of their salvation.

THE TIME OF HIS JUDGMENT HAS COME. Daniel 8:14, in conjunction with Daniel 9:24-27, announces an investigative judgment to begin in the heavenly sanctuary in the year 1844.

Do texts such as these bring fear to your heart? “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (2 Cor. 5:10); and “The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment” (Ps. 1:5). A mortgage company advertises: “Need money for a house? Finding it difficult to get a mortgage? Come down and visit us, and we’ll give you just what you deserve!”

One reason many of us fear judgment is just that: We fear that God is waiting to give us “just what we deserve.” However, the loving and merciful Jesus took upon Himself what we deserved (death) and gave us what He deserved (life). Those who cannot see this wonderful picture of our Lord seek to resolve their fears by denying the concept of an investigative judgment. Such judgment, however, is good news for His faithful followers, for it ushers in their face-to-face reunion when He comes again.

THE GOOD NEWS OF THE JUDGMENT (Ezek. 33:11; Ps. 96:10-13; Dan. 7:21, 22).

How does God view the death of the wicked? Ezek. 33:11. What does this tell us about the kind of God He is?

Describe David's attitude toward the judgment. Ps. 96:10-13. Why did he look forward to it? Ps. 7:8; 26:1; 43:1.

David was certainly a sinner, yet he looked to the judgment without fear. On what basis was he optimistic about the outcome of the judgment? Although he was a sinner, he had asked for forgiveness. "He also understood the message of righteousness by faith. He recognized that, sinful though he was, his sins could be covered and cleansed by the blood of the Substitute. He prayed: 'Purge me with hyssop [the agent used to apply the blood of the sacrifice, Lev. 14:4-6; Num. 19:18; Ex. 12:22], and I shall be clean' (Ps. 51:7)."—Richard M. Davidson, "The Good News of Yom Kippur," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, Leo R. Van Dolson, ed. (Collegedale, Tenn.: Adventist Theological Society, Autumn, 1991), vol. 2, no. 2, p. 5.

What is the outcome of the judgment? Dan. 7:21, 22; Zech. 3:2.

The investigative judgment reveals to the universe the saints' standing before God. It does not put the salvation of God's people in jeopardy. While it is a fearful thing to those who have rejected salvation, for those in Christ the investigative judgment is a reason for singing. Since 1844, God's saints can rejoice that finally the judgment has come. The final judgment has begun—the process of investigation, followed by the millennial review and the final execution of the sentence. At last, Satan is to be silenced. The truth will be seen that vindicates God's people. Truly the first angel's message—"The hour of His judgment has come" (Rev. 14:7, NKJV)—is part of the "eternal gospel."

Vindication and assurance in the judgment *are* good news, for the judgment leads to Christ's soon coming. It is so good that many find it difficult to believe. In our consumer societies, we expect to pay dearly for something of such great value. Of course, Someone *has* paid—paid with His life.

In the judgment, am I concerned about what God thinks of me or about what God thinks of my Substitute? How does my life demonstrate the answer?

CHRIST AND THE JUDGMENT (John 5:22, 27, 30; Heb. 7:25; 4:14-16; 1 John 2:1).

In most courtrooms of today, the judge plays one role, the prosecutor another, the defense attorney still another. However, in the heavenly judgment, we find that Christ plays more than one role on our behalf.

Ascertain the characteristics and roles of Christ in the following texts, which give us assurance in the judgment:

Heb. 2:17, 18 _____

Heb. 7:25 _____

1 John 2:1 _____

John 5:22, 27, 30 _____

Rom. 8:34 _____

What great news! Our Friend, the One who came to save us, who longs to take us home to live with Him eternally, stands by our side in court. He is indeed all that we need in the judgment. No wonder we are urged to come boldly before the throne of grace! (Heb. 4:16).

What do you find in Hebrews 4:14-16 that encourages you to approach the throne of grace with confidence?

“John in holy vision beholds the faithful souls that come up out of great tribulation, surrounding the throne of God, clad in white robes, and crowned with immortal glory. What though they have been counted the offscouring of the earth? In the investigative judgment their lives and characters are brought in review before God, and that solemn tribunal reverses the decision of their enemies. Their faithfulness to God and to His Word stands revealed, and Heaven’s high honors are awarded them as conquerors in the strife with sin and Satan.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 361.

If I know that the Father counted Christ’s character as my character, how would I look at the judgment? What difference does this make in my life today? Am I willing to ask humbly to receive the character of Christ?

FORGIVENESS OF SINS AND THE JUDGMENT (Rom. 3:28; James 2:22, 23; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19; Eph. 4:30; Rom. 8:14-17, 23).

Some find difficulty in harmonizing the promise that our sins are forgiven when we ask for forgiveness with the equally biblical concept of a future judgment in which the record of our deeds is examined. They ask, Is it not true that our sins are *forgotten* at the time they are *forgiven*? Then how can a final judgment make that determination?

The great gospel theme has “already” and “not yet” dimensions to it in the sense that God already has fulfilled some of His promises to us, while some of His promises to us are yet to be fulfilled. Discover these two complimentary concepts in the following pairs of texts:

1. Rom. 3:28 _____ James 2:22, 23 _____
2. 1 Pet. 1:18, 19 _____ Eph. 4:30 _____
3. Rom. 8:14-17 _____ Rom. 8:23 _____
4. 2 Tim. 1:9 _____ Matt. 24:13 _____

Similarly, in the earthly sanctuary the sins of the penitent were atoned for through the daily service, yet the final atonement at the end of the year dealt with all their sins through the cleansing of the sanctuary (see Lev. 16:16). Likewise, sins are covered by the blood of Christ when they are confessed and forgiven (as in Ps. 51:1, 9), yet the final blotting out, or removal of the record of these sins, takes place in connection with the investigative judgment. (See Rev. 3:5; Exod. 32:33; Heb. 10:14-18; Dan. 12:1, 2; Matt. 10:32, 33.)

The concept of judgment does not jeopardize assurance of salvation. For even the final blotting out of sin is by virtue of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus, after which the record of sin is removed from the sanctuary forever. The defilement is gone and the universe is clean for eternity. “He who conquers shall be clad thus in white garments, and I will not blot his name out of the book of life; I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels” (Rev. 3:5, RSV). What great news!

The good news is that the judgment is an integral part of the everlasting gospel, ushering in the Second Coming. How should we live our lives today in view of the end time? In what ways can we share this good news with others so that they, too, may look forward to Jesus’ appearing?

ASSURANCE OF SALVATION AND THE JUDGMENT (1 John 3:1; 5:10-13; Ps. 103:12; Isa. 38:17; 43:25).

What is our status in God's family? 1 John 3:1. What is the status of our salvation in Jesus? 1 John 5:10-13; John 6:47. How does this affect our lives and witness?

Have you ever had a friend who left you dangling? You never knew where you stood. You felt as if the slightest mistake could sever your relationship. Then you would have to crawl back on your knees, so to speak, in order to restore the friendship. It is clear that healthy relationships cannot exist in such an environment.

Have you ever been tempted to view God in the same way? Has the concept of the investigative judgment left you dangling in your relationship with God? Satan rejoices over such misconceptions of God.

God's desire is to enjoy a loving relationship with each of us. That is why He created us, redeemed us, and plans to take us home with Him when He returns. A healthy relationship with God can no more dangle from a thread than can a human relationship. God wants us to be secure in our relationship with Him.

What does God promise to do with sins that have separated us from Him? Ps. 103:12; Isa. 38:17; 43:25.

These texts are full of assurance. God wants to put us at ease, like the children in a family who know that they belong and are accepted. Only then can we come boldly before the throne of grace. Only then can we enjoy the companionship of God. Only then can we, as did the prodigal son, run into His outstretched arms.

"If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 62. He abides in your heart by faith.

"More than this, Christ changes the heart. . . . You are to maintain this connection with Christ by faith and the continual surrender of your will to Him; and so long as you do this, He will work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure."—p. 63. (Read Gal. 2:20; Matt. 10:20).

How does the above statement help you to await Christ's coming joyously? Why would you desire to proclaim the everlasting gospel that the hour of His judgment has come?

SALVATION AND JUDGMENT (Rom. 8:1-4; Eph. 2:8; Eccles. 12:14; James 2:14-18).

How are we saved, and how are we judged? Eph. 2:8; Rom. 1:16, 17; 6:13-18; Eccles. 12:14.

The tension between salvation by grace on the one hand, and judgment by works on the other, causes concern among many Christians. How can works be the basis of judgment if we are saved by faith?

What is the relationship between faith and works? James 2:14-18. What is the relationship between salvation in Christ and walking according to the Spirit? Rom. 8:1-4.

If faith without works is dead, does that mean that we are saved by works? Paul exclaims, No! By the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified! (Rom. 3:20). Does grace then abolish the law? No! It establishes it! "Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law" (Rom. 3:31, RSV).

How then, can we embrace the biblical teaching that we are saved by grace but judged by the law?

The book of Leviticus helps us to understand the relationship between salvation and holiness. Chapter 16 deals with the Day of Atonement, when the earthly sanctuary was cleansed. This cleansing pointed to the final day of judgment. The chapters leading up to chapter 16 refer to cleansing sins by blood. The following chapters refer to holiness. Richard M. Davidson explains the connection this way: "I am convinced that we can fully appreciate the *significance* of the Day of Atonement only when we see it in its setting in Leviticus. Building up to the Day of Atonement, we see blood, substitutionary sacrifice—in New Testament terms, justification. Assurance on the Day of Atonement is based solely upon the blood of the substitute."—See Davidson, "The Good News of Yom Kippur," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*. Yet from Leviticus 16 onward, the rest of the book presents a call to holiness, to sanctification. The Day of Atonement thus links blood and holiness, justification and sanctification.

The structural setting of Leviticus underscores the balanced gospel message. While good works are never the foundation of our salvation, they follow salvation.

Do I perform good deeds in order to be saved or because I am saved? What difference does this make in my life?

FURTHER STUDY: Ezek. 36:25-27; Luke 12:8; Rom. 3:20-28; Gal. 3:13; Heb. 10:1-39; James 2:8-12; 1 John 1:8-10; 4:15-21.

Read *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 63-70; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 758-764.

"The law requires righteousness,—a righteous life, a perfect character; and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character. These he offers as a free gift to all who will receive them. His life stands for the life of men. . . . He [Christ] builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character. . . . Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 762.

It is exciting to live in the time of the pre-advent judgment, for it takes place just before the return of Jesus. The judgment reveals God's righteousness in saving those who have accepted His atonement. Thus it refutes Satan's arguments in the great controversy between him and Christ.

Our standing before God depends not upon our works but upon our acceptance of what Christ has done for us. Satan comes before God's heavenly court to accuse Joshua. Joshua indeed seems worthy of accusation, but God commands that the filthy garments be replaced with rich, clean robes. The accusations of Satan are silenced. (See Zech. 3:1-5.)

Some may raise the concern that the judgment detracts from what Christ did for us on the cross. But salvation is always based on the merits of His sacrifice. The verdict in favor of the saints is based totally upon the blood of Jesus Christ.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Living in the time of the judgment, why is it important that I examine myself and my works? Can my good works tip the scales of judgment in my favor? Explain.
2. Do I rejoice to live in this crucial time of the judgment? How does this help me to proclaim "The hour of His judgment is come"?

SUMMARY: The saints rejoice in the time of judgment, for they are vindicated! They have received the robe of Christ's righteousness and have lived by His power! Let us join in proclaiming the everlasting gospel—"the hour of His judgment has come" (Rev. 14:7, NKJV)—a final phase in the plan of salvation that ushers in the Second Coming, the reign of the righteous in heaven for a thousand years, and the new earth.



God Knew the One

Eric Monnier

As a church leader, I often hold week-long lay training schools. I teach lay men and women how to give Bible studies, how to preach, how to bring people to a decision for Christ, and prepare them for baptism.

At one session with 120 lay workers, I was demonstrating how to make a call for a decision for baptism. I explained that sometimes we need to get personal, even go into the audience to encourage one with whom we have been working to make that decision for baptism.

As I spoke I walked into the group of lay workers and approached one young woman. I looked into her eyes and said, "You know, this may be the time that God has chosen for you to decide for Christ. Don't take a chance on waiting. Come, God loves you; all of us love you. We want you in God's kingdom. Come."

With those words, I took her arm and invited her to walk to the front of the room with me. She walked with me to the front. After I closed my demonstration call with prayer, I thanked her, and she returned to her seat. Throughout the demonstration the young woman had said nothing.

I continued with class. During our noon break several people came to talk to me. This girl stood a few feet away but left before I could speak with her. Later one of the other students came to me and told me that the girl with whom I had made the appeal had confided in him that she wanted to be baptized on Sabbath.

I learned that this young girl had grown up in an Adventist home but had never made her decision to be baptized. But during my call, the call that I thought was only a demonstration, she felt God speaking directly to her.

Later that day I spoke with her. She confirmed her desire to be baptized, then she said to me, "No one here knew that I was not baptized. No one except God. God directed you to approach me rather than someone else."

We made arrangements to close the training class with a baptism on Sabbath afternoon. As the members of the lay training class formed a circle around us, nearly every one of them had tears in his or her eyes. We all realized that only God knew her need. And He directed me to her.

Eric Monnier is president of the Bolivian Union Mission.

Such a Cloud of Witnesses and the Second Coming



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Gen. 6:8-13; Num. 13:27-33; Luke 1:17, 67-79; Acts 1:8-11; 2 Pet. 3:10-13; 1 John 3:1-11.

MEMORY TEXT: “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14, NKJV).

KEY THOUGHTS: God has always had messengers to proclaim His message of reconciliation to lost humanity. At key junctures just prior to major events, these messengers proclaimed a special message. In these last days, God’s people are to carry the special message of His second coming to all the world.

GOD'S SPECIAL MESSENGERS. “Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7). God has raised up key people at major turning points in history. Noah was commissioned to warn of the coming doom through a worldwide Flood. Abraham was called out to be the founder of a nation. Jeremiah called for repentance in view of the impending doom from Babylon. John the Baptist proclaimed the coming of the Messiah. In the last days, God is calling a people to proclaim the full gospel to lost humanity. God wants people to accept the sacrifice of His Son on Calvary. He desires them to accept His offer of reconciliation. Therefore, God is looking for a people in these last days who will carry this gospel of the kingdom—the everlasting gospel—to the whole world before Jesus returns.

NOAH AND THE IMPENDING FLOOD (Gen. 6:8-13; Heb. 11:7).

What was society like in Noah's day? How do these conditions compare to those that will exist just before the second coming of Christ? Gen. 6:11-13; Matt. 24:37-39; Luke 17:26, 27; 21:34-36.

At the time of the Flood, even those who claimed to worship the true God rejected the message of Noah. They reasoned that a God of love would not destroy the creatures whom He had created. Further, their study of science convinced them that it could not rain. After all, it had not rained since the creation of the earth. Who better than they would know that talk about impending judgment was just a scare tactic? There was no danger. (See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 90-104.)

What prepared Noah (and what will prepare us) to deliver God's message and to remain faithful during the approaching judgment hour of earth? Gen. 6:8, 9; Heb. 11:7.

Noah "gave the world an example of believing just what God says."—*Patriarchs and Prophets* p. 95. By contrast, "The wise men of this world talked of science and the fixed laws of nature, and declared that there could be no variation in these laws, and that this message of Noah could not possibly be true. The talented men of Noah's time set themselves in league against God's will and purpose, and scorned the message and the messenger that he had sent. When they could not move Noah from his firm and implicit trust in the word of God, they pointed to him as a fanatic, as a ranting old man, full of superstition and madness. . . It was true that Noah could not controvert their philosophies, or refute the claims of science so called; but he could proclaim the word of God; for he knew it contained the infinite wisdom of the Creator, and, as he sounded it everywhere, it lost none of its force and reality because men of the world treated him with ridicule and contempt."—"An Example of Saving Faith," *Ellen G. White Articles, Signs of the Times* (April 18, 1895), vol. 3, pp. 200, 201.

How did Jesus' victory in the wilderness compare with Noah's stand for God's Word? Matt. 4:1-11.

What kind of faith would it take to wait for rain for seven days in the ark with crowds scoffing outside? "But Noah stood like a rock amid the tempest."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 96. How can you be a faithful witness in these tempestuous times before Christ returns?

ABRAHAM, THE FATHER OF THE FAITHFUL (Gen. 12:1-3; 22:1-14; Heb. 11:8-10, 17, 18).

What did God ask Abraham to do, and what did He promise him? Gen. 12:1-3. How did Abraham respond? Gen. 12:4, 5; Heb. 11:8-10.

Abraham's unquestioning obedience is one of the most striking evidences of faith to be found in all the Bible. To him, faith was "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1, NKJV). This is the kind of faith that will lead us into our Promised Land when Christ returns.

"Relying upon the divine promise, without the least outward assurance of its fulfillment, he abandoned home and kindred and native land, and went forth, he knew not whither, to follow where God should lead." "He could not even explain his course of action so as to be understood by his friends. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned. . ."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 126.

What unusual test did God bring to Abraham, and how did he respond? Gen. 22:1-14; Heb. 11:17, 18. Contrast following human wisdom to living by faith in God's Word.

As the father of the faithful, Abraham was tested to the utmost. He was ordered to sacrifice Isaac, the son of promise, through whom God had promised to bless all nations. How easy it would have been to reason that God's command to kill his son was totally out of harmony with God's promise concerning his son's future! The command was inconsistent with God's character. With our imagination stretched to its limits, can we even begin to comprehend the agony involved in the patriarch's resolution? By faith, Abraham obeyed, believing that God would fulfill His promise. What an example for us as our faith is tested in preparation for Christ's coming!

As for God's command to move to Canaan, Abraham could muster more logical reasons for staying in Ur. Certainly the city, with its cultural and economic advantages, was a better center for evangelism than was Canaan. Abraham, however, accepted a "Thus saith the Lord" as the basis for obedience.

Abraham's focus was on his heavenly home as he "waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10, NKJV). What earthly things am I willing to abandon in order to possess my heavenly home? What is my focus in my daily life as I await Christ's second coming?

CALEB, JOSHUA, AND THE PROMISED LAND (Num. 13:27-33; Deut. 1:22-40).

In preparation for entry into the Promised Land, Israel encamped at Kadesh-barnea. From there, twelve spies were sent to determine the nature of the fortifications they must confront, as well as the morale and fitness of the enemy soldiers. Their mission was successful; they traversed the land from one end to the other.

What impression did the spies have of the land, and how did they view the possibility of taking it? Num. 13:27-29, 31-33; Deut. 1:25.

Taking the land was humanly impossible. It didn't take a military genius to draw that conclusion. The passes were strongly fortified. Missiles of stone were strategically positioned to wreak havoc on an approaching army. The cities were walled, the armies were well trained, and there were giants in the land. By contrast, Israel's civilian force had no military experience and was not equipped to do battle. Military science will tell you not to expect victory under such circumstances. From a human point of view, the situation seemed hopeless. That's what most of the spies and the Israelites as a whole concluded too. They "left God out of the question, and acted as though they must depend solely on the power of arms."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 388.

God had not only promised, He had commanded. Israel was to take the land. God would win the battle for them. Caleb and Joshua believed His word. They were ready to go forward, to defeat the enemy under God's leadership, and to possess the Promised Land.

Israel, as a whole, yielded to doubt. Doubt has amazing power to build upon human wisdom. By following their own judgment rather than accepting God's word by faith, Israel failed to reach the Promised Land. Neither will we enter the Promised Land by our own efforts, nor by our own reasoning. Those who gain citizenship there will be a people of faith who accept the Word of God at face value despite all kinds of opposition. What seems totally unreasonable from a human point of view is easily possible from God's perspective. Those who take a stand by faith, as did Caleb and Joshua, will enter the Promised Land when Jesus returns.

What vote would you have cast had you been at Kadesh-barnea? "Camping" around the heavenly Canaan, what vote are you casting today? Is it a vote of doubt and insubordination, or is it a vote of faith and obedience? Is anything holding you back from entering the Promised Land?

JOHN THE BAPTIST AND THE MESSIAH (Luke 1:17, 67-79; 3:3-6; Acts 1:8-11).

What was to be the mission of John the Baptist as prophesied by his father, Zacharias? Luke 1:67-79. How did the apostle John describe this mission? John 1:6-8.

John was sent from God to witness that grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. It was the mission of Christ to reveal the Father to us (John 1:15-18). Filled with the Holy Spirit, John turned “many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God.” In so doing, he prepared a people to greet the coming Messiah (Luke 1:16, 17, NKJV). “John was ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. In preparing the way for Christ’s first advent, he was representative of those who are to prepare a people for our Lord’s second coming.’—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 101.

John clearly and forcefully preached God’s message of repentance and righteous living in preparation to receive the Messiah. “‘He must increase,’” he said, “‘but I must decrease’” (John 3:30). People from all walks of life responded to his preaching by repenting, and many were baptized.

Compare John the Baptist’s mission with our mission of preparing the way for Christ’s second coming. Luke 1:17; 3:3-6; Acts 1:8-11.

John the Baptist was a great man of faith. Had the book of Hebrews included New Testament heroes of faith, surely John’s name would have been there. Yet, at the end of his mission of preparing the way for Christ’s first coming, he languished in prison and was tempted with doubt. We, too, may face imprisonment and be tempted with doubt in preparing others to meet Christ when He comes, but we must gain courage from the experience of the Baptist who “did not surrender his faith in Christ. The memory of the voice from heaven and the descending dove, the spotless purity of Jesus, the power of the Holy Spirit that had rested upon John as he came into the Saviour’s presence, and the testimony of the prophetic scriptures,—all witnessed that Jesus of Nazareth was the Promised One.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 216.

Just as John the Baptist proclaimed Christ’s first coming, so are we to proclaim His second coming. In what effective ways can we bear witness of the Light, point others to the Lamb of God, and help them be ready for His second coming?

FAITH IN THE PROMISES OF GOD (Heb. 11:4-39; 12:1-3, 22-29; 2 Pet. 3:10-13; 1 John 3:1-11).

Toward the fulfillment of what promise did each person in the Hall of Faith look forward? Heb. 11:10, 13-16.

What common trait links Noah, Abraham, Caleb, Joshua, John the Baptist, and the many others like them?

1. They all lived by faith. Each had material and intellectual resources upon which to rely. They could have managed their lives based upon principles of greed, materialism, power, and the many other resources available. They lived instead by faith in the word of God. Their faith was not based upon human ability, but upon God's word. Their faith was the "substance," the foundation of things hoped for (Heb. 11:1).

2. By faith they viewed a city whose builder and maker is God (see Hebrews 11:10, 16). That is the blessed hope we have in awaiting the coming of our Lord, who will usher us into His kingdom of glory.

3. Each had a message to go forward by faith in the word of the Lord: Noah, to go into the ark for safety; Caleb and Joshua, to move forward into the Promised Land; John the Baptist, to prepare for the first coming of the Messiah. In these last days, God is calling for a people to proclaim the second coming of Christ. Let us be as faithful in fulfilling this special mission as they were in fulfilling theirs.

4. Though human and fallible, by the grace of God they lived upright lives. "Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God" (Gen. 6:9, NKJV). God knew Abraham, that he would "command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice" (Gen. 18:19).

Compare what John and Peter said concerning the manner of persons we ought to be in view of the certainty of the Second Coming. 2 Pet. 3:10-13; 1 John 3:1-11. Why does John say that all who have the hope of the Second Coming purify themselves, just as Christ is pure?

In these last days God is looking for a people who are willing to live by faith in His Word; a people who are willing to step out and follow wherever He leads; a people who are willing to accept His Word as the foundation of their lives. God's people proclaim and live by love and allegiance to God in view of the judgment and of the near return of their Savior and Lord. What are you willing to do to be one of God's people?

FURTHER STUDY: Job 28:12-18; Luke 7:22, 24-35; John 1:15-18, 29-36; 2 Cor. 5:20, 21; 6:1-10; Rev. 20:6; 22:11.

Read *Education*, pp. 13-19; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 125-131.

"Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God's ideal for His children. Godliness—godlikeness—is the goal to be reached."—*Education*, p. 18. What a striking thought! When Christ comes the second time, the children of God will be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is!

"Men put God out of their knowledge and worshiped the creatures of their own imagination; and as the result, they became more and more debased. . . . If the mind is never exalted above the level of humanity, if it is not uplifted by faith to contemplate infinite wisdom and love, the man will be constantly sinking lower and lower. The worshipers of false gods clothed their deities with human attributes and passions, and thus their standard of character was degraded to the likeness of sinful humanity."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 91.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Describe the characteristics of those who are proclaiming the second coming of Christ. In what ways do they reveal that they are decreasing and Christ is increasing in their lives and witness?
2. What roles do faith, devotion, and loyalty play in the proclamation of the gospel prior to Christ's coming? Why is godliness so important in the Christian life? Why does God want us to be like Him when Jesus returns?
3. How do we, who are living at the end of time, proclaim the last warning message without compromise, yet with compassion and conviction?

SUMMARY: Just as God has had messengers for every major event in human history, so He also is preparing a people who are willing to proclaim the certainty of the second coming of Christ. By faith, this people will lay hold of the Word of God as their guide. They will accept Christ as the One manifest to take away their sins (see 1 John 3:3). By the grace of God, they will be holy, for He is holy (see 1 Pet. 1:15, 16).



The Mechanic Turned Preacher

J. H. Zachary

Beven Stephen lives on Guadalcanal, in the Solomon Islands. He grew up in an Adventist home, but during his teens he drifted away from the church. He dropped out of school and took a job as an auto mechanic. He was a good one and quickly became the supervisor of the repair shop. He thought he had everything he wanted from life.

But a sudden and serious illness shattered his dreams. His doctor gave him little hope for recovery and suggested that Beven should prepare to die.

Beven's family and friends began praying for him, and God healed him. Beven returned to God and the church he had left as a youth. He began telling others what God had done for him. Soon he decided to quit his job as a mechanic and become a lay preacher, even though he had no training in preaching or evangelism.

He wanted to share his faith with people who knew nothing about Adventists. He chose Nagusa, a village in the remote mountains of Guadalcanal. He arrived in Nagusa and began sharing his faith. One local man told Beven to leave the village. When Beven did not leave, the man beat him. Beven still refused to leave.

The village chief, a convert from heathenism named Billy Graham, invited Beven to visit him. "I want to know two things," he told Beven. "What is the Bible basis for not eating pork and for worshiping on Saturday instead of Sunday?"

Beven smiled and replied, "If you attend my meetings I will explain these Bible teachings."

Chief Billy Graham agreed to attend the meetings and ordered the villagers to stop persecuting Beven. With this encouragement, Beven prepared for the public meetings. As a result of Beven's fervent prayers and faithful work, Chief Billy Graham and nine others took their stand for Christ and were baptized.

Beven is working to raise up a church in another village. But he has not forgotten the believers in Nagusa. He rejoices every time he learns of a baptism there. Today 50 members worship together in Nagusa. The believers have begun construction on a church.

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The Witness of the Remnant and the Second Coming



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Exod. 20:11; 31:17; Dan. 7:9, 10; Isa. 13:19-22; 2 Thess. 2:1-17; Rev. 12:17; 14:6-14.

MEMORY TEXT: “Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water’” (Revelation 14:6, 7, NKJV).

KEY THOUGHT: God has promised that just before the Second Coming a remnant people will proclaim the everlasting gospel in order to prepare humankind for His Son’s soon return.

THE PROCLAMATION OF GOD'S WORD BRINGS REVIVAL AND RECONCILIATION TO GOD. As we noted last week, throughout history, God has sent messengers to prepare His people for major events. At the end of the age, He speaks through His remnant. His message emphasizes the “everlasting gospel.” The context, however, is unprecedented: the imminent return of Jesus for His persecuted people.

Long has God waited for restoration of the fellowship ruptured in Eden. Now, with the Second Coming, comes face-to-face communion with Him. His faithful remnant people have not only preached His Word, they have lived it, and by so doing have shown the world what God is really like. In harmony with the last warning message, they have given Him glory in proclaiming His gospel to the people of the world.

THE HOUR OF GOD'S JUDGMENT AND THE SECOND COMING (Dan. 7:9, 10; Rev. 14:6, 7).

What do we understand by “the hour of His judgment has come”? Rev. 14:7, NKJV. Why is this urgent message to be preached so intently just prior to the Second Coming?

“Seventh-day Adventist expositors understand the judgment here mentioned as that which began in 1844, represented in type by the cleansing of the earthly sanctuary.... That the reference here is not to the executive judgment at the coming of Christ when all receive their rewards, is seen by the fact that the messages of the three angels (Rev. 14:6-12) precede the second coming of Christ (v. 14). Furthermore, the message concerning the judgment is accompanied by an appeal and a warning that reveal that the day of salvation has not passed. Men may still turn to God and escape the wrath to come.” —*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 828.

A neighbor has told me of attending his first worship service in an Adventist college. Just out of high school and not a professing Christian, he knew little about the Bible. To this day, decades later, he remembers the minister opening his Bible and, in a quiet voice, reading the words of Daniel 7:9, 10: “I watched till thrones were put in place, and the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, its wheels a burning fire; a fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, and the books were opened” (NKJV).

My neighbor said: “I, who knew nothing of judgment, sat among the Adventist saints, petrified. So intense was the conviction that I would stand in judgment, so powerful the ministry of the Holy Spirit, that whenever I recall that evening, the same emotion seizes me.”

Perhaps many Adventists have shared my neighbor’s fear of judgment. Just as he does now, however, many look to the judgment as a time of vindication and rejoicing. Among the graphic words of Revelation 14:5 is the wondrous assurance that God’s remnant people will be found “without fault before the throne,” not because they had lived sinless lives, but because they have confessed and repented of their sins, and through faith in Jesus they were found hid in Him and thus covered with His perfect robe of righteousness.

What relevance does the coming of His judgment have to the nearness of the Second Coming and to my daily life and witness? Do I think of judgment with fear or rejoicing? Why?

WORSHIP HIM WHO MADE HEAVEN AND EARTH (Exod. 20:11; 31:17; Rev. 14:7).

Why is the call to worship Him who made heaven and earth so important in the last days? Rev. 14:7.

Our modern age, to a great extent, does not accept what God's Word has to say about Creation. Many think human wisdom has "taught" them better where faith is squeezed out. They think that they must base belief on "independent" evidence, such as the "evidence" of evolution, a concept that almost totally dominates the thinking of our age.

What evidence can the Christian produce for Creation? The book of Hebrews provides the answer: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Furthermore, "by faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible" (Heb. 11:1, 3, NKJV).

If we are to accept the biblical concept of a literal, visible second coming of Christ, we must also accept the biblical concept of Creation. For in the Second Coming, Christ will recreate "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," just as He did in the beginning (1 Cor. 15:52). The dead in Christ will be resurrected (1 Cor. 15:20-22), and those who are alive will be re-created (1 Cor. 15:51, 52). If God does not create, as it is reported in the Bible, there would be no Second Coming as such, or one is led to devise an alternate, unbiblical explanation.

Why does it matter what we believe about Creation and the Second Coming? It is because God wants us to know the truth about Himself and His relation to humanity. We must be careful not to exchange the truth about God for a lie, for then we would worship the creature instead of the Creator (Rom. 1:24, 25).

What is an important biblical manner of worshiping the Creator? Exod. 20:11; 31:17. What is its significance?

The Sabbath of Creation is an integral part of the everlasting gospel and plays a vital role in the last days in its final proclamation. It uniquely demonstrates our love and allegiance to God and our willingness to live by faith alone in His Word. This is the kind of faith we need to prepare ourselves and others to meet Jesus when He returns.

Why is the admonition to worship Him who made heaven and earth especially relevant to those who are living just prior to the Second Coming?

THE PATIENCE OF THE SAINTS (Rev. 12:17; 14:12; 19:10).

Revelation 14 is packed with critical information about the final conflict. Verse 8 introduces the wrath of God against false religious systems. The armies of heaven “harvest” the earth, dealing once and for all with those who choose the wrong side in the conflict. For the saints, however, the chapter is good news. They are rescued and saved (see verses 12, 13).

When we come to the calm waters again, what description do we find of the people of God? Rev. 14:12; 12:17.

By contrast with those who think to change times and laws in Daniel 7:25, the people of God keep His commandments, including the fourth (Rev. 14:7). The people of God are ready for the Second Coming. “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Cor. 5:21). Through Christ’s righteousness and the power of His indwelling Spirit, His people have come to reflect His character.

How does the book of Revelation define “the testimony of Jesus”? Rev. 12:17; 19:10.

God’s end-time remnant also have the gift of prophecy given, in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, through His messenger Ellen G. White. Her ministry has been a tremendous blessing to the church. Only today are world scientists catching up with her nineteenth-century counsels on diet and health. Adventist health institutions, established in response to prophetic counsel, bring healing to many around the world. Her interest in the development of Christian education and institutions has also brought dignity and understanding to millions of students. Her guidance in the formation of church government has given the church strength.

But even more important than her contribution to the functioning of the church has been her emphasis upon the Bible. She always saw herself as a lesser light to lead to the greater light (see *Colporteur Ministry*, p. 125).

The “patience” of the saints (Rev. 14:12) refers to their steadfast endurance in the face of opposition and persecution. How is this characteristic revealed in my daily life and witness as I await Christ’s second coming?

COME OUT OF HER MY PEOPLE (Rev. 14:8-11; 18:1-5; Isa. 13:19-22).

Compare and contrast the message carried by the second angel with the third. Rev. 14:8-11. What is God's main concern in each?

Second angel _____

Third angel _____

Sin breaks the law of God and separates us from Him. Idolatry separates us from Him, because it tempts us to worship other gods (Exod. 20:2-6). This includes creating a concept of God that comes from human reasoning and observation rather than from the Word of God. This attachment to other gods or idols separates us from Him. God wants us to be detached from such idolatrous practices in this sinful world and to be intimately attached to Him, so that we may be prepared to be with Him in the world to come.

What does it mean for God's people to come out of Babylon? Rev. 18:1-5. How do they do that, and how do they help others do the same?

The Lord warns us in the book of Revelation to come out of those systems that point us to the worship of anyone or anything other than Him, the only true God. He wants us to exhibit the patience of the saints, which characterizes those who worship the true God: those who accept Him as their Creator; those who acknowledge Him as sovereign by worshiping on His holy Sabbath; those who love Him and live faithfully for Him in the day of His judgment.

God's people will not value their own ideas more than God's, as Adam and Eve did in the Garden of Eden. They will not philosophize about how a God of love must act, as did those who lived just prior to the Flood. They will not use human logic as their basis for judging the promises of God, as did Israel at Kadesh-barnea. Rather, they will stand—as did Noah, Caleb and Joshua, and Christ Himself, and so many others throughout history—on the firm “Thus saith the Lord.” They will accept God's self-revelation in the Bible, and in Christ the center of the Bible, as the basis for their understanding and acceptance of Him, the only true God. They will stand with the great Reformers, who urged their contemporaries to return to the undiluted Word of God.

As you prepare yourself to meet the Lord when He comes again, what idols or gods hinder your progress toward your heavenly home? How can God help you get rid of them so that you may be fully committed to Him in these last days?

THE DEVIL'S DELUSIONS (2 Thess. 2:1-17; Rev. 13:13, 14; Matt. 24:4-6, 11, 23, 24).

What power will Satan exercise to deceive those who live on the earth? Rev. 13:13, 14; 2 Thess. 2:9, 10.

Satan will come with great miracle-working power. He will even bring "fire" down from heaven. The revelator here alludes to the experience at Mount Carmel, when Elijah's sacrifice was consumed by fire, revealing his God, rather than Baal, to be the true God. Now Satan will bring his "fire" from heaven. This time, however, it will fall on the wrong altar, and the world will accept him as the Messiah!

What concern did Christ have about deception just before His second coming? Matt. 24:4, 5. What would be the nature of Satan's deceptions? Matt. 24:6, 11, 23, 24.

Through his miracle-working powers, Satan intends to deceive the very elect. He knows this will be his final chance to deceive the saints, and he wants to make the most of it. He will also work through spiritualism to lead people away from the Word of God. He has been laying the groundwork for this deception by promoting the natural immortality of the soul. Leading people away from the biblical truth that the soul ceases to exist at death, he encourages so-called communication with the dead.

"But none need be deceived by the lying claims of spiritualism. God has given the world sufficient light to enable them to discover the snare. As already shown, the theory which forms the very foundation of spiritualism is at war with the plainest statements of Scripture. The Bible declares that the dead know not anything, that their thoughts have perished; they have no part in anything that is done under the sun; they know nothing of the joys or sorrows of those who were dearest to them on earth."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 556.

Regardless of Satan's work, Noah maintained His faith in God's word and remained in the ark for seven days before it began to rain. Abraham left city and family, relying by faith on the word of God. Caleb and Joshua urged Israel to take the land of Canaan. In the last days, God's remnant people also will step out by faith to proclaim "the everlasting gospel" and to prepare a people to meet Him.

Considering my relationship with God right now, am I willing to submit to the Word of God, even when the evidence of my senses seems to contradict it? Explain.

FURTHER STUDY: Acts 17:31; Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 11:30; Gen. 1:1; 2:1-3; John 5:46, 47; Mark 13:5, 22.

Read *The Great Controversy*, "The First Great Deception," pp. 531-550; "Can Our Dead Speak to Us?" pp. 551-562; and "The Scriptures a Safeguard," pp. 593-602.

"God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain 'Thus saith the Lord' in its support."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 595.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

In these last days:

1. What is the significance of the judgment-hour message?
2. Why is it significant to worship God the Creator as He has revealed Himself to us in the Bible?
3. How does the Sabbath separate between those who live by human tradition and those who live by faith in the unchangeable Word of God?
4. What safeguards do you have against the deceptions of Satan? How can you fight his darkness with the light of God's truth?

SUMMARY: God has a special message to be given just prior to His second coming. It involves preaching the total message of Scripture and to prepare the way of the Lord. This message is to call special attention to the hour of God's judgment and to God's creative power. This message is a call to worship God as He truly is. It is a plea to live by faith in His Word rather than by faith in human capabilities—to accept God's way of viewing things rather than ours. It is a call to repentance, conversion, and transformation—a call that can be accepted only if we come out of all false systems of worship. It is His plea for us to be ready to meet Him, the only true God, when He comes.



Bogdan's Spiritual Quest, Part 1

Barbara Huff

Bogdan grew up in a communist home in Ukraine. His parents were engineers, and like most communists, they had no belief in God.

However, during perestroika, Bogdan's mother bought a Bible. Young Bogdan found it and began reading it. He discovered the book of Revelation with its fearsome beasts. Intrigued, he kept returning to it, trying to unlock the secrets he was sure it held. He memorized the Lord's Prayer and often prayed it 100 times in a day, including a request to understand the book of Revelation.

He continued reading the Bible when he was drafted into the army. During this time he learned about baptism and decided to be baptized as soon as his military service was over. A fellow soldier often talked about the Bible, but his friend believed that Revelation was a closed book. Bogdan could not accept this; he continued searching.

True to his commitment, when Bogdan left the military, he found an Orthodox priest and was baptized.

Bogdan returned home to look for work. But the economy of the Ukraine was in shambles, and few jobs were available. Finally he found work in a small brewery. The supervisor was a Hungarian woman who spoke fluent English. Bogdan began learning English as he studied the brewing business. When he was just 21 years old, he was offered a partnership in the brewery and a chance to study brewing in Hungary.

One day Bogdan learned that a Canadian evangelist was holding Bible lectures in town. Still interested in the Bible and eager to improve his English, he decided to go. After the meeting, Bogdan waited to talk to the evangelist. As they spoke, the evangelist asked if he could pray with Bogdan. The man placed his hand on Bogdan's shoulder and prayed that God would touch his heart. Suddenly Bogdan felt a surge of power flow through him, and his heart began to beat wildly.

(Continued next week)



Bogdan Koshelev (left). Barbara Huff is an administrative secretary in the Euro-Asia Division office in Moscow, Russia.

Millenial Expectation and the Second Coming



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Deut. 18:22; 2 Pet. 3:1-18; Dan. 2:41-45; 8:14; 12:4, 9, 10; Revelation 13.

MEMORY TEXT: “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1, NKJV).

KEY THOUGHTS: Children of God who know that Jesus dwells in their hearts by faith will long for His near return. While watching for events that indicate His return is near and eagerly anticipating that reunion, they will joyfully delight in His daily presence. Christ, rather than the crisis, will be the focus of their lives at the end.

THE CHALLENGE OF THE MILLENNIUM. As we enter this new millennium, the excitement of prophetic fever is part of our global and cultural climate as evidenced by a wide range of expectations.

Luke predicted that such a climate would exist at the end when people's hearts would fail from fear and foreboding (21:26). Even though the Bible predicts such a season, Christ's second advent will still come as a “thief in the night” (1 Thess. 5:2). Many will be lulled to sleep by false predictions that have no basis in Scripture.

This week, we shall try to discern the difference between Christ's admonition to “watch” and “be ready” (Matt. 24:42, 44) and the general fever of millennial expectation that leads to presumption and false expectations.

THE DANGER OF FALSE PREDICTIONS (Matt. 7:15-23; Deut. 18:22; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 Thess. 5:1-6).

By what criteria should prophetic claims be evaluated? Deut. 18:22; Matt. 7:15-23.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has never set a date for Christ's return, although a few individual members have tried. Recent dates they have calculated on the basis of the jubilee include 1987, 1991, 1994, 1996, and 1998.

An Adventist friend recently received a letter, full of impressive calculations, informing him that Jesus would return on New Year's Day. My friend wrote this message on the envelope containing his response: "Not to be opened until January 2." By the time this Bible Study Guide appears, another date—probably linked to the year 2000—will be in the mail.

Why do you think Jesus has not returned yet? 2 Pet. 3:9.

Time-setters often rationalize their mistakes by coming up with more erroneous dates and explanations that are not Bible-based. Some also misuse Ellen White's writings in the same way. She is clear that the coming of Christ has been delayed:

"It was not the will of God that the coming of Christ should be thus delayed. God did not design that His people, Israel, should wander forty years in the wilderness. He promised to lead them directly to the land of Canaan, and establish them there a holy, healthy, happy people. But those to whom it was first preached, went not in 'because of unbelief.' Their hearts were filled with murmuring, rebellion, and hatred, and He could not fulfill His covenant with them."

"For forty years did unbelief, murmuring, and rebellion shut out ancient Israel from the land of Canaan. The same sins have delayed the entrance of modern Israel into the heavenly Canaan. In neither case were the promises of God at fault. It is the unbelief, the worldliness, unconsecration, and strife among the Lord's professed people that have kept us in this world of sin and sorrow so many years."—*Evangelism*, p. 696.

Jesus promised: "I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:3, NKJV).

The exciting thing about the Second Advent is the Christ of the Advent. We are not to live on prediction, speculation, or crisis excitement. We are to live instead on Christ-excitement!

THE LONGEST TIME PROPHECY (Dan. 8:14; 10:1, 2; 12:4-10).

How can the 2,300-year prophecy build up your confidence in God's Word as we await the Second Coming? Dan. 8:14.

Seventh-day Adventists began as a prophetic movement rooted in an understanding of the 2,300-year prophecy. Synonymous with the Millerite movement, some "seventy-five prominent and respected voices," scattered over a dozen nations on four continents, tracked this prophecy to fulfillment in about 1843-1847. These were all prior to publication of William Miller's first book on prophecy in 1836.—Le Roy Edwin Froom, "The Status of Prophetic Interpretation," in *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation* (Washington, D.C.: The Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1954), vol. 4, p. 403. Thirty-eight of these writers ended the 2,300 years in 1843 or 1844 and thirty in 1847. Many expositors were convinced that the fulfillment of this prophecy marked the "time of the end," the "latter days," or the "last days."—Page 407. William Miller himself believed human probation would end shortly before the Second Advent. (See page 409.)

Church historian Le Roy Edwin Froom wrote: "It dispenses forever of the notion that this [concept] was simply or principally an American Millerite or New World concept. . . . It began, instead, on the Continent of Europe and in the British Isles, but almost immediately appeared on both sides of the Atlantic. It was distinctly international, and was virtually a simultaneous world phenomenon."—Page 410. This was a direct fulfillment of Revelation 10:1, 2, which portrayed an angel with the open book of Daniel standing on the land and on the sea.

The global impact of this prophecy was also predicted in Daniel 12. Daniel predicted that "many" would understand the unsealed contents of his book after the end of the 1,260 years, which closed in 1798 (12:4, 7). This promise was repeated in 12:9 and 10 to show the certainty of the prophecy's fulfillment. Daniel wrote, "for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified . . . the wise shall understand" (12:9, 10, NKJV).

Froom records the historical fulfillment of this prediction: "It was . . . the spontaneous conviction of many of the finest minds of the time. . . ."

"And finally," writes Froom, "it lays low the suggestion that this [concept] was the hobby of a single unstable religious group. . . . It was, instead, spread with amazingly balanced distribution among all leading religious groups or denominations."—Page 410.

Why has God allowed so much time to elapse between 1844 and the final end? What does this say about His character?

PROPHETIC MILEPOSTS, PART 1 (Dan. 12:4, 9, 10).

As the end approaches, how will God greatly increase our knowledge of Jesus and the prophecies relating to His return? Dan. 12:4, 9, 10.

1. _____

2. _____

Several signs of Christ's return are hidden in the prophecies of Daniel to be opened only in "the time of the end."

In yesterday's lesson we noted the developing global interest in the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation around the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. In 1899, Ellen White wrote: "The time has come for the light given [Daniel] to go to the world as never before. If those for whom the Lord has done so much will walk in the light, their knowledge of Christ and the prophecies relating to Him will be greatly increased as they near the close of this earth's history."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1174.

The increased knowledge promised in Daniel 12:4 was "shut up" for centuries. During that time sincere believers understood and appreciated some of Daniel's prophecies. As Christ's second advent neared, they were given a clearer and broader vision of closing events. Prayerful study of Daniel and Revelation revealed the awesome dimensions of the great controversy between Christ and Satan. This cosmic perspective offered a unified framework for understanding all the great truths of Scripture. The final pieces included the judgment, the Second Coming, resurrection, and the ultimate eradication of evil from the universe.

Though the context of Daniel 12:4 points to an increased knowledge of Scripture, the prophecy has also been interpreted as pointing to "the stupendous advances of science and general knowledge in the last century and a half, advances that have made possible a widespread proclamation of the message of these prophecies."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 879.

How have communication advances helped people understand the prophecies? What role have they played in the advancement of the everlasting gospel? Is global communication technology a "sign" of Christ's near return? Explain your answer. What technological advances are being used by Seventh-day Adventists today to diffuse the three angels' messages to all parts of the world?

PROPHETIC MILEPOSTS, PART 2 (Dan. 2:41-45).

At what point of world history does the “stone” strike the feet of the great image? Dan. 2:41-45.

The prophecy of the image of Daniel 2 points to the setting up of God's kingdom at the time of the end. Ellen White highlights two signs from the prophetic image. The iron and clay mixture, she says, represents (1) the “deterioration of the kingdoms of the earth in power and glory,” as well as (2) the “deterioration of religion and morality among the people of these kingdoms.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1168.

How are the signs mentioned above evident in today's political and cultural environment? What factors are accelerating moral decline and spiritual deterioration?

One sign is linked to the union of church and state on a global scale. “The mingling of church craft and state craft is represented by the iron and the clay. This union is weakening . . . the power of the churches. This investing the church with the power of the state will bring evil results.”—“Manuscript 63, 1899,” *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 1, p. 51. Jesus taught His disciples that His kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). Therefore, His faithful church could never set its affections and hope on the success of an earthly empire. In contrast to Europe, the founders of the United States recognized the moral virtue of the separation of church and state. However, there are political forces today challenging those founders' position.

Much of Western Europe is today largely indifferent to religion. Their great cathedrals are empty monuments to a lost glory. To some, it seems that the era when Europe was a Christian continent lies behind us. In an attempt to regain their former influence, the historic churches of Eastern Europe, delivered from communism, are again seeking power through a connection with the state.

Every weekend in the USA, many millions attend their houses of worship. Today their organized influence is being felt more and more on all levels of government. The prophecies of the Bible are quickly being fulfilled as the wall separating church and state begins to crumble.

In what ways do you see church and state joining forces today? Are Adventists as sensitive to these dangers now as before? How can Adventists speak out without becoming overly political? What can you do personally?

A PARTNERSHIP OF BEASTLIKE POWERS (Revelation 13).

What elements of church and of state are described in Revelation 13? What current struggles are revealed there?

The elements of the Seventh-day Adventist view of Revelation 13 are not all new. From the Reformation on, expositors identified the papal power as the ten-horned beast, the successor to Imperial Rome. Our identification of the lamblike beast as the United States has its roots in recognition of historical fulfillment. Le Roy Edwin Froom writes of "a long background of antecedents developing over a course of centuries before Seventh-day Adventists entered the picture."—Page 1093. The 1,260-year prophecy (Rev. 13:5) points to the years following 1798 as a time of conflict for God's people. The first and second beast will then unite efforts at the time of the end to enforce the mark of the beast and to destroy God's remnant church (Rev. 13:12, 15).

When in 1899 Ellen White wrote about the mingling together of church craft and state craft, the National Reform Association, founded in 1863, was seeking a religious amendment to the U.S. Constitution. At that time, a national Sunday Law bill had been introduced into the U.S. Senate, and Protestants and Catholics were uniting to promote its passage. These early attempts failed, but not before some Sabbath keepers had languished in prisons for breaking Sunday laws. In the same century, spiritualism gained international recognition and broad acceptance in the West. Three prophetic powers emerged as actors in an end-time drama: Romanism, apostate Protestantism, and spiritualism. It seemed as though Revelation 13 were about to be fulfilled, but God's people were not yet ready.

In 1899 Ellen White warned that "laws manufactured by satanic agencies under a plea of goodness and restriction of evil will be exalted."—*Present Truth and Review and Herald Articles* (Dec. 26, 1899), vol. 4, p. 135. Even now, concerned citizens cite the loss of family values, rising crime rates, and the evils of society as good reasons for tampering with the U.S. Constitution.

To these events must be added the developing miracle-working powers of Revelation 13:13 and 16:13, 14, such as the New Age movement, excesses in the charismatic movement, scientific and media support for communication with the dead, and the spread of reincarnation teachings.

The above are compelling signs that we stand on the threshold of eternity. Will we be ready to enter in? What does it mean to be ready to enter in and live an eternity in the presence of Jesus and the Father? How does the Word of God define readiness to meet the Lord?

FURTHER STUDY: Daniel 2; 9; 12:4, 10; Matt. 24:23-27; Acts 1:9-11; 2 Thess. 2:1-11.

"As the crowning act in the great drama of deception, Satan himself will [im]personate Christ. . . . In different parts of the earth, Satan will manifest himself among men as a majestic being of dazzling brightness. . . . The glory that surrounds him is unsurpassed by anything that mortal eyes have yet beheld. The shout of triumph rings out. . . . 'Christ has come! Christ has come!'”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 624.

In 1992 an ultra-Orthodox sect of Judaism took a full page ad in the *New York Times* to reveal that "The Time for Your Redemption Has Arrived." The Messiah, said the ad, was their leader, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, who has since died.—"Expecting the Messiah," *Time* (March 23, 1992), p. 49.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How is the 2,300-year prophecy a linchpin of signs pointing to Christ's return?
2. What other Adventist doctrines are connected to the fulfillment of the 2,300-year prophecy?
3. Who is most likely to be deceived by the counterfeit messiah: those who have set dates for Jesus' return, those who have ignored the signs of His coming, or both? Why?

SUMMARY: In the 1890s, excited by revival in the church and a threatened national Sunday law, many Seventh-day Adventists thought Jesus' return was imminent. Ellen White cautioned: "We are not to live upon time excitement. . . . No one will be able to predict just when that time will come. . . . You will not be able to say that He will come in one, two, or five years, neither are you to put off His coming by stating that it may not be for ten or twenty years."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 189.



Bogdan's Spiritual Quest, Part 2

Barbara Huff

Bogdan worked in a brewery when he heard that an evangelist was holding meetings in town. Still interested in learning more about the Bible and eager to practice his English, he decided to go. After the meeting he talked with the pastor. When the pastor put his hand on Bogdan's shoulder and asked God to touch his life, a frightening power seemed to surge through his body, and his heart began beating wildly.

Shaken, Bogdan went home and told his father about what had happened. That night he lay in bed thinking about what had happened and what it could mean.

He attended the remaining meetings. At the close of the series, the evangelist announced that the local pastor would hold a Revelation Seminar. Eagerly Bogdan attended, and there he found the keys that unlocked this fascinating book. But the knowledge he gained left him in turmoil.

He had accepted an offer to study brewing in Hungary as part of his work, but new insights into the truths of the Bible left him wondering how the principles of Christianity and a career in the brewery business could coexist.

Bogdan quit his job in the brewery and was baptized. He remembered a voice that had spoken to him during the first evangelistic meeting he had attended. "You should be standing there" where the speaker stood. Was God calling him to be a pastor? It seemed impossible. He had no job and no money to pay tuition.

Nevertheless, if God was calling him, he must go. But God would have to perform a miracle. He confided his convictions in the pastor, who told him that nothing was impossible for God. One day the pastor came to Bogdan and said, "It's all arranged; you go to Zaoksky to study theology."

Bogdan journeyed to Zaoksky seminary, where he is studying to become a pastor. He does not know who has sponsored him, but he knows that God has arranged everything. He had no idea when he first read the Bible that his mother bought that his spiritual quest would change his life. But he would not change anything along the way, for he is convinced it was all in God's plan.

Bogdan Koshelev is studying at Zaoksky Seminary to become a pastor. Barbara Huff is an administrative secretary in the Euro-Asia Division office in Moscow, Russia.

The Certainty of the Second Coming



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Acts 1:9-11; 1 Cor. 15:51-53; Rev. 22:12; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; 2 Pet. 3:9-12; Titus 2:11-13.

MEMORY TEXT: “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:1-3, NKJV).

KEY THOUGHTS: The second coming of Christ is the time of a personal and intimate reunion with our Savior and Lord. His coming will be visible to all; and with great glory He will take the righteous home to live with Him for all eternity.

THE GRAND CLIMAX. The second coming is the grand climax of all that has gone before. It is the “Hallelujah Chorus,” the culmination of the work of God through the prophets, apostles, and Jesus Christ Himself. It is the focal point toward which God has been working ever since sin entered the world.

Our understanding and knowledge of it are dependent upon the authority of the Bible. Yet, the Bible has little significance for us unless its message results in our reunion with Christ. Creation has little significance if it does not result in fellowship with the Creator. The Second Coming brings about the restoration of that which was lost in Eden—face-to-face fellowship with God.

THE MANNER OF CHRIST'S COMING (Matt. 24:23-27; Acts 1:9-11).

How widely known will be the coming of Christ? Matt. 24:23-27.

How many will see Him come? Rev. 1:7.

Describe the glory of the coming of Christ.

Matt. 25:31

1 Thess. 4:16

Christ will come as King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16). All the holy angels will accompany Him on the triumphant return to earth (Matt. 25:31). His return will not be secret, nor will it be some kind of a mystical event. This literal, visible event will begin a new and glorious chapter in human history.

What will be the manner of the coming of Christ? Acts 1:9-11.

Christ will come in person in the same manner in which He ascended into heaven. He was not a mystical spirit-being at the time of His ascension. Resurrected bodily after Calvary, He was not only seen but was touched by His disciples (John 20:27-29). He even ate food (Luke 24:36-43). He had forever become one with humanity.

It is comforting to think that Jesus will return not only as King of kings and Lord of lords but also as our friend, forever one with us.

In our modern era, it is sometimes considered unsophisticated to accept the notion that Christ was bodily resurrected from the dead and that He bodily ascended into heaven. Resurrections have never taken place in our age, it is argued, therefore they did not take place back then. However, if we accept the Bible as the Word of God, we must accept also the bodily ascension of Jesus Christ and His bodily return. Furthermore, as we have seen this quarter, biblical doctrine is a unity. We cannot reject one part of it without affecting our understanding of the whole.

How would my concept of the Second Coming and of heaven differ if I thought of the risen Lord as a powerful idea or a mystical spirit rather than as a real person who was resurrected bodily from the dead?

RESURRECTION AND TRANSFORMATION (1 Thess. 4:13-17; 1 Cor. 15:12-20, 51-53).

What will happen to the righteous dead and the righteous living at the second coming of Christ? 1 Thess. 4:13-17; 1 Cor. 15:51-53.

The Bible views a person as one. Adam was formed of the dust of the ground. God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul (Gen. 2:7). The soul is not something that exists apart from the body, for we are not composed of a number of independent parts. We are one. At death, the spirit (the breath of life) returns to God, who gave it, and the body returns to dust, where it came from (Eccles. 12:7). The soul ceases to exist until the Second Coming. At that time, the creative power of God will go into action again, and the dead in Christ will be resurrected (the spirit or "breath of life" and the body will be united and will become a living soul). Then those who are alive will also be transformed: "this mortal will put on immortality" (1 Cor. 15:53).

How does Paul argue for the resurrection of the saints? 1 Cor. 15:12-20.

Paul uses the resurrection of Christ as a promise of our resurrection. Just as Christ was resurrected from the dead, those who have died in Him will be resurrected. Christ is the firstfruit of those who have fallen asleep in Him (1 Cor. 15:14-19).

"If Christ be not risen, Christian witness is condemned on two counts: (1) Jesus repeatedly declared that He would rise from the dead (see Matt. 16:21; 17:22, 23; 20:17-19; etc.), and if He did not rise, He was an impostor; (2) the apostles were basing their preaching on an event that they alleged did occur, and thus were parties to the imposture, holding out a hope that could not be fulfilled."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 802.

The biblical picture of Creation, sin, death, the resurrection of Christ, and the resurrection at His second coming all fit together harmoniously. We are created, unified beings. Because of sin, we die, at which time the unified being ceases to exist. At the resurrection, the dead in Christ will be restored to life eternal with Him.

What does the bodily resurrection of Christ mean to me? What does it say about my resurrection if I should die before He comes? What does it say about my transformation if I should live until He comes? How does this bring hope, courage, and comfort to me and to those with whom I work and live?

A TIME OF REWARD AND JUDGMENT (Matt. 16:27; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; Rev. 6:14-17).

When will the final reward be given and to whom? Matt. 16:27; Rev. 22:12.

What great separation will take place at the coming of Christ, and what will He say to each group? Matt. 25:31, 32, 34, 41.

The righteous are not rewarded at death but rather at the resurrection of the just (Luke 14:13, 14). They, as the writer of Hebrews observes, will not be made perfect without us (Heb. 11:39, 40). Paul anticipated the crown of righteousness that would be given him “on that Day,” and not to him only “but also to all who have loved His appearing” (2 Tim. 4:8, NKJV).

How will the wicked respond to the coming of Christ, and what will happen to them? Rev. 6:14-17; 2 Thess. 1:7-10.

By the decisions made day by day, we determine our status at the coming of Christ. Our reward is determined during the judgment that takes place just prior to the Second Coming. Though works are not the basis of salvation, they are the basis of judgment; for works are the fruit of salvation. When the righteous are judged by their good works (the fruit of salvation), they are found to be clothed in the perfect righteousness of Christ.

At the Second Coming, the righteous dead will be resurrected to eternal life; the righteous living will be transformed, for this mortal shall put on immortality. The living wicked, however, will be destroyed at the coming of Christ. “In the beginning, man was created in the likeness of God, not only in character, but in form and feature. Sin defaced and almost obliterated the divine image; but Christ came to restore that which had been lost. He will change our vile bodies and fashion them like unto His glorious body. The mortal, corruptible form, devoid of comeliness, once polluted with sin, becomes perfect, beautiful, and immortal. All blemishes and deformities are left in the grave.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 645.

Are you among those who happily anticipate the appearing of Christ? Based on your answer, list some ways this would make a difference in your life this week.

CONDITIONS AT THE TIME OF THE SECOND COMING (Matt. 24:6, 7, 14; Mark 13:32, 33; 2 Pet. 3:9-12).

List some signs of the nearness of the Second Coming:

Matt. 24:6, 7 _____

Luke 21:11 _____

2 Tim. 3:1-5 _____

1 Tim. 4:1, 2 _____

Matt. 24:14 _____

Why do you think there have been many attempts to set the date for Christ's second coming, considering what He says in Mark 13:32, 33?

"But the day and the hour of His coming Christ has not revealed. . . . Had He been at liberty to reveal this, why need He have exhorted them to maintain an attitude of constant expectancy? There are those who claim to know the very day and hour of our Lord's appearing. . . . But the Lord has warned them off the ground they occupy."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 632, 633.

Why does Christ seem to delay His coming, and how can we help to hasten it? 2 Pet. 3:9-12.

God does not view delay the same way we do. One reason for the seeming delay is that He wants as many as possible to be saved. That is why Jesus commissions us to make disciples of all nations. "By giving the gospel to the world it is in our power to hasten our Lord's return. We are not only to look for but to hasten the coming of the day of God. . . . Had the church of Christ done her appointed work as the Lord ordained, the whole world would before this have been warned, and the Lord Jesus would have come to our earth in power and great glory."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 633, 634.

Does God's extended grace give us excuse to delay our decision for Christ and our preparation for His return? What are some possible benefits or dangers?

BE READY! (Luke 17:26-30; Matt. 24:43, 44; 2 Pet. 3:11, 12).

Compare the days of Noah and of Lot with those just preceding the Second Coming. Luke 17:26-30.

It is not wrong to eat, to marry, to buy and sell land, to plant gardens, and to build. It is wrong to make these things our priority above preparation for our Lord's return. (Read Matt. 6:33, NKJV.)

Christ used a number of parables to describe our need to be ready for His coming. Show how each of the following parables illustrates this need for preparedness:

1. The thief at midnight (Matt. 24:43, 44) _____

2. The master's return (Matt. 24:45-51) _____

3. The ten virgins (Matt. 25:1-13) _____

Have you ever missed a major event through indifference or carelessness? Your friends were there, the occasion was fantastic, the event memorable, but you were elsewhere. Many will miss the kingdom not only because of willful sin but also because of neglect.

In view of the nearness of Christ's coming, how should we live?
2 Pet. 3:11; Titus 2:11-13.

Abiding in Jesus fills us with confidence as we await His coming (1 John 2:28). Our love for Him and His appearing propel us to live to please Him in all things. Our hearts will thrill with love as they contemplate His return. If we truly love Him, we will prepare for His coming with the same joy and care with which a bride prepares to meet her bridegroom for the wedding ceremony.

What priority does the soon coming of Jesus Christ have in my life? What impact has it had on my daily life and witness this week? What can I do differently next week?

FURTHER STUDY: Job 14:1-15; Isa. 33:14-17; 55-56:7; Matt. 24:12; Mark 13:32-37; Luke 17:26-30; 18:7, 8; 21:25-28; 2 Thess. 2:8-10; 1 Tim. 4:1-4; 2 Tim. 4:1-4; Heb. 10:27, 28; 12:29; Rev. 14:6, 7.

Read the chapters "The Time of Trouble" and "God's People Delivered," in *The Great Controversy*, pp. 613-652.

The prophets and apostles eagerly anticipated the return of Christ. Isaiah said, "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us" (Isa. 25:9, NKJV). Paul looked "for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

Think of a time in your life when you could hardly stand to wait any longer for reunion with a spouse, parent, child, or a dear friend. You looked out the window; you walked out to the road; you thought of the first words you would say, and then . . . "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. In solemn silence they gaze upon it as it draws nearer the earth, becoming lighter and more glorious, until it is a great white cloud, its base a glory like consuming fire, and above it the rainbow of the covenant. Jesus rides forth as a mighty conqueror."

—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 640, 641.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What does the bodily resurrection of Christ say about the reality of the eternal life we will enjoy in the earth made new?
2. You have a neighbor who believes that the righteous will receive their reward when they die. How would you explain from Revelation 22:12 that receiving their reward will occur only at Christ's second coming?
3. The only way to have assurance in Jesus and to be prepared for His coming is to continue abiding in Him as the branches abide in the vine. Why is this so?

SUMMARY: The plan of salvation is a connected whole from beginning to end. Just as Jesus Christ created by the word of His mouth in the beginning, so will He resurrect by the word of His mouth at the Second Coming. The Second Coming reverses the results of the transgression of humankind in the Garden of Eden—it restores our full relationship with God. Jesus came to live and die on our behalf, in order to restore us to the perfection of our creation at His return.



Stanislaw's Search for Healing

J. H. Zachary

Tomaszyk Stanislaw is well known in his province of Poland. During his youth he had won many awards in the sport of weight lifting. He was proud of his muscular physique; he enjoyed excellent health and looked forward to a good life.

But shortly after his fortieth birthday he began to experience considerable pain in his joints. Stiffness and weakness set in. Soon this strong man had to use a wheelchair to get around.

One day while browsing in a book shop, he found a book on health. As he leafed through it, he decided he must have this book. He noticed that it was published by one of the sects in Poland that his priest had warned parishioners about. But he bought it anyway.

As he read the book, he found that the lifestyle suggestions made sense to him. He adjusted his life in accordance with the book's suggestions. He gave up meat and began following the eight principles for good health: good nutrition, exercise, use of water, sunshine, plenty of fresh air, temperance, adequate rest, and trust in God.

Stanislaw noticed that the book often referred to the Bible. He purchased a Bible and began reading it. As he found new biblical principals, he put them into practice in his life. He was amazed at the difference it made. As he continued reading the Bible, he realized that the Bible commands believers to keep Sabbath holy rather than Sunday. He began keeping the Sabbath.

Stanislaw's wife did not share Stanislaw's new religious enthusiasm or the changes he was making in his life, and eventually she left him. Undaunted, Stanislaw began searching for people who followed the principles he had found in the health book. He searched for five years before he met an Adventist pastor who confirmed that Seventh-day Adventists teach and practice the biblical and health principles he had found. Stanislaw is studying the Bible with the pastor and looks forward to being baptized.

In every community honest souls are searching for a better life by improving their health, reducing their stress levels, and finding answers to their spiritual questions. It is up to believers everywhere to find those honest hearts and lead them to the Source of all health and healing through Jesus Christ.

J. H. Zachary is international evangelism coordinator for The Quiet Hour in cooperation with the General Conference Ministerial Association.

The Millennium, the End of Evil, and the Beginning of the New Earth



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Isa. 65:21-25; John 14:1-3; 1 Cor. 6:2; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 19:11-16; 20:6-15; 21:2, 8.

MEMORY TEXT: "And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away'" (Revelation 21:3, 4, NKJV).

KEY THOUGHTS: The millennium will be preceded by the second coming of Christ and followed by the destruction of the wicked and the establishment of the new earth. These events will restore the universe to harmony with God.

WORTH THE WAIT AND THE CLIMB. Backpacking in the high mountains can be an "enjoyable" family activity. You start out in the valley on a hot and dusty trail that leads to the wilderness you intend to hike. You sweat, your muscles ache, you sleep on the damp ground. You pretend to enjoy your meager rations of food, slightly seasoned with soot and sand. Your lungs burn from lack of oxygen. You ask yourself, Who in his or her right mind would ever think of doing this again!

Then you reach the top. Before you lies an awesome landscape shared only with the few who have gone before. Trials and tribulations of the journey are forgotten. IT IS WORTH THE WAIT AND THE CLIMB!

THE MILLENNIUM BEGINS (Rev. 19:11-16; John 14:1-3).

Though not a biblical term, *millennium* almost always refers to the one-thousand-year period mentioned in Revelation 20. Chapters 19 and 20 describe events from the Second Coming through the millennium and to the establishment of the new earth.

How does John describe Christ's return to the earth at the beginning of the millennium? Rev. 19:11-16.

"Accompanied by the angel armies of heaven (ch. 19:14), Christ is seen descending from heaven as King of kings (v. 16) in power and majesty to deliver His faithful people from those who are bent upon their destruction. . . . The scene described in vs. 11-21 is the climax of 'the battle of that great day of God Almighty,' often called the battle of Armageddon."—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 873.

As we saw last week, two groups of people will be present at the second coming of Christ—those who worship Christ and those who live under the control of Satan (Matt. 25:31-46). Jesus returns to gather the elect of the earth (Matt. 24:31). The righteous dead will arise in what Scripture calls the first resurrection; then the living righteous will join them in joyously greeting Christ as He arrives from heaven (1 Cor. 15:51-54; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17). The happy throng will then go to live with their Savior for a thousand years. No wicked are part of that great procession through the stars! They lie dead upon the earth, destroyed by the radiance of the Lord whose rule they rejected.

"At the coming of Christ the wicked are blotted from the face of the whole earth—consumed with the spirit of His mouth and destroyed by the brightness of His glory. Christ takes His people to the City of God, and the earth is emptied of its inhabitants. 'Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof.' . . .

"The whole earth appears like a desolate wilderness. The ruins of cities and villages destroyed by the earthquake, uprooted trees, ragged rocks thrown out by the sea or torn out of the earth itself, are scattered over its surface, while vast caverns mark the spot where the mountains have been rent from their foundations."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 657.

How do I view the future events associated with the Second Coming? Are these merely facts to be studied for curiosity's sake or to be anxious about? How should I view them from Christ's perspective: "Let not your heart be troubled. . . . I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also"? (John 14:1-3, NKJV).

DURING THE MILLENNIUM (1 Cor. 6:2; Rev. 6:14; 20:1-4).

Where does Satan spend the millennium? Rev. 20:1-3.

What will the earth be like during the millennium? 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 6:14.

"At the beginning of the millennium occurs also the binding and confining of Satan, represented in the vision by the dragon's being chained and cast into the bottomless pit 'that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled' (Rev. 20:1-3). These symbols SDA's believe will be fulfilled in the confinement of Satan to this earth, which has been desolated by the judgments of God (16:17-21), and in the restriction of his activities, caused by the depopulation of the earth as a result of the removal of the redeemed to heaven and the destruction of the wicked."—*SDA Encyclopedia*, p. 888.

"In like manner, when the work of atonement in the heavenly sanctuary has been completed, then in the presence of God and heavenly angels and the hosts of the redeemed the sins of God's people will be placed upon Satan; he will be declared guilty of all the evil which he has caused them to commit. And as the scapegoat was sent away into a land not inhabited, so Satan will be banished to the desolate earth, an uninhabited and dreary wilderness."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 658.

What will the righteous be doing during the millennium? Rev. 20:4; 1 Cor. 6:2.

"During the thousand years between the first and the second resurrection the judgment of the wicked takes place. The apostle Paul points to this judgment as an event that follows the second advent. 'Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.' 1 Corinthians 4:5. Daniel declares that when the Ancient of Days came, 'judgment was given to the saints of the Most High.' Daniel 7:22. At this time the righteous reign as kings and priests unto God."—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 660, 661.

How does it make you feel to know that the righteous will help judge the wicked during the millennium? What does this tell you about God's character?

AT THE CLOSE OF THE MILLENNIUM (Rev. 19:8, 9; 20:3, 7, 11-15; 21:2, 8).

Christ and Paul speak of two main resurrections—for those who have followed Christ, the resurrection of life; and for those who have rejected Him, the resurrection of condemnation (John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15). Since the resurrection of the righteous is the “first resurrection” (Rev. 20:5, 6), we may refer to the resurrection of the wicked as the “second resurrection.”

What will happen to Satan at the end of the millennium? Rev. 20:3, 7.

During the millennium, Satan is confined to earth. Since the righteous are in heaven and the wicked are dead, Satan has no one to deceive during this period. But at the end of the millennium, Satan will be released from solitary confinement and will again deceive the nations, the evil citizens who have been resurrected.

What does Satan intend to accomplish through the wicked hosts? Rev. 20:7-9. What entity will be the object of their attack? Rev. 21:2.

Although the descent of the New Jerusalem is not mentioned until Revelation 21, it is apparent that the city has already descended by the time Satan prepares for war (Rev. 20:9). According to the scriptural record, he marshals his armies of the damned and surrounds the holy city (Rev. 20:7-9).

What judgment will take place at the end of the millennium, and what will be its ultimate consequence? Rev. 20:11-15; 21:8.

“Satan’s work of ruin is forever ended. For six thousand years he has wrought his will, filling the earth with woe and causing grief throughout the universe. The whole creation has groaned and travailed together in pain. Now God’s creatures are forever delivered from his presence and temptations. ‘The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet: they [the righteous] break forth into singing.’ Isaiah 14:7.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 673.

Contemplate this most wonderful thought: The day is coming when Satan and His work will be no more! Take a moment to thank God for that.

HELL: ETERNAL OR FINAL? (Matt. 10:28; Ps. 37:20; Rev. 21:8).

Of which death do the wicked partake? Rev. 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8. Do they suffer forever in hellfire? Matt. 10:28; Ps. 37:20.

The Bible reveals that the wicked will be destroyed. They will cease to exist. “And the day which is coming shall burn them up, . . . that will leave them neither root nor branch” (Mal. 4:1, NKJV). The wicked will be “devoured” (Rev. 20:9; Ps. 21:9; Heb. 10:27); “destroyed” (Ps. 145:20; 2 Thess. 1:9); and “nothing” of them will survive (Isa. 41:11, 12).

Several Bible passages refer to “everlasting fire” (Matt. 18:8), “eternal fire” (Jude 7), and smoke ascending “forever and ever” (Rev. 14:11). How shall we understand such expressions? They do not teach that the wicked live on, tormented forever in hell, but that the destruction of the wicked will be complete and final.

“A study of the usage and meaning of the Greek term *aionios*, as used in connection with the fire of the last days, shows that the emphasis is on its destructiveness rather than on its duration. For example, Sodom and Gomorrah met with the punishment of eternal (*aionios*) fire (Jude 7). The fire completely destroyed these cities, but became extinct long centuries ago. Jude set forth the destruction of these cities as an ‘example’ of the fate that awaited the licentious apostates of his day. The term ‘unquenchable’ may be similarly understood. Jeremiah predicted that God would kindle a fire in the gates of Jerusalem that would ‘not be quenched’ (Jer. 17:27). This prediction was fulfilled when the city was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 52:12, 13; cf. Neh. 1:3). . . . Clearly the meaning is that it would not be quenched but would thoroughly destroy.”—*SDA Bible Dictionary*, revised edition, p. 475.

How is the earth purified? 2 Pet. 3:10. What is death called, and what happens to it? 1 Cor. 15:26; Rev. 20:14.

“The whole universe will have become witnesses to the nature and results of sin. And its utter extermination, which in the beginning would have brought fear to angels and dishonor to God, will now vindicate His love and establish His honor before the universe of beings who delight to do His will, and in whose heart is His law. Never will evil again be manifest. Says the word of God: ‘Affliction shall not rise up the second time.’ Nahum 1:9.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 504.

Consider the two conflicting concepts: an eternally burning hell and the final destruction of sin and sinners. In what ways does acceptance of these concepts affect your relationship with God?

THE NEW EARTH—HOME AT LAST! (Isa. 11:6-9; 1 John 3:2; Rev. 21:2, 3; 22:1-7).

What gives us absolute confidence in the reality of the new earth? Rev. 22:1-7.

Our sure knowledge of heaven does not come from human imagination but from God's revelation through the prophets and apostles. By faith in God's Word we look forward to "the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10, NKJV). Heaven is unimaginable! For "eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Cor. 2:9).

God will make all things new (Rev. 21:5, 6)—a new heaven and new earth in which our former trials and tribulations will be forgotten (Isa. 65:17). We can rely upon God's promise of new heavens and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness (2 Pet. 3:13). Heaven will be inhabited by the meek (Matt. 5:5; Ps. 37:11). We will never fear footsteps approaching us from behind, for "there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life" (Rev. 21:27).

What do the following texts tell you about the relationship between God and the redeemed in the new earth?

1. Rev. 21:2, 3 _____

2. Rev. 21:22-24 _____

3. Rev. 22:4 _____

4. 1 John 3:2 _____

From Eden lost to Eden restored, we will have come full circle in the plan of salvation. The face-to-face relationship lost through sin will be restored in the new earth. We shall see Him as He is, for we shall be like Him in character. No barrier of sin will disrupt relationships. IT WILL HAVE BEEN WORTH THE WAIT AND THE CLIMB.

What will be our living conditions in the new earth? Isa. 11:6-9; 65:21-25; Rev. 21:4; 22:3. Picture yourself among the redeemed of all ages at the end of the millennium. What would be going through your mind as you enter the Holy City? What choices should you be making right now to ensure your being there?

FURTHER STUDY: Isa. 14:12-17; 24:1-6; 35:10; 66:22, 23; Heb. 12:29; Rev. 2:7; 22:2, 14.

Read *The Great Controversy*, pp. 653-678.

"In union with Christ they [the righteous] judge the wicked, comparing their acts with the statute book, the Bible, and deciding every case according to the deeds done in the body. Then the portion which the wicked must suffer is meted out, according to their works; and it is recorded against their names in the book of death."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 661.

John wrote his Gospel to convince us that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that if we believe, we "may have life in His name" (John 20:31, NKJV). The Gospel reaches a high point when the doubting Thomas confesses his faith in Jesus as the Christ (John 20:28).

The same burden pervades the book of Revelation. John wants us to know that Christ will return quickly (Rev. 22:12), bearing rewards for the righteous. Descriptions of these "gifts" are scattered like jewels throughout the book. The righteous will have access to the healing leaves of the tree of life in the midst of paradise (22:2). They will receive a crown of life (2:10); feed on "hidden manna" (2:17); have power over nations (2:26); wear white garments (3:5); have God's new name written on them (3:12); sit with Christ on His throne (3:21) as kings and priests (5:10); they will never shed another tear (7:17).

Clothed in fine linen—the righteous acts of the saints—(19:8), they shall sit as judges and reign with Christ for a thousand years (20:4); escape the second death (20:6); partake of the tree of life, which grows beside the pure river of life, proceeding from the throne of God (22:1, 2); reside where there is no more curse (22:3); see God's face and have His name in their foreheads (22:4); live in His light and reign with Him forever (22:5); have the right to eat forever of the tree of life (2:7); and to enter freely the gates of the Holy City (22:14).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Which of the many responses of praise to God in the Revelation represent how I feel about Him? (4:11; 5:9, 12, 13; 6:10; 11:13, 17; 15:3, 4). Explain.
2. How will I respond to John's plea that I accept Jesus now and remain in Him forever? (Rev. 22:17).

SUMMARY: John tells us that Jesus loved us so much that He washed our sins in His own blood (Rev. 1:5). John prophesied that throughout the ages there would be some who would accept that sacrifice and many who would reject it. He invites us to join the redeemed of all ages to accept Christ's offer of total restoration for all eternity.



The One-day River

Joe Dugucagi

When Joe Dugucagi [doon-goo-KAHN-gee] joined the Adventist church in Fiji, he was the only Adventist in his village. He met strong opposition from others when he tried to share his faith, but eventually a few others were baptized.

The believers held evangelistic meetings, and seven people prepared for baptism. But an eight-month drought had left the nearby river dry. Some skeptical villagers jeered at the Adventists, who insisted on baptizing by immersion, even when there was no water. The only alternative was to baptize the new believers in an oil drum. The day before the baptism, the believers carried water to fill the barrel. That evening they gathered for vespers and once more asked God for rain, though the skies were clear.

The next morning Joe saw puddles of water outside his door. He realized that it must have rained during the night, although no one had heard rain, even on his house's metal roof. Excited, he hurried to the river and found the water level was up to his chest! He ran to tell the pastor the good news.

The believers gathered under the clear sky to worship and praise God, then moved to the river for the baptism. It was a glorious day for the little Adventist congregation!

The following morning Joe went down to the river to bathe, but he found only a few puddles where yesterday there had been a full river. He walked some distance to another channel of the same river and found water there. Apparently Friday night's rain had caused the river to change course and fill the river channel nearest the village. When the water receded, the river returned to its normal channel.

The villagers were amazed that the rain had filled the river channel in answer to the believers' prayers, then left it dry the next day. Many who had jeered the Adventists responded with interest.

The church in Joe's village now has about 40 members, thanks to God's blessings and to the believers' answered prayers.



Joe Dugucagi (left) works in Suva, Fiji but spends his weekends in his rural village, where he continues to share his faith.

God Reveals His Righteousness



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Gen. 3:1-8; Exod. 3:14; Job 1:8-12; Ps. 98:2-9; Isa. 45:22-24; John 14:6; Rev. 19:11.

MEMORY TEXT: “Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested” (Revelation 15:3, 4, NKJV).

KEY THOUGHTS: At the end of the millennium, every knee will bow, responding to God’s revelation of His righteousness. All beings in God’s great universe will acknowledge that God is love, truth, and justice.

SOME OF THE TRAGEDIES that we confront in the legal systems of the world today have to do with the fact that often we are not certain whether justice is really done. God’s government is sometimes put on trial even by well-intended individuals. It is as if the creatures would have the power and authority to take their own Creator to court, to determine whether He is a good and reliable God worthy of their trust.

The Scriptures reveal that no one can take God to court to pass judgment on Him or to evaluate Him. However, God has voluntarily allowed His creatures to witness His acts and the proceedings of the final judgment in order to see that He is an altogether righteous and merciful God and that the accusations of the demonic powers against Him had no foundation whatsoever.

**HUMAN STANDARDS CANNOT BE USED TO JUDGE GOD
(Isa. 40:6-28).**

God sent Moses to Egypt to ask Pharaoh to let His people go free to worship Him in the wilderness. Pharaoh challenged Moses, asking him: "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go?" (Exod. 5:2, NKJV). This is indeed an important question, because its answer testifies to the power of the Lord to judge nations and defeat His enemies. God in Egypt acted as the judge of the nation and defeated the magicians and the gods of Pharaoh.

Read the description of God found in Isaiah 40:12-14, 17-28. Then list the characteristics of God that qualify Him to judge the nations of the earth.

Think for a moment. Would it be possible for human beings or any intelligent creatures to judge God and take Him to court? Perhaps from our familiarity with human legal systems comes a desire to bring God into a court of justice where we could require Him to justify Himself. In our sophisticated era, humans are using philosophy, science, and other human disciplines as the basis for evaluating God and passing judgment on His existence or on His lovingkindness. But God's infinite power and wisdom and His own mysterious nature place Him beyond the full comprehension of our finite minds.

What comparison does Isaiah make between our thoughts and ways and those of God? Isa. 55:8, 9. What status do the judgments of God have? Rom. 11:33.

God is the Incomparable One! God asked His people, "To whom then will you liken Me, or to whom shall I be equal?" (Isa. 40:25). No one can ever be adequate to pass judgment on this unique and majestic God. Outside Himself there is no standard that we can use to measure the love and justice of His actions. It is He and only He who can perfectly judge the universe, because He is our Creator and Redeemer.

In what sense and on what basis did Eve judge God, and what was the result of her function as judge? Gen. 3:1-8.

In what ways have some of my actions been similar to those of Eve? How does trusting God help me in this area?

THE SOURCE OF ALL LOVE, TRUTH, AND JUSTICE (Exod. 3:14; John 14:6; 1 Cor. 1:30; 1 John 3:16).

When a telephone pole fell on his car during a storm, Rodney Bowman of Florin, Pennsylvania, suffered a broken back. He sued the telephone company for \$10,830 in damages. In defense, the company argued that the accident was "an act of God," a charge that has been heard occasionally in the courts of the United States. Who do you think was responsible?

Who does God say He is? Exod. 3:14.

God is the great "I AM," the self-existent One. He is not dependent upon any other being, thing, or idea for His existence. He is Himself the Creator—the Source of life, matter, and truth. God gives wisdom and understanding (Isa. 54:13; John 6:45). Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Ps. 111:10; Job 28:28). In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:2, 3). Jehovah is the foundation of all wisdom, all truth, and all knowledge. (See Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1079.)

According to Paul and John, of what is God the source?

1 Cor. 1:30 _____

John 14:6 _____

1 John 3:16; 4:7, 10 _____

Because of His revelation in Jesus Christ and the Bible, we can know something of God and the world He has created for us. God's Word gives light and understanding (Ps. 119:98-100, 105, 130). It is the basis for right thinking and doing (Ps. 119:1, 2, 5, 6, 11, 30; 1 Tim. 6:20). So-called wise persons who reject the Word of the Lord are ashamed and dismayed; there is no wisdom in them (Jer. 8:9).

God is beyond the highest expression of truth and love. He Himself is truth, love, and life. He is the Source and the basis of our knowledge of them. So when we attempt to obtain principles above God by which to judge Him, we are actually attempting to place ourselves above God.

In what everyday ways do we judge God? Perhaps when we return tithe and then suffer a financial downturn. Or perhaps a neighbor loses a child to cancer and we say, "We just can't understand why God let that happen." How should we relate to such situations, and why?

GOD IS THE JUDGE (Ps. 94:2; 96:13; Dan. 7:10, 22; John 5:22; Acts 10:42).

God is the One who establishes justice in the earth (Isa. 42:4). He is proclaimed as judge in the Scriptures because He created everything there is and therefore has universal dominion (Rev. 14:7; Ps. 110:6). He is the Source of all love and justice. He is the moral Arbiter of the world, who differentiates with absolute exactness justice from injustice, love from hatred, and moral from immoral. Those who believe in Him can trust Him as their judge and joyfully look forward to the time when He will judge them (Ps. 26:1-12). Knowing that there is only *One Person* to whom we have to answer as our judge, and knowing also that He is loving and compassionate, is a comforting truth for any person in need of forgiveness. Perhaps even more significant is the fact that God entrusted judgment to His Son, who became one of us. God has done all that He could do to show the universe the righteousness of His judgments.

What is the value of human judgments upon God?

Job 40:2, 8 _____

Rom. 9:20, 21 _____

Isa. 40:23 _____

The human desire to pass judgment on God and His actions is at the root of the sin problem. It is the desire to live our lives independently of God; to know our own truth, to determine our own morality, and to live by our own wisdom. We must be on guard against those who “presume to pass sentence upon God’s moral government.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 124.

“Let men remember that they have a Ruler in the heavens, a God who will not be trifled with. He who puts his reason to the stretch in an effort to exalt himself and to delineate God, will find that he might far better have stood as a humble suppliant before God, confessing himself to be only an erring human being.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, p. 1079.

How does it encourage you to know that God will ultimately have the final word in the affairs of this troubled world and that though wickedness seems to triumph, God knows all things and will one day make everything right?

GOD'S GLORY WILL BE REVEALED (Job 1:8-12; Ps. 98:2-9).

How does the knowledge of God's glory come to us? Isa. 40:5. How can the knowledge of God's righteousness be obtained? Rom. 1:16, 17; 3:21-26; Ps. 98:2.

A revelation of the character of God is needed, for sin corrupted and distorted the natural world and our human nature. True knowledge of God can be provided for us only from God Himself as self-revelation of His nature. He, knowing our desperate need, provided in Christ the most glorious revelation of Himself as a loving God. The biblical God we know has not been discovered through philosophical analysis or scientific investigation, for He is beyond the natural world.

Which arguments did Satan use to question the character of God? Gen. 3:1-6. What argument did he use to accuse God of ruling on the basis of selfishness and not love? Job 1:8-12.

The evil forces have been passing judgment on God, accusing Him of being precisely the opposite of what He claims to be. God cleared up this distortion on the cross through the sacrificial death of His Son as our substitute. He has also allowed His creatures to be involved in the final judgment in order to witness the justice of His decisions. According to Daniel 7:10, during the investigative judgment "A thousand thousands ministered to Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, and the books were opened." The resolution of the sin problem is not something that will take place in secret and unknown to God's creatures.

"In His dealing with sin, God could employ only righteousness and truth. Satan could use what God could not—flattery and deceit. He had sought to falsify the word of God and had misrepresented His plan of government before the angels, claiming that God was not just in laying laws and rules upon the inhabitants of heaven. . . . Therefore it must be demonstrated before the inhabitants of heaven, as well as of all the worlds, that God's government was just, His law perfect."

—*The Great Controversy*, p. 498.

"That which the mind cannot now grasp, which is hard to be understood, will be explained. We shall see order in that which has seemed unexplainable; wisdom in everything withheld; goodness and gracious mercy in everything imparted."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1091.

GOD'S VINDICATION (Isa. 45:22-24; Phil. 2:10, 11).

The God who cannot be judged by the universe is willing to allow the universe to witness the wonderful way in which He dealt with the sin problem, thus demonstrating once and for all that the accusations of the evil powers were false. In the final judgment God vindicates Himself. We must remember that "the plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth . . . but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 68.

What is God's intention for all the inhabitants of earth? Isa. 45:22-24; Ps. 66:1-4; 96:11-13; Rev. 13:4; 14:7.

It has always been God's intention to reunite the universe by a recognition that He alone is worthy of worship. This conflict will come to an end when *everyone* makes a public recognition of that glorious fact.

At the end, who will bow before Jesus? Phil. 2:10.

The terminology used by Paul in this text is all-inclusive indicating the universal scope of the action. "These words have not yet been fulfilled, but they are an assurance that the time will come when every creature will acknowledge Christ's overlordship (cf. Rev. 5:11-14). This can only be when the great controversy is ended, when all, including Satan and his followers, will bow down at the feet of Jesus and own that the ways of God have been just and righteous." —*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 157.

This confession of the evil ones is not an indication of their repentance but a recognition that God has shown Himself to be worthy of worship. Achan was asked to give glory to God before being executed (Josh. 7:19, 20). It was after his "confession" was made that he was executed for his sin. It is in this sense that the evil forces will glorify God at the end of the conflict and before their destruction. They will recognize that their punishment is deserved. God will defeat His enemies from without and also those from within.

"Satan sees that his voluntary rebellion has unfitted him for heaven. . . . His accusations against the mercy and justice of God are now silenced. The reproach which he has endeavored to cast upon Jehovah rests wholly upon himself. And now Satan bows down and confesses the justice of his sentence." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 670.

FURTHER STUDY: Isa. 11:4; Matt. 10:42; 23:31-39; John 16:8; Rom. 1:18-23; 1 Cor. 1:21; Rev. 5:13; 15:4.

Read *The Desire of Ages*, p. 22; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 493, 504, 666-670; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 393.

"The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan's deceptive power was to be broken. This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 22.

"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. As Jesus *opens* before them the riches of redemption and the amazing achievements in the great controversy with Satan, the hearts of the ransomed thrill with more fervent devotion, and with more rapturous joy they sweep the harps of gold; and ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands and thousands of voices unite to swell the mighty chorus of praise. . . .

"The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 678, emphasis supplied.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. God is taking His people to court on account of their rebellion (Mic. 6:1-8). What does this say about God?
2. How will the redeemed react to God's judgment against their enemies? (See Rev. 15:2, 3; 19:1, 2.)

SUMMARY: God is the Judge of the universe because He is the Creator and Redeemer. Creatures can never sit in judgment against their infinite Creator. He revealed Himself on the cross as a loving God, and during the final judgment it will be clear to all that, even in His judgment against His enemies, He is righteous and merciful.



A Rope and a Prayer

Rafael Apaaya

I did not take religion seriously until a co-worker invited me to attend a Revelation Seminar in 1998. I went, and there I met the Savior.

A few days after my baptism some co-workers and I drove to a funeral some 225 miles from where we live in Tamale [TAH-mah-leh], Ghana. Before we left, I prayed for our safety. These co-workers had known me as a drinker and laughed at my prayer.

Our trip covered some very rough roads, and I stopped often to pray. Each time I prayed, my companions mocked me. The road became quite rugged. Suddenly we heard a bang, and the car jerked off the road and into the bush. As I struggled to control the car, it veered back onto the road. We stopped and jumped out to inspect the damage. The right front wheel had come off! The men who had been laughing minutes before now asked how I had steered the car without the wheel. I told them that God had protected us.

I left the others with the car and walked to the nearest town to find a mechanic. Two different mechanics looked at the car and said that without spare parts they could not repair it. And the parts were not available in that town.

I remembered that I had some nylon rope in the trunk. We raised the car and pushed the wheel back into place, tying it with the rope. As we got back into the car, I told my companions that I would pray for safety. This time they were quiet and did not make fun of me. Slowly we started out toward the next town. None of us thought that the rope would hold for long, but I kept driving and praying.

No town along our route had the parts to fix the car, so we continued on to our destination. We could not find parts there either, so we started toward home. By God's grace, we arrived safely in Tamale, having driven some 350 miles on little more than a rope and a prayer.

Not once after the accident did my companions mock my prayers. And since that trip, my Muslim friend comes by to discuss religion. God's miracle has reinforced my faith and made others stop to think about the power of God and the effectiveness of prayer.

Rafael Apaaya is an industrial relations officer in Tamale, in northern Ghana.



Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide for Third Quarter, 2000

The third quarter Bible Study Guide, entitled *Witnessing: Turning the World Upside Down*, travels through the book of Acts to reveal not only how the early Christians witnessed but how we can apply these methods to our particular place and time.

Lesson 1: Witnessing: A Christian Fundamental.

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE:

Sunday: What Is a Witness? (Acts 9:1-22; 22:15, 16, 20).

Monday: The Goal of Witnessing (Matt. 28:18-20).

Tuesday: Reasons for Witnessing (Acts 8:26; 31; 2 Pet. 3:9; 2 Cor. 5:14).

Wednesday: The Basic Approaches to Witnessing (Daniel 1; Matt. 5:7; Acts 18:4).

Thursday: Witnessing: A Matter of Obedience (Acts 5:17-42).

MEMORY TEXT: Matthew 28:18-20.

SABBATH GEM: God has appointed a special role for each of us in the work of spreading His gospel.

Lesson 2: The Power and the Joy of Witnessing.

THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE:

Sunday: Searching Within (Acts 1:14; 2:1).

Monday: Conditions for Enabling Baptism (Acts 1:5, 8, 14).

Tuesday: Filled With the Spirit (Acts 4:23, 31; 6:1-5; 7:54-56; 11:22-24).

Wednesday: The Latter Rain (Acts 2:14-21).

Thursday: Fasting (Acts 9:7-9, 18, 19; 13:1-3; 14:21-23).

MEMORY TEXT: Acts 4:33.

SABBATH GEM: The Holy Spirit is the power behind any witnessing we do.

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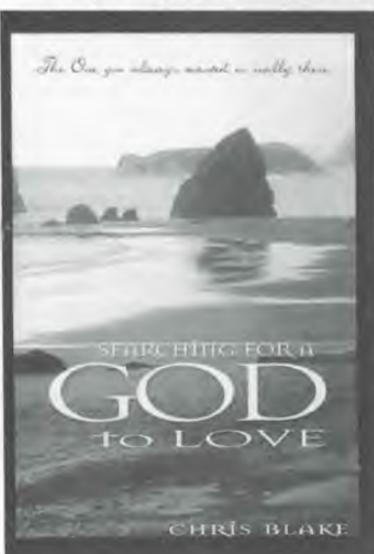
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