

Adventist World

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BY BILL KNOTT

Nothing comes before the thorns.

Five centimeters (2 inches) long, they bristle all across our path, snagging shirts and piercing skin. Nature and the ravages of time have made it hard to see what’s left of old Colossae.

Between the choking goat-thorn bushes, you can glimpse the evidence that once this was a place where families lived and children played. Crumbling bricks, unspeakably old, poke through unexcavated mounds. The crescent of a Roman amphitheater emerges from a sun-baked hill, teasing the imagination with what transpired millennia ago.

When the apostle Paul wrote his letter to the church at Colossae, the recipients could probably gather in a member’s house. Their city was declining; their church was small. No great thing was ever going to arise among the thorns. Wealth, commerce, art, and culture flowed away with younger citizens to bigger, better places. Opportunities were always going somewhere else. Even the fact of a Christian church in this town was an act of faith—faith that the gospel doesn’t need endorsement from the wealthy or the famous; from art or culture, politics or trends.

And yet, to these beleaguered Christians, ringed by pagan deities and cults that worshipped angels, the apostle wrote some of the most cosmos-circling lines recorded in the Scriptures: “He [God] has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son. . . . He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Col. 1:13, 17, NRSV).

Lest they imagine that they and their small congregation had been forgotten in the sweep of time, Paul reminded them that the Lord before whom they bowed in love and awe was ruler of far more than just this planet. When thorns both real and symbolic blocked their way and pierced their hopes, they found new comfort in the surety that “all things have been created through him and for him” (verse 16). When earthquakes rattled; when friendships weakened; when faith got shaken by deep scorn or failing health, they had a word to cling to: “He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”



It is the message God’s end-time remnant surely needs today. We see the thorns—the obstacles—that block our paths and thwart our dreams. We worry to ourselves that faith might fade with those who follow—with children and grandchildren; with friends, with new believers. We wonder when the rains will come to green our church and raise our hopes—when we will see the gospel move with Spirit-power unstoppable. A hundred kinds of thorns are painful evidence that “our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12, NRSV).

But there stands Christ among the thorns—all-confident; all-powerful. He rules the future and the past, and brings omnipotence to now—our small, obscure, uncertain now. There is no place He doesn’t rule. There is no power that will not bow. His crown was made of thorns.

Take courage, church, in every trouble: “He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

We believe in the power of prayer, and we welcome prayer requests that can be shared at our weekly staff worship every Wednesday morning. Send your requests to prayer@adventistworld.org, and pray for us as we work together to advance God’s kingdom.

Church members, together with General Conference president Ted N. C. Wilson, gathered outside the capital Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, on Sabbath, August 27, to celebrate baptisms at the end of a nationwide evangelistic campaign commemorating the 30th anniversary of the beginning of official Adventist mission in Mongolia. There were 21 evangelism sites across the country and 155 new church members were baptized.

Photo: Henry Stober



“There is no doubt in my mind that the [Adventist] Church will benefit with these teens leading it, both now in their local setting and in the future across the broader church. Watching the Holy Spirit work in the teens’ lives was very humbling. We all left with a sense of, ‘Wow!’ It was such a powerful week.”

—Jeff Parker, Australian Union Conference youth director, about the CHOSEN conference, a teen leadership training event. More than 60 teens ages 14 to 16, representing the nine Australian conferences, attended the seventh CHOSEN conference in Brisbane July 4-8. The conference organizers encourage local pastors and church leaders to nominate teenagers with potential leadership qualities to attend the program, where they are mentored, inspired, and trained to become future leaders of the Adventist Church.

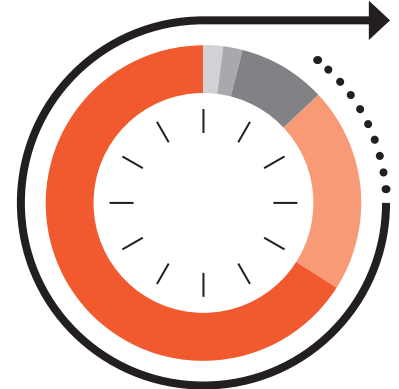
30

The number of years the 1000 Missionary Movement (1000MM) has been in service. The 1000MM is a missionary outreach institution located in Balubad, Silang, Philippines. In 1992 the first cohort of missionaries was commissioned, marking the beginning of the 1000MM annual cohorts of missionaries sent for mission to different parts of the world.

End-time Prophecies

Church members were asked to what extent they accept the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s teaching about end-time prophecies:

- 2% I don’t accept it
- 2% I have major doubts about it
- 9% I have some questions about it
- 21% I accept it because the church teaches it
- 66% I embrace it wholeheartedly



N=54,572

Source: 2017-18 Global Church Member Survey, 50-51

URL: <https://bit.ly/3FrAKKX>

More Than 200

The number of health directors, professors, and medical practitioners who attended the Southern Asia-Pacific Division health summit. This year’s conference was held in Legazpi, Bicol Region, Philippines, August 23-25. The three-day summit included goals of professional fellowship, learning new trends in health ministry, and exposure to the connection between current scientific discoveries and the Bible. Other purposes included preparing medical practitioners as lifestyle evangelists, focusing on global health issues, and the need for comprehensive health ministry. Leaders encouraged participants to use the knowledge they received at the summit to bless others.

“One of the key initiatives we are working on is a ‘winterization’ project. This program assists people to prepare their homes for winter by repairing windows and doors that have been destroyed. Winter is coming soon, and people will be too cold unless their homes can be repaired.”

—Greg Young, ADRA South Pacific director, about a month-long deployment to help the victims of the conflict in Ukraine. Amid the devastation, ADRA is working to support the victims and has assisted more than three million people in Ukraine through the provision of shelter, food and water, cash assistance, evacuation, and transport.

“There are many across the territory who are waiting for that moment to give their life to Jesus because they have received the light of the gospel. And we must continue to testify and advance the mission. Our church continues marching on and only stops to baptize. But we must remain committed as church leaders, pastors, and laypersons to sharing the message of salvation with greater member involvement and impact the territory even more.”

—Elie Henry, Inter-American Division (IAD) president, during in a final charge to the more than 650 lay evangelists and church leaders gathered on the last day of the IAD’s Festival of the Laity held in Panama City, Panama, in early August.

More Than 3,000

The number of people who marched through the capital city of Port Vila in Vanuatu on August 12 to celebrate 150 years of Seventh-day Adventist Education. Vanuatu Mission and Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) staff, students, parents, staff from all five Adventist schools based on Efate, along with leaders of other denominations and national and local government officials joined the celebrations.

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Do you want to keep up with what is happening in our church? To receive our weekly newsletter featuring news, Bible teaching, inspiring stories, and videos, sign up today.



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More Than 20,000

The number of Adventist church members in Venezuela who spread cheer and hope through dozens of outreach activities across every state in the South American country. Captioned as *Close to You Venezuela*, the sixth annual event saw young and old take part in spreading joy to many people affected by numerous challenges. →



Photo: East Venezuela Union

Mongolia Mission Celebrates 30th Anniversary Preaching and Baptizing

Williams Costa, Jr., communication department director, General Conference

What do people usually look for as a present when they celebrate a 30-year anniversary? Some would like to have a memorable trip, a special dinner, or special clothes. Others are simply satisfied to have some food and hope for a better future.

The Mongolia Mission, part of the territory of the Northern Asia-Pacific Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, decided to celebrate its thirtieth anniversary by preaching and baptizing. From August 20-27, 2022, simultaneous evangelistic meetings were held in 21 cities across the country of Mongolia. The outreach was a Total Member Involvement event, including the participation of many church members as well as pastors and church administrators.

Hundreds of people attended the meetings, were inspired by the health talks and Bible presentations, and decided to be baptized.

Mongolia has 3.4 million inhabitants, and 2 million live in Ulaanbaatar, the country's capital. The Seventh-day Adventist Church currently has 3,000 members in Mongolia. Adventist missionaries first entered Mongolia in 1992, two years after the fall of communism. The country is located in what is known as the 10/40 window, and more than half its population is Buddhist.

Commenting on the recent outreach event, Pastor Han Suk Hee, Mongolia Mission president, said: "We are celebrating 30 years of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's presence in Mongolia with an integrated effort to carry the message of salvation in Jesus."

Pastor Yo Han Kim, the Northern Asia-Pacific Division president, also in Mongolia for the event, stated, "I trust God has great plans for Mongolia, and the pastors and administrators have excellent projects to expand and consolidate

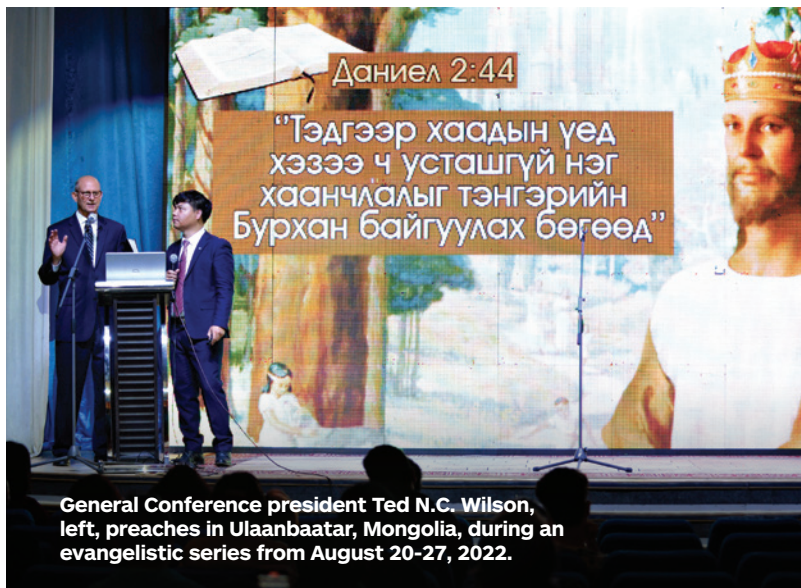
the mission of the Church here."

The Church's president of the General Conference, Pastor Ted Wilson, preached daily throughout the week at the Mongolian Labor Union Auditorium in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar. During the final weekend, he met with a large representation of the Church at the Suut Youth Camp, 35 miles (56 kilometers) north of the city.

On the final Sabbath morning, Wilson challenged the large group to develop a Christian life through Bible study and prayer. He urged all members to engage in Total Member Involvement and stay faithful to the Lord's call to be missionaries throughout Mongolia until "we meet with Jesus in the clouds of heaven," he said. "Since this mission is celebrating the thirtieth anniversary reunion of the Seventh-day Adventist message arriving in Mongolia, I challenge each of you to look forward to and invite others to be present at the greatest of all anniversary reunions—the second coming of Christ," Wilson said.

That afternoon, the pastors baptized 155 people representing 21 locations that held simultaneous evangelistic meetings. Wilson is encouraging all pastors, teachers, health-care workers, church administrators, other church workers, and church members to be active in Total Member Involvement and engage in local personal and public evangelism sharing Christ, His three angels' messages, and His soon second coming.

There is no better way to celebrate three decades of existence in Mongolia than preaching and baptizing. ©



General Conference president Ted N.C. Wilson, left, preaches in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, during an evangelistic series from August 20-27, 2022.

Photo: Henry Stober

2,500 Young People Are Challenged to Connect With God

Marcos Paseggi, *Adventist World*

A long-awaited event brought together thousands of Seventh-day Adventist young people from across Europe in Lahti, Finland, August 2-6, 2022, for several days of enriching activities. The European Adventist Youth Congress 2022 (AYC22), under the theme *Plug In*, helped more than 2,500 young Adventists connect with God and those around them, leaders said.

“We live in a time in which we have more cables to recharge the devices in our house than any other thing you can think of. We always make sure that our devices do not run out of battery,” Inter-European Division (EUD) youth director Jonatan Tejel said. “We need to take this reality to the spiritual realm . . . to find our rest and rhythm [and] truly connect with God.”

After the opening plenary message by international speaker David Asscherick, titled “Unplug,” participants kept exploring the topic through such presentations as “Plug & Breathe,” “Plug & Serve,” “Plug & Share,” and “Plug & Live.”

AYC22 also included physical challenges, uniquely Finnish cultural experiences, and opportunities to network and serve others. The event also featured the Impact Lahti community outreach project. Through an Exhibition of Nations and a 5K Run to Help initiative, organizers and participants reached out and connected with residents of the city of 120,000, located an hour’s drive north of Helsinki, Finland’s capital city.

TOGETHER AT LAST

The event, which takes place every four years, was postponed in



Photo: Daniel Kluska

2021 because of pandemic-related restrictions, but leaders said they are glad they could meet in person only a year later than planned, five years after the previous event held in 2017 in Valencia, Spain. The number of registrants surpassed the organizers’ estimates.

“With the situation we’re living in Europe . . . [and] the COVID-19 virus still knocking at our doors, our estimation of attendance was lower [than that],” Tejel acknowledged.

Participants coming from dozens of European countries were lodged at Lahti area schools. The EUD delegation included participants from Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Italy, and several other nations. The Trans-European Division (TED) group included delegations from the UK, Adriatic and Baltic nations, and Scandinavia. Thanks to anonymous donors, there was a sizable delegation from Ukraine.

A WIDE RANGE OF INTERESTS

Besides plenary sessions, participants were able to choose between dozens of workshops addressing various issues that Adventist young

The 2022 European Adventist Youth Congress inspired thousands.

people find relevant, including topics such as Disability and the Bible, Bible Journaling, and How to Be a Positive Influencer. Other topics offered included God’s Will Versus Your Will, Baptism and Discipleship in Relational Ways, and How to Survive a Faith Crisis.

“Those topics tried to address issues that are affecting our youth today,” Tejel explained, “like sexual purity in a society where pressures and temptations exist, the problem of loneliness, the issue of disconnection from the church. The congress tried to also answer the question: How can we personalize and live out our faith?” he said.

A mini-Olympics sports tournament, a scavenger hunt, a mass choir practice, art activities, and a “Chill Out Lounge” after the evening programs added options for all attendees and provided them with opportunities to connect. The Sabbath program included a baptismal ceremony.

“We hope that every individual who attended is able to connect again and again with Jesus,” Tejel said. ☺

2,596,256

Membership of the South American Division (SAD) as of June 30, 2022

“God has been working in His church, a church that even amid constant challenges keeps moving increasingly forward. Our direction is very clear: we are eternity-bound!”

—Stanley Arco, SAD president, in a video message to church members, as he shared his hopes for the Adventist Church in the region during 2022.

“I’m not an Adventist, but when they started building a church in front of my business, I went straight to the pastor to tell him I wanted to donate for the remodeling project. They accepted me, and they received me with great affection. God has been very good to me, and I needed to give back to Him because He gives me many blessings.”

—Freddy Alcívar, a well-known business owner in Santa Lucía, Ecuador, about the first Nuevo Tiempo Bible study center and remodeled church in that town. The reconstruction of the church building became a reality thanks to God’s provision, many church members who got involved, and the support of area residents.

“When we left our school, I felt nervous. I had created three pictures in my mind: first about the volunteer team, second about the place of service, and third about the spiritual component of the initiative. But I must say I was wrong in all of them. My expectations were surpassed by far.”

—Vitor Nunes, a student at Brazil Adventist University (UNASP), about the Amazon Lifeguard project that he and 35 other people participated in. This project was promoted by the Northwest Missions Institute (IMN) in partnership with the Volunteer and Mission Center. The partnership between IMN and UNASP is seven years old and seeks to motivate young university students to engage in mission and participate in initiatives aimed at supporting riverside and indigenous communities in some of the most hard-to-reach places on the Amazon River. ↓

2,000,000

The number of the average monthly unique viewers who tune into Feliz7Play, an online platform that hosts TV series, films, and documentaries. Feliz7Play was the result of careful research with Internet users to find out their needs and preferences. Its name reflects the goal of catering primarily to Adventist children, teens, and young adults, providing them with biblical content they can watch, especially on Sabbath.



Photo: South American Division News



Photo: Norman Meyer

Is the Spirit of God Withdrawing From the Earth?

This is the best time to reveal God's character.

In recent times the world has witnessed events that just a few years ago might have seemed unbelievable.

Flooding, record temperatures, and devastating fires have given evidence that our planet is fragile. Traditional moral values have been turned upside down, while defenders of biblical standards have been ridiculed. Social media has become an ocean of unbridled anger and malice. Cancel culture ruins lives, careers, and reputations.

Politics has become openly hostile, seemingly devoid of the collegiality that once characterized political discourse. The lingering COVID-19 crisis revealed that in no time at all, the attention of the entire world can be fixed on a single polarizing issue. A raft of restrictions was swiftly implemented, impacting everything from one's ability to work to a congregation's ability to assemble for worship.

WHAT IS GOING ON?

The logical question to ask is

"What in the world is going on?"

While murder, immorality, abortion, and natural disasters are almost as old as our planet itself, what we are witnessing today is a fulfillment of Jesus' words in Matthew 24. Speaking of the signs of His return, Jesus said in Matthew 24:8, "All these are merely the beginning of birth pains" (NASB). Just as contractions increase in frequency and intensity prior to the arrival of a baby, the signs of Jesus' return are increasing as we approach the Second Advent.

For years, thinking people have asked where society was heading. We now know. The Holy Spirit is being withdrawn from the earth, just as He was in Noah's day (Gen. 6:3-5). History is repeating itself.

The temptation for Christian believers today is to seek political, civil, or economic solutions for the serious challenges the world faces. However, elections, protests, and legal decisions cannot remedy what currently ails our world. We wrestle today, not with "flesh and blood" (Eph. 6:12), but with a jealous devil, whose millennia-long campaign against God is rapidly gaining ground.

Caught in the midst of a great controversy, as the Spirit of God is being withdrawn from the world, Planet Earth sinks ever deeper into the morass of sin.

WHAT CHARACTER ARE WE MANIFESTING?

The larger question is no longer, "What can we do about the state of our world?" The vital question we must now ask ourselves is "What character are we manifesting in this time of crisis?"

Though it may be easy to become frustrated with the condition of the world, we must remember where we are in the stream of time. Now that we are witnessing the fulfillment of 2,000-year-old promises, the appropriate response is not anger and despair, but hope and assurance in the God whose Word has again proven unerring.

THIS IS OUR TIME

The inquiring world is to know that God's people possess assurance, not malice and bitterness. As difficult as it is to digest current events, the God who is "upholding all things by the word of His power" (Heb. 1:3) can uphold you. As Jesus fills your life with His presence, the universe will see the final and full display of the power of the gospel in all who have continued to surrender their lives to Him.

It is our time to let the world witness the power of God in the lives of His people. ☉



Focus

The Trouble With the “Time of Trouble”

Facing
the future
without fear

BY GERHARD
PFANDL



The expression “time of trouble” (Hebrew *‘et tsarah/tsar*) appears eight times in the Old Testament.¹ The New Testament equivalent “great tribulation” (*thlipsis megalē*) appears three times.² In each text the “time of trouble/tribulation” refers to a time of distress, oppression, disaster, or war.

Considering the biblical prophetic outline, we believe that we are living in the time of the end just prior to the second coming of Jesus. Thus, the great time of trouble is not a time far off in the future, but a time we may all experience. After all, Ellen White noted: “The final movements will be rapid ones.”³ While persecution is to be expected during the great time of trouble, already now Christians are persecuted, and, in fact, Christians are currently one of the most persecuted religious groups in the world.⁴

Especially in regions with traditionally non-Christian majority religions, Christians have experienced severe persecution, including the destruction and burning of houses of worship, severe beatings, destruction of property, and even death. While persecution will be a reality in the time of the end, Scripture assures us that during the great time of trouble none of God’s people will lose their lives, because God will take care of them (Rev. 22:11).⁵ Let’s look more closely at the biblical data that help us understand the concept of a “time of trouble.”

JEREMIAH’S WITNESS

Of special interest are three texts in Jeremiah. The prophet lived during the last decades of the kingdom of Judah. The last good king of Judah, Josiah, died in 609 B.C. in the battle at Megiddo against the Egyptians. His sons did not follow in the footsteps of their father, and Jeremiah repeatedly warned them of the coming time of trouble unless they returned to their God. The trouble on the horizon at that time was the Babylonian Empire.

The drought in Jeremiah 14 is seen as a precursor of the coming judgment. Jeremiah pleads with God, “O you hope of Israel, its savior in time of trouble” (verse 8), “do not leave us” (verse 9).⁶ Jeremiah 15 includes God’s negative response to Jeremiah’s plea. A time of trouble will come (verse 11), and “your wealth and your treasures I will give as spoil, without price, for all your sins” (verse 13).

The Book of Consolation (Jer. 30-33) opens with a promise that sometime in the future Israel and

We can look with confidence into the future, knowing that Jesus will come to take us home to the mansions He has prepared for us (John 14:1-3).

Judah would return from exile to their homeland, the land of their forefathers (Jer. 30:3). The northern kingdom, Israel, had already gone into the Assyrian exile in 722 B.C.; and Judah was soon to follow in three deportations (in 605, 597, and 586 B.C., respectively) to Babylon. But prior to the exile there would be the horror of the conquest of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. "For that day [of judgment] is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble" (verse 7, NKJV). Jeremiah describes the events surrounding the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., that included a months-long siege of the city, and the Babylonians pillaging the city and destroying the first temple, as the time of Jacob's trouble. This was the historical fulfillment of the prophecy concerning "the time of Jacob's trouble." Nevertheless, Judah "shall be saved out of it" (verse 7). Following the Babylonian exile, the people were returned to the land of Judah.

INSIGHTS FROM DANIEL AND MATTHEW

The best-known "time of trouble" text in the Old Testament is found in Daniel 12:1: "At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book"

"At that time" refers back to when the king of the north comes to "his end, with none to help him" (Dan. 11:45). That is the time Michael shall stand up. Michael, whose name means "Who is like God?" is the great prince who stands guard over Daniel's people (Dan. 12:1). In Jude 9 he is called "the Archangel," and in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 the

voice of the Archangel will raise the dead in Christ. Because in John 5:26-28 Christ says His voice will raise the dead, the term "Michael the Archangel" refers to Christ.

The Hebrew word *amad*, "stand up, arise," is repeatedly used in Daniel 11, where it always refers to a new king coming to power.⁷ All the kings in Daniel 11 were earthly rulers, "but now the ruler from heaven will take over, and He will make up a very different type of kingdom, one that is ruled upon the principles of righteousness."⁸

A time of trouble "such as never has been since there was a nation till that time" is also mentioned in Matthew 24:21, "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be." Both "times" are referred to as the greatest in human history. Since the two statements refer to different times, they cannot both be literally true. Therefore, they must be understood as idiomatic expressions that emphasize the superlative nature of the events.⁹

That Daniel's time of trouble comes at the end of world history, just prior to the Second Coming, is indicated in the next two sentences: "But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan. 12:2). While during the great time of trouble God's people will experience persecution and hardship, God will deliver His people from the designs of their enemies, so that they, together with the resurrected righteous, shall be caught up together "in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. 4:17).

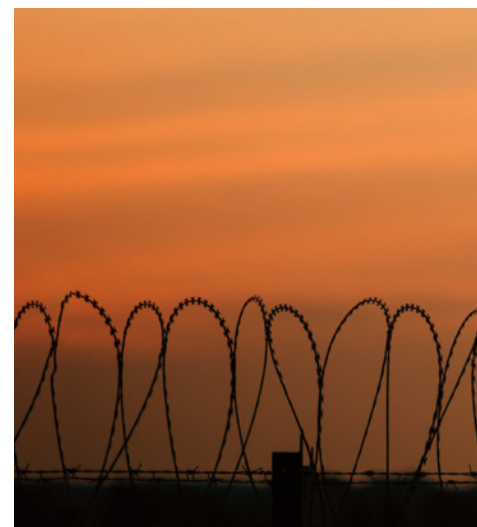
The "great tribulation" Jesus

predicted in Matthew 24:21 follows the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, described in verses 15-20. Thus, the great tribulation in verse 21, following the fall of Jerusalem, found a fulfillment during the Dark Ages when Satan tried to destroy God's true people through the apostate church.

THE TIME OF TROUBLE IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

In Revelation 7:4 John hears the number of those who were sealed: 144,000. In verse 9 he sees them and, behold, they are "a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb." When he is wondering who they are, he is told: "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:14). This is the only reference to the great tribulation at the time of the end in the book of Revelation, but what happens during this time is described in Revelation 13:15-17 and chapters 15 and 16. This great tribulation is the same event as the time of trouble referenced in Daniel 12:1.

Just as in the epilogue to the book of Daniel, where Daniel is told that the unsealing of his prophecies will



cause a division, “many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined, but the wicked shall act wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand” (Dan. 12:10), so in the epilogue to the book of Revelation (Rev. 22:6-21) the solemn announcement is made: “He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still” (verse 11, NKJV). Human beings “can resist the gospel for a time. Eventually a verdict will be pronounced, however, and it will be too late to change.”¹⁰

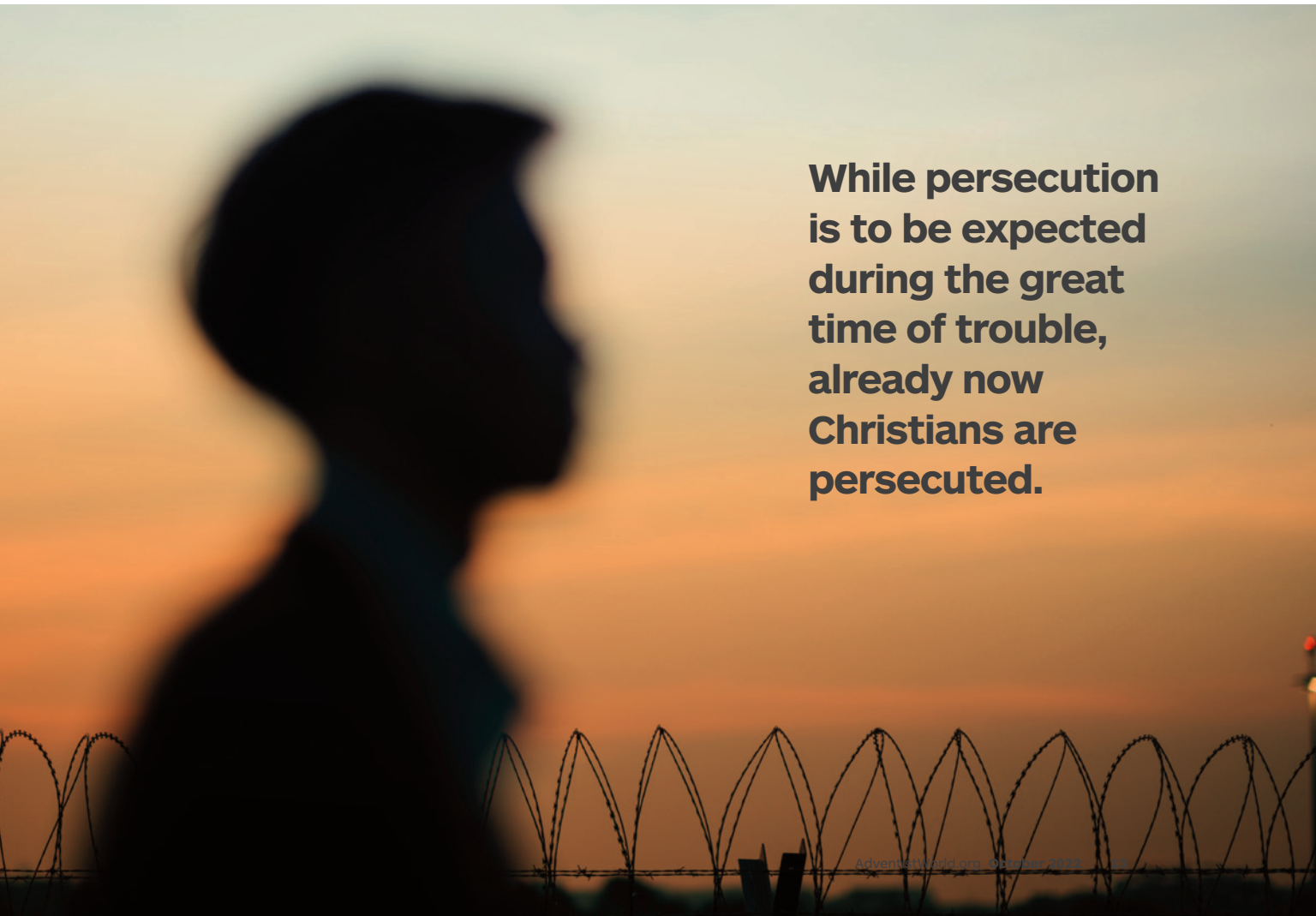
The great time of trouble will start with the close of probation in Revelation 22:11, when Jesus finishes

His ministry of intercession and pre-Advent judgment in the heavenly sanctuary. At that time, only two classes of people will be found on earth: those who have accepted God’s offer of salvation, and those who have rejected it. As mentioned above, during the great time of trouble, when the seven last plagues are poured out on the wicked, God’s people are without an Intercessor in heaven, but they are not forsaken by God. While the Holy Spirit is withdrawn from the wicked, He is not withdrawn from God’s people. Furthermore, the pronouncement in Revelation 22:11 is God’s assurance that He will take care of His people. “He who is holy, let him be holy still” means God guarantees He will protect them, and nothing will

happen to them to change their destiny; they will remain holy. Yes, they will experience the “time of Jacob’s trouble,” but not one of God’s holy ones will be lost.

THE TIME OF TROUBLE IN THE WRITINGS OF ELLEN WHITE

Ellen White outlined three distinct time periods in her description of end-time events, each with specific happenings: (1) the time of the investigative or pre-Advent judgment, which concludes with the close of probation; (2) the great time of trouble following the close of probation and concluding with the Second Advent; (3) the millennium following the Second Advent, concluding with the resurrection of the wicked and their final destruc-



While persecution is to be expected during the great time of trouble, already now Christians are persecuted.

tion in the lake of fire.

Events leading up to the time of trouble include the sealing of the saints,¹¹ the latter rain,¹² the loud cry,¹³ the shaking,¹⁴ the Sunday laws,¹⁵ the death decree,¹⁶ and the close of probation.¹⁷ Following the close of probation Ellen White saw the great time of trouble, the outpouring of the seven last plagues, and the time of Jacob's trouble. This great time of trouble climaxes in the battle of Armageddon during the sixth plague, followed by a partial resurrection on the day of the second advent of Christ, at which time the first resurrection and the translation of the righteous takes place. These events will be followed by the millennium.

1 The Great Time of Trouble

The great time of trouble (Dan. 12:1) begins with the close of probation. It is the time when the seven last plagues will fall on the earth. God's long-suffering has ended. The wicked have passed the boundary of their probation, and the Spirit of God has at last been withdrawn. "It was impossible for the plagues to be poured out while Jesus officiated in the sanctuary; but as His work there is finished, and His intercession closes, there is nothing to stay the wrath of God."¹⁸ This is the time when the four angels in Revelation 7:1-3 loose the winds of the earth, and Satan will "plunge the inhabitants of the earth into one great, final trouble."¹⁹

The seven last plagues²⁰ will be of short duration and localized in various places around the globe, otherwise "the inhabitants . . . would be wholly cut off,"²¹ but the sixth plague will involve the worldwide battle of Armageddon in Revelation 16:12-16. The three unclean spirits (i.e., spirits of demons) come out of the mouth of the dragon (spiritualism), the beast

(the Papacy), and the false prophet (apostate Protestantism). They arm the powers of this world to a final battle against God and His people. Armageddon is not a place in the Middle East, as many Christians believe, but wherever God's people are endangered by the enemy—there is Armageddon. At the time of their greatest danger, however, Jesus appears in the clouds of heaven to rescue His people.²²

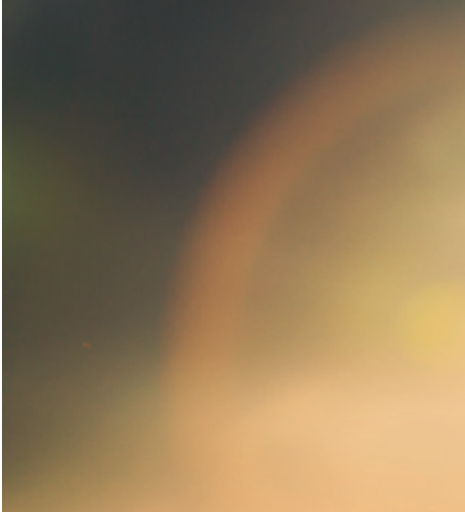
2 The Time of Jacob's Trouble

The fulfillment of the time of Jacob's trouble, referred to in Jeremiah 30:7, in the time of Jeremiah, has been explained above. Ellen White applies the time of Jacob's trouble to the time of the end and connects its beginning to the death decree before the close of probation, even though it occupies most of the time of the great time of trouble. "When this time of trouble comes, every case is decided; there is no longer probation, no longer mercy for the impenitent. The seal of the living God is upon His people. . . . The decree has been passed by the highest earthly authority that they shall worship the beast and receive his mark under pain of persecution and death."²³

As Jacob, though he had confessed his sins, still wrestled with God (Gen. 32), so God's people will experience a time of anguish and feel a deep sense of their unworthiness. However, "their sins have gone beforehand to judgment and have been blotted out, and they cannot bring them to remembrance."²⁴

3 Partial Resurrection

Just before the appearance of Christ in the clouds of heaven there is a partial resurrection, as suggested in Daniel 12:2: "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame



and everlasting contempt." Ellen White describes this as follows: "All who have died in the faith of the third angel's message come forth from the tomb glorified, to hear God's covenant of peace with those who have kept His law. 'They also which pierced him' (Rev. 1:7, KJV), those that mocked and derided Christ's dying agonies, and the most violent opposers of His truth and His people, are raised to behold Him in His glory and to see the honor placed upon the loyal and obedient."²⁵ This special resurrection does not take place days or weeks prior to the Second Coming, but on the day Jesus returns to this earth. Because the purpose of this resurrection is to let the people mentioned above see Him coming in the clouds of heaven, this special resurrection may be only minutes or hours prior to His appearing.

4 The Second Coming

When Christ comes, the first resurrection takes place (Rev. 20:4, 5). "The voice of the Son of God calls forth the sleeping saints. He looks upon the graves of the righteous, then, raising His hands to heaven, He cries: 'Awake, awake, awake, ye that sleep in the dust, and arise!' Throughout the length and breadth of the earth the dead shall hear that voice, and they that hear shall live."²⁶ The living who have accepted Jesus as their Saviour will be translated "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor. 15:52). "Now they are made immortal and with the risen

The pronouncement in Revelation 22:11 is God's assurance that He will take care of His people.



saints are caught up to meet their Lord in the air,²⁷ and the unbelievers will be destroyed. “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.”²⁸ At that time the millennium will commence.

WE HAVE THIS HOPE

We are clearly living in the time of the end (Dan. 11:45). Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy provide us with a glimpse of the future. There will come persecution, a death decree, and the great time of trouble, during which God's people have to live without an Intercessor in heaven. Nevertheless, they have nothing to fear, for God promised in Revelation 22:11 that He will take care of them. We can look with

confidence into the future, knowing that Jesus will come to take us home to the mansions He has prepared for us (John 14:1-3). ☉

¹ Neh. 9:27; Job 38:23; Ps. 37:39; Isa. 33:2; Jer. 14:8; 15:11; 30:7; and Dan. 12:1.

² Matt. 24:21; Rev. 2:22; 7:14.

³ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 9, p. 11.

⁴ Kelly James Clark, “The Most Persecuted Religion in the World,” *Huffpost*, Mar. 6, 2013, available online at https://www.huffpost.com/entry/christianity-most-persecuted-religion_b_2402644?guce_referrer_us=aHR0CHM6Ly9mci5NYXRlc3RvbmVpbmN0aXR1d-GUub3JnLzEzNzQyL3NpbGVuY2UtcGFwZS1wZjZjZW11dGlvbi1jaH-JldGlibnM8guce_referrer_cs=JJ0y8zbxendzSumsz71QQ. See also, in more detail, Rupert Short, *Christianophobia* (London: Civitas: Institute for the Study of Civil Society, 2012), available at https://www.civitas.org.uk/pdf/Shortt_Christianophobia.pdf.

⁵ This assertion is based on Revelation 22:11. Its particular meaning is discussed in the section dealing with the time of trouble in the book of Revelation.

⁶ Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible texts are from *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

⁷ Dan. 11:2, 3, 4, 7, 20, 21.

⁸ William Shea, *Daniel: A Reader's Guide* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2005), p. 269.

⁹ This is similar to the idiomatic expression in 2 Kings 18:5 and 23:25, where the kings Hezekiah and Josiah are both described as so faithful to the Lord that “after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him.”

¹⁰ Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, rev. ed. (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 2009), p. 619.

¹¹ Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1882,1945), p. 58.

¹² Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), pp. 54, 55.

¹³ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958, 1980), book 1, p. 363.

¹⁴ E. G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 270.

¹⁵ E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 232.

¹⁶ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 631. On the timing of the death.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 629.

¹⁸ E. G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 280.

¹⁹ E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 614.

²⁰ The name “the seven last plagues” comes from the fact that when the 10 plagues fell on Egypt, the first three fell also upon the Israelites; only the last seven fell on the Egyptians alone. The last seven plagues in the time of the end will fall only on the wicked, not on the righteous.

²¹ E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 628, 629.

²² E. G. White, *Early Writings*, pp. 284, 285.

²³ E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 213.

²⁴ E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 620.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 637.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 644.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 645.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 657; cf. Rev. 19:11-21.

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How Can I Be Ready?

Some faithful Adventists feel a deep sense of dread when they think about end-times and “the time of trouble.” The same Bible that taught us to believe in a “time of trouble” also shows us how to deepen our trust in the Saviour whose coming is “the blessed hope.” Here are some helpful suggestions that will bring reassurance to you and all others who await this crucial moment in earth’s history, just prior to the glorious return of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.—Editors.

▶ First things first: Live today—and not in the future. Make your commitment to God every day and do not live in dread and fear, imagining the details of dark times.

▶ Spend quality time in your friendship with Jesus every day.

▶ Don’t postpone important decisions for Jesus.

▶ Remember the big picture: God loves you, and as your Creator and Saviour He gave everything so that you can spend eternity with Him. He is completely on your side.

▶ Claim His joy now.

▶ Practice faith and trust in Him every day—beginning with the small daily decisions that shape our days and lives.

▶ Keep saying “Yes” to Jesus—every day, every moment.

▶ Trust that “He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 1:6, NIV).

Heritage of Faith



That evening after the vesper service, I asked my husband, Andrew, “What are we going to pass on to our child?”

badminton or football, cricket or running; he’s got it all covered. He is also a preacher at heart. Then I thought about myself: *What am I going to pass on to my child?* I might be good at different things, but what was that one thing that I wished to give our child? Suddenly I thought back to the beginning of my journey with God.

Psalm 16 has spoken to me in many different ways, at various moments in my life, but the first time it became real to me was when I was 18. I got on my knees before I left for the airport, before I could answer all those daunting questions about college and career. I needed

Music has a way of reaching the deepest parts of our personalities. It’s captivating and consuming. At times it can transport one to a seemingly different world. I never imagined a brass band would uncover something that was buried deep within. As I was reveling in the melody of the brass band that played for Lowry Memorial English church one vespers service, I noticed something beautiful: a bond between father and children blossoming before our very eyes.

Melvin Manoharan, his daughter, and two sons are a great blessing to the church family. When I hear this family making music for God’s glory, I marvel at what a great gift this father has passed on to his children—a heritage of music.

That evening, after the vesper service, I asked my husband, Andrew, “What are we going to pass on to our child?” As Andrew and I embark on the new adventure of parenthood, I thought this was one thing we needed to answer. Andrew is good at sports and track events, be it

comforting answers from God just then, including a promise of guidance or the assurance for strength. But here before me lay a challenge. A challenge to say and live out the prayer of David. “O Lord, You are the portion of my inheritance and my cup” (Ps. 16:5). It was a challenge to make God my all.

I have experienced hilltop experiences and valleys in my walk with God. I have disappointed Him, taken my eyes off Him; yet I see His faithfulness. Time and again He has given me the opportunity, created avenues, and pushed me to the edge, where I can slowly practice learning to fly on wings of faith.

When I think of God’s goodness and faithfulness, I think of the time my husband and I went parasailing. It was an indescribable experience. God’s faithfulness is like this giant parachute hovering over us, the one we are constantly connected to. We can experience God’s goodness, His wisdom, instruction, fullness of joy, a good inheritance, and eternal pleasures (verses 6-11), when we are completely dependent on Him. God wishes for us to soar on wings of faith. He wants to become our all.

One thing I wish to pass on to my child is this radical faith. The same faith my grandfather had when he decided to leave everything to follow Jesus; the faith my parents showed when they returned to serve India; the faith Andrew and I now try to live out: a heritage of faith. ©

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Hold Fast What You Have

Jesus Is Coming! (Part 3)

Photo: Szabo Viktor



This is the third of three parts abridged from Pastor Wilson's sermon to the General Conference Session on June 11, 2022. Watch the full sermon at: <https://bit.ly/HoldFast-WhatYouHave>.



Josef Kissinger



Let's focus on our specific calling by God as His remnant church for these last days of earth's history—to proclaim worldwide the three angels' messages of Revelation 14 and the fourth angel of Revelation 18.

We are told, "In a special sense Seventh-day Adventists have been set in the world as watchman and light bearers. To them has been entrusted the last warning for a perishing world. On them is shining wonderful light from the Word of God. They have been given a work of the most solemn import—the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels' messages. There is no other work of so great importance. They are to allow noth-

ing else to absorb their attention."¹

Since these messages are central to our mission as Seventh-day Adventists, let's review some of their vitally important points, reminding ourselves what our God-given mission really is.

FIRST ANGEL

We read in Revelation 14:6: "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." The core of the three angels' messages is the justifying, sanctifying righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Verse 7: "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.'" This first angel's voice is loud so everyone will hear and give glory to God.

The text indicates, "for the hour of His judgment has come." In 1844 the investigative judgment began in the most holy place in heaven as the Lord began reviewing the lives of people down through history. Soon probation will close, so it is vital to always lean on Jesus and His righteousness.

This judgment is before the entire universe, revealing that God's wonderful character of love is just, pure, perfect, and true. We are to worship Him who made heaven, earth, and the sea, which ties into the third angel's message, signifying that God is the all-powerful Creator. We are to worship Him on the seventh-day Sabbath—a distinct sign of His authority. This will be one of the great controversial topics of the last days, and will lead to the ultimate decision of whom to worship by indicating where our loyalties lie.

SECOND ANGEL

Revelation 14:8 states, "And another angel followed, saying, 'Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.'" This is the church of the Middle Ages that continues today, led by the Papacy.

Babylon, a symbol of confusion, chaos, and the mixing of truth and error, is fallen because it represents satanic influences confusing people. We are told, "Through the two great errors, the immortality of the soul and Sunday sacredness, Satan will bring the people under his deceptions. While the former lays the foundation of spiritualism, the

latter creates a bond of sympathy with Rome. The Protestants of the United States will be foremost in stretching their hands across the gulf to grasp the hand of spiritualism. They will reach over the abyss to clasp hands with the Roman power; and under the influence of this threefold union, this country," referring to the United States, "will follow in this step of Rome in trampling on the rights of conscience."² This is not a conditional prophecy; it confirms Revelation 13 and 14.

Revelation 13:12 states, "And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed." This clearly shows that the image to the beast—the United States combined with apostate Protestantism—will initiate activities to support the beast and a Sunday law and will make the whole earth worship the beast whose deadly wound was healed.

THIRD ANGEL

Revelation 14:9-11 says: "Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, 'If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or in his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.'"

We are told, "The mark of the beast is the papal sabbath." "When the test comes, it will be clearly shown what the mark of the beast is. It is the

keeping of Sunday." "The sign, or seal, of God is revealed in the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath, the Lord's memorial of creation."³

The three angels' messages end with marvelous verse 12: "Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." And as the three angels' messages are proclaimed, the Holy Spirit will guide us to be unified. "His transforming grace upon human hearts will lead to unity that has not yet been realized, for all who are assimilated to Christ will be in harmony with one another. The Holy Spirit will create unity." "I am instructed to say to Seventh-day Adventists the world over, God has called us as a people to be a peculiar treasure unto Himself. He has appointed that His church on earth shall stand perfectly united in the Spirit and counsel of the Lord of hosts to the end of time."⁴

Share these precious three angels' messages with heavenly kindness and Christian love. They not only have a strong warning but offer great hope through the righteousness of Christ revealed in the everlasting gospel. Don't get weary or discouraged! Don't give way to complaining and skepticism. Don't turn away from the Lord and the task He has entrusted to us. Look to Christ, His merits, His righteousness, His everlasting biblical truth, and live as you respond to God's instructions for His last-day remnant people.

EYES FIXED ON CHRIST

In the Ellen G. White Estate offices at the General Conference headquarters a large painting called *Christ of the Narrow Way* portrays God's people moving along a treacherous pathway. Created by veteran Seventh-day Adventist artist Elfred Lee, it depicts Ellen White's vision show-

"Look to Christ . . . and live as you respond to God's instructions for His last-day remnant people."

ing the tribulations and triumphs of God's last-day remnant church as it moves along the ever-narrowing pathway. As long as God's people—both individually and as a united body—keep their eyes fixed on Christ at the front of the pathway and do not compromise their faith, they are safe. Let us stop looking to each other, stop looking to outside "experts," stop looking to worldly influences, stop compromising, stop looking to errant theological thinking, stop looking to humanly devised church growth methods, and turn our eyes upon Jesus and His heavenly instructions. Jesus Christ is the true leader of this church, and He is the only one who can guide us safely to our heavenly home as we look to Him alone each day. ☺

¹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 9, p. 19.

² Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 588.

³ Ellen G. White, *Last Day Events* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1992), p. 224.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *Principles for Christian Leaders* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2018), p. 306.

Ted N. C. Wilson is president of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church. Additional articles and commentaries are available from the president's office on Twitter: @pastortedwilson and Facebook: @Pastor Ted Wilson.

Devotional

Searching for the Theory of Everything

Our world is complex—and people have always been searching for answers. Astronomers, physicists, theologians, and philosophers have approached life's mysteries with respect and wonder. In search of a theory of everything that would explain the world, scientists have dug deeper into the mysteries of the universe and explored amazing connections. Yet a theory of everything has not been found. "If God created the world, His main concern was certainly not to construct it in a way that we could understand it," world-famous physicist Albert Einstein is reported to have said.

AN ANCIENT QUEST

The Pharisees in Jesus' days were also searching for the theory of everything. What holds the world together? What can everything be reduced to? They searched for it in the Torah. The commandments were the core of God's revelation. But which is the greatest commandment? This question was a popular debate among the scribes. It seemed impossible to answer. Therefore the scholars asked Jesus, "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" (Matt. 22:36, NIV). Jesus' answer quickly summarized God's revelation: *Love God and your neighbor as yourself* (cf. verses 37-40).

Here it is, the theory of everything that holds everything together. Love in three dimensions: love of God, love of my neighbor, and self-respect. We may not always understand clearly love for God or the value of self-respect, but loving our neighbor is very concrete. Jesus knew what He was talking about when He said, "Love your neighbor." After all, He Himself loved His neighbors unconditionally. He treated every person with respect. Jesus knew how to give each person a sense of worth: Zacchaeus, the woman He met at Jacob's well, and the

Roman centurion in Capernaum. Jesus' unconditional love managed to separate the person from their action. That's why He was able to love even those who hated Him.

JESUS: MAN OF CONFLICT

While Jesus loved people unconditionally, He never avoided conflict just for the sake of peace, so that everyone would feel comfortable. He could be righteously angry. Even in His anger, however, He never violated the dignity of others, but always communicated based on facts. He clearly called sin by its name. For example, He addressed the Pharisees as a "brood of vipers"—clearly no term of endearment. However, Jesus offered strong reasons for this reproach. He alerted Peter about His threefold denial before it happened (Matt. 26:34), and when His family came to take Him out of the public's focus, He provocatively asked, "Who are My brothers?" (Matt. 12:48).

JESUS: MAN OF COURAGE

Jesus could put His finger where it hurts, but He was also never reluctant to praise others. His praise, however, offered no feel-good niceties lacking substance. He approached each person authentically. He didn't cultivate any prejudices, not even those that were already part of Jewish common knowledge: women as second-class people, Gentiles no better than dogs, tax collectors as traitors. No, Jesus distanced Himself from imperfect oversimplifications and always got straight to the point. Very gently and with respect He separated sin from sinner and addressed the longing of those He encountered. That made Him the best ambassador of God's kingdom.

THE POWER OF APPRECIATION

We know this phenomenon, but today we call it appreciation. Appreciation approaches others as wholistic beings. It's said that

appreciation is associated with respect, goodwill, and recognition, and is expressed in attentiveness, interest, and friendliness.

Sounds like a dream, doesn't it? We all want to be noticed and recognized. We enjoy a heartfelt compliment, praise, or a little attention. We begin to thrive when someone really listens to us and sees us. We are grateful for respect and genuine interest. Appreciation warms our hearts, builds our courage, and gives us wings. We become better people because someone believes in us and gives us value. Whether a mere acquaintance or a friend or close family member—we all thrive on appreciation.

Big business has also discovered this theory of everything and has made it a big topic. There is hardly a training seminar without the reference to the much-praised appreciation culture. This approach is supposed to engender unity and motivate employees to give their best. At times, one might think that paradisaical conditions are about to return to a company and that universal reconciliation is imminent. Even so, a core theme of being human is addressed here.

It is therefore even more important that we give esteem and appreciation its rightful place in everyday church life. Especially in the context of a church or local congregation, we often take people for granted. We expect a high level of commitment from our members, without often recognizing the importance of each individual member. We look forward to the moment when our Master will say to the redeemed: "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (Matt. 25:23) and forget that we, too, are called to offer kindness and appreciation to those around us—including in our congregations. If we want to be ambassadors for God's kingdom, then we are called to reflect Jesus' attitude of love and care for those with whom we rub shoulders.

We all want to be noticed and recognized. We enjoy a heartfelt compliment, praise, or a little attention.

God wants us to share a tiny bit of Paradise on earth, wherever we go and whatever we do.

GOD'S THEORY OF EVERYTHING

So there it is, God's theory of everything. I can see it in Scripture and in the life of Jesus again and again. "The Saviour taught this principle [the golden rule] to make mankind happy, not unhappy; for in no other way can happiness come," wrote Ellen White about this unconditional attitude of appreciation. "Seize every opportunity to contribute to the happiness of those around you, sharing with them your affection. Words of kindness, looks of sympathy, expression of appreciation, would to many a struggling, lonely one be as a cup of cold water to a thirsty soul. A word of cheer, an act of kindness, would go far to lighten the burdens that are resting heavily upon weary shoulders. . . . Live in the sunshine of Christ's love. Then your influence will bless the world."^{*}

Genuine appreciation has never harmed anyone. On the contrary, appreciation is the balm that heals our everyday life. ©

* Ellen G. White, *My Life Today* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1952), p. 165.

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Reviving a Neglected Strategy

Pastoral home visits still make a difference.

According to Scripture, thrilling things happened when Jesus, the prophets, or the disciples visited in people's homes. Peter's mother-in-law was healed of a sickness (Luke 4:38-41); the son of the Shunammite woman and the daughter of Jairus were resurrected (2 Kings 4:18-37; Mark 5:21-43); Zacchaeus confessed his sins and made restitution (Luke 19:1-10); Jesus relaxed in Martha's home (Luke 10:38-42); the Philippian jailer and his family were converted in their house (Acts 16:25-40); early believers worshipped with Paul in Priscilla's home (Rom. 16:3-5); and tax collectors connected with Jesus in Matthew's house (Matt. 9:10-12).

THE CABOOLTURE EXPERIENCE

During 2021 exciting things happened in the homes of Caboolture Seventh-day Adventist Church members in Morayfield, Queensland, Australia, who together with their pastor celebrated 100 pastoral home visits.

My husband and I were privileged to enjoy one of the first visits from our new pastor, Casey Wolverton. We spent about one and a half hours relaxing in the lounge room together just chatting about our families, our histories, our connections with the church, and hopes for the future. We finished by praying for each other. We felt truly blessed by the time we spent together, and a friendship was initiated that has continued to grow.

LYN'S EXPERIENCE

While reflecting on this experience, my mind went back to my childhood on our family dairy farm about 100 kilometers (62 miles) from the Adventist church in the town of Kingaroy, which we attended monthly. Sometimes the pastor and his wife would come out to the farm for the weekend. We would enjoy Sabbath worship together with a few other isolated families.

I remember some pastors going over to the dairy to

help with milking. My mother was always impressed by their humility and willingness to share in our lives. I also remember Pastor Algie Gallagher sitting on the sunny back-veranda steps sharing baptismal studies with me. I believe these simple visits more than 50 years ago positively influenced my faith and my view of my church. Some might say that times have changed, but have people's needs changed that much?

I've heard stories from church members across Australia who feel that pastoral visitation is a neglected practice these days. This is not just a problem for the Adventist Church or only in Australia, however. Speaking of his pastoral colleagues, Matt Ward, a Baptist pastor in the United States, laments, "I have pastor acquaintances who never go to the hospitals or darken the door of a church member's home."¹

Hearing the overwhelmingly positive responses of Caboolture members to their recent pastoral visit has made me wonder if it is time to reconsider the benefits that flow out of pastoral visitation and to revive this valuable tool. I asked some Caboolture church members, and a few pastors who are known for their home visitation passion, to share with us their thoughts about this subject. Pastor Russell Willcocks, senior ministry systems specialist for the South Pacific Division, has been developing a resource bank of ministry tools for members and pastors. Here are three that especially resonate with me:

1 Pastoral visitation creates an opportunity for connection-building between the members and the pastor.

Pastor Russ sees pastoral visitation as central to the minister's call. "As the shepherd is responsible for the sheep, being with people is the heart of the pastor's responsibilities" (see 1 Peter 5:2). He goes on to claim that "effective ministry cannot exist without regular

pastoral visitation” and that personal care of members is “a vital part of every pastor’s ministry.”

Jesus, of course, is the model shepherd. He told the people in Jerusalem who were milling around Him, “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me” (John 10:27, NIV). Church members need some personal connection with the pastor or associate pastors. How can the shepherd pastor get to know the sheep if they do not spend time with them?

2 Pastoral visitation gives the pastor an opportunity to show caring and attention.

Pastor Russ suggests that “knowing the people informs every other part of the minister’s ministry. It gives a handle on questions people are asking and the issues they’re facing. Preaching is enriched, crises are averted, and people feel cared for. It’s often in the routine pastoral calls, during which we don’t talk about anything urgent, that people feel most cared for.”

The pastoral visit gives an opportunity for the pastor and members to enjoy quality time together. When there are more than 100 people at church on Sabbath, it is challenging for the pastor to get around to everyone, and members are lucky if they can get five minutes to chat to their minister. In the relaxed atmosphere of the family home, both parties can chat about life in general, interests, hobbies, or whatever comes up.

One of our much-loved former youth directors, church pastor and chaplain Bob Possingham, has made visitation a lifelong practice. “When we go to visit people, we can be sure that God is with us and that His spirit goes before us,” Pastor Bob reflects. “The downhearted and discouraged are given hope, the dying are given peace, the wayward are reminded of how important they are to God, the lonely are encouraged that there is a brother who cares. Those who face an uncertain future are reminded that there is a future to look forward to.”

3 Pastoral visitation energizes the other roles that a pastor is expected to fulfill.

Commenting on this aspect, Pastor Russ says, “When people know that the minister cares for them and their families, they embrace his or her ministry, and things happen that would simply not be possible without it. Pastors who visit their people and genuinely seek to know them experience relationships that deepen with time and share journeys with people who become lifelong coworkers and friends.”

We’ve seen this happening at Caboolture church. Friendships established during home visits have flourished as our pastor has preached relevant sermons and joined in with the church work bees, Pathfinder worships, various planning committees, outreach programs,

Is it time to reconsider the benefits that flow out of pastoral visitation and to revive this valuable tool?

and every other aspect of church life. There’s encouragement, spiritual guidance, fun, camaraderie, affirmation, and problem-solving—and the jobs get done.

It’s always a joy when missing members come back to church. It is just so easy these days for people to slip away because they feel isolated and unnoticed. Pastoral visitation can help in this space too. “When Pastor Casey came to visit us,” one drifting couple responded, “we felt valued knowing that someone cared enough to make contact with us. When we accepted his invitation to come to Caboolture church, we immediately felt a sense of belonging among the warm, friendly people who welcomed us. Now we are loving worship and building new friendships.”

Pastors are expected to increase the membership of their churches. Pastor N. Ashok Kumar published an article in *Ministry* magazine in which he concluded that “old-fashioned pastoral visitation matters and is one of the best church-growth strategies we have. It is far less complicated or expensive than a Revelation Seminar.”²

CONCLUSION

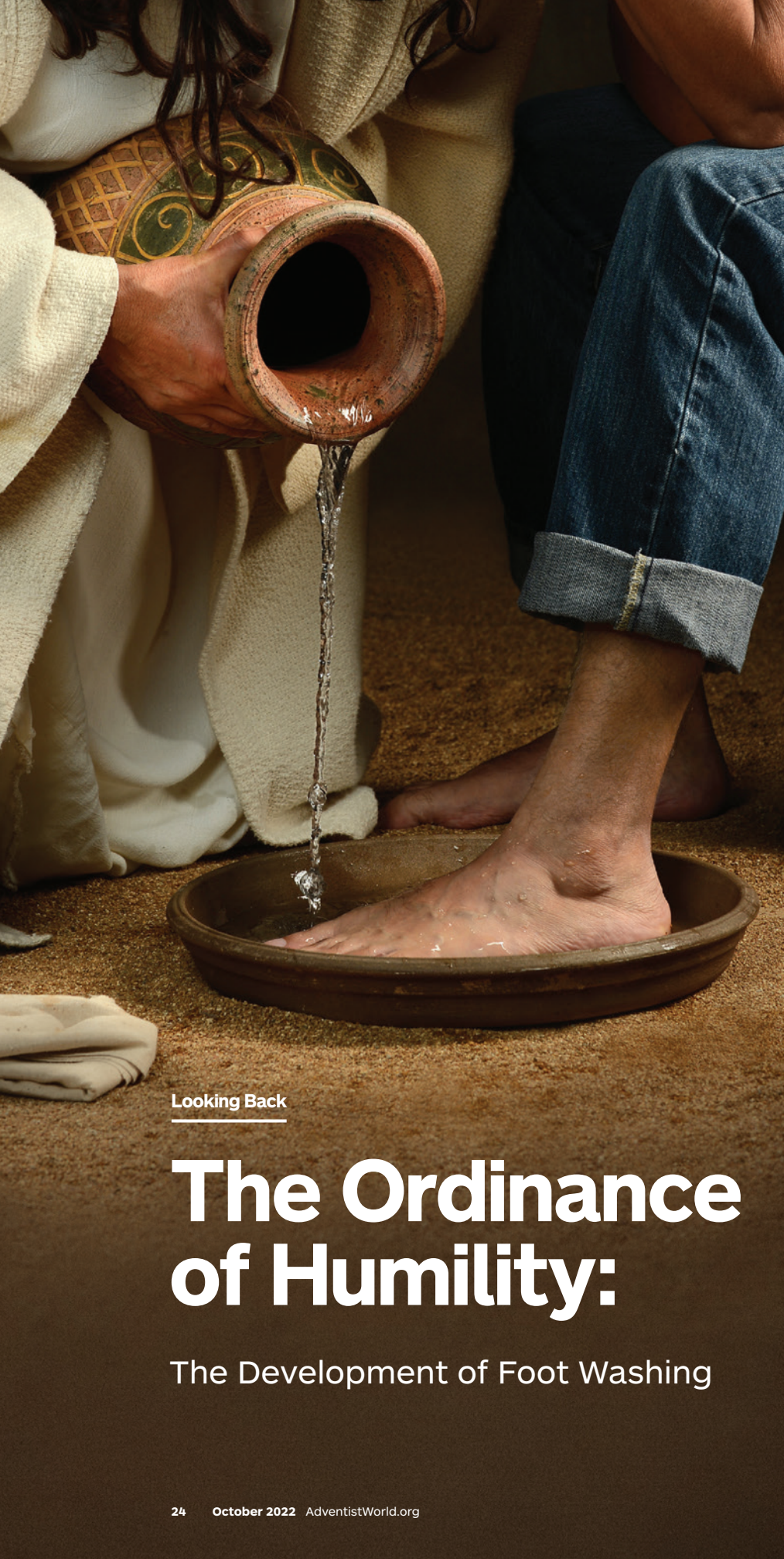
At Caboolture church, pastor and members are very enthusiastic about the revival of this gift of pastoral visitation. “Frankly speaking, this central focus on home visits has been new for me,” admits Pastor Casey. “Fortunately, my new church leadership team has simplified my responsibilities, to make room for me to focus on visitation. It’s been so rewarding and fruitful that I intend to continue it as my top priority.” ☺

This article was first published in Adventist Record, March 31, 2022. Reprinted with permission.

¹ M. Ward, “Why Pastoral Visitation Is Essential (for Every Pastor),” Dec. 12, 2019, accessed Jan. 23, 2022, pastortheologians.com/articles/2019/12/12/why-pastoral-visitacion-is-essential-for-every-pastor.

² N. Ashok Kumar, “The Pastoral Benefits of Visiting Church Members,” *Ministry*, December 2010, ministrymagazine.org/archive/2010/10/the-pastoral-benefits-of-visiting-church-members.

Lyn Ashby is a retired teacher, wife, mother, busy grandmother, worship leader, and Pathfinder counselor at Caboolture church in **Queensland, Australia.**



Looking Back

The Ordinance of Humility:

The Development of Foot Washing

The Bible emphasizes the vital importance of humility (Prov. 16:18; Micah 6:8; James 4:6; Matt. 11:29), and Jesus showed it by washing His disciples' feet. He commanded them to do likewise (John 13:12-17). As Seventh-day Adventists we practice this "ordinance of humility" before we come to the Lord's table. How did we discover this "ordinance"?

AMONG EARLY ADVENTISTS

When William Miller preached on the Second Advent, he was joined by ministers of various denominations. Among them was George W. Peavey, who reported on a conference in Grafton, Vermont, where he was part of a group who washed one another's feet after the Lord's Supper.¹ In 1845 Peavey wrote a letter in defense of foot washing to Joseph Marsh, editor of *The Voice of Truth*, who published Peavey's story to refute him.² Peavey's arguments were biblical: a Christian shows his love for Christ by obedience (John 14:15), the command of Jesus in John 13:12-17 is distinct, and by practicing it we learn humility.

Peavey's letter and Marsh's rebuttal started the discussion on whether foot washing is an ordinance like baptism and the Lord's Supper. Opponents missed further biblical evidence and reduced it to an act of hospitality. A large body of Adventists rejected foot washing completely in May 1845 because a group of "Spiritualizers," who saw themselves as angels for whom gender was irrelevant, practiced it among mixed genders or "promiscuously." The early Adventists believed it to be "unscriptural" and "subversive of purity and morality."³

This rejection challenged those who practiced foot washing to justify their view on it as an ordinance. Enoch Jacobs opened his periodical,

the *Day-Star*, for the discussion.⁴ J. B. Cook addressed objections and wrote that foot washing is an “ordinance,” because Jesus “ordained” it, like baptism and the Lord’s Supper.⁵ O.R.L. Crosier agreed with Cook and looked “upon these ordinances as equal in importance.”⁶ Jacobs himself reported about meetings where foot washing was practiced and emphasized that they practiced the “long neglected command of Jesus.”⁷

AMONG SABBATARIAN ADVENTISTS

To illustrate Ellen White’s point of view that foot washing should be performed gender-separately, the following anecdote is told: “The excited man kneeling before Ellen said, ‘The Lord tells me, Sister White, that I must wash your feet.’ ‘The Lord tells me,’ Ellen retorted quickly, ‘that you have no business with my feet at all. When my feet are washed, it will be by a sister, not by any man.’”⁸

It is noteworthy that Ellen Harmon (later White) mentioned foot washing as a distinguishing feature of true believers before the topic of the seventh-day Sabbath became prominent. In her letter to Jacobs, dated December 20, 1845, she reports her first vision from December 1844: “Then it was that the synagogue of Satan knew that God had loved us who could wash one another’s feet.”⁹

Early counsel from Ellen White on foot washing was published in her book *Experience and Views*. In a vision she received, God had confirmed that foot washing should be performed. It will keep believers “humble and separate from the world, and from backsliding.”¹⁰ Ellen White called the believers to follow the example of Jesus as exactly as possible, but at the same time, it “should be more frequently practiced,” which in her day would mean more than once a year. Because of

prejudice, caution, restraint, and wisdom should be used in carrying it out and passing it on to others.

Some thought that foot washing should be done after the Lord’s Supper because the King James Version says in John 13:2, “supper being ended.” R. F. Cottrell and W. H. Littlejohn answered in detail, giving the right order—that foot washing precedes the Lord’s Supper.¹¹

Reports in the *Review and Herald* confirm that foot washing was practiced, often referred to in the plural as “ordinances of the Lord’s house,” mostly in the evening (“supper”). It did not take place every week, only at larger gatherings such as conferences, when an ordained minister was present. In the 1860s believers administered foot washing once in three months, or four times in a year, at “quarterly meetings.”

AMONG SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

Uriah Smith emphasized in his articles that foot washing is not about ritual cleansing. The Lord’s Supper is not about satisfying hunger or thirst, and the foot washing is not about cleaning dirty feet. It is not about a gesture of hospitality, because the guests usually washed their own feet. Jesus’ action was completely new and showed His humility. He gave us an example. Foot washing is the ideal preparation for the Lord’s Supper.¹²

The Lord’s Supper was celebrated at evening because supper was eaten at that time. W. H. Littlejohn wrote several articles about foot washing, starting in June 1878. He also addressed the timing. As Jesus did not attach His commandment to a time, Littlejohn argued that the Lord’s Supper must not take place in the evening.¹³

In the 1890s the *Review* published articles by Ellen White on foot washing. She confirmed and

Ellen White mentioned foot washing as a distinguishing feature of true believers before the topic of the seventh-day Sabbath became prominent.

enriched former arguments and even corrected the understanding of a closed communion to an open one by emphasizing that Jesus washed the feet of Judas.¹⁴ At the 1980 General Conference Session the Lord’s Supper with the foot washing was formulated as Fundamental Belief 15 (and, in 2005, #16.) ©

¹ G. W. Peavey, “Conference at Grafton,” *Midnight Cry*, Aug. 1, 1844, p. 22.

² G. W. Peavey, “Washing Feet,” *Voice of Truth*, Apr. 23, 1845, p. 29; J. Marsh, “Remarks on the Above,” *Voice of Truth*, Apr. 23, 1845, pp. 29, 30.

³ William Miller, “Mutual Conference of Adventists at Albany,” *Advent Herald*, May 14, 1845, p. 107.

⁴ For a detailed list of references in the *Day-Star*, see the appendix in Thomas Eißner, “The Development of the ‘Ordinance of Humility in the Seventh-day Adventist Church’ (research paper, Andrews University, 2022).

⁵ J. B. Cook, “To Be Christians, We Must Do the Works of Christ,” *Day-Star*, July 1, 1845, pp. 31, 32.

⁶ O.R.L. Crosier, “Letter From Bro. Crosier,” *Day-Star*, Aug. 25, 1845, p. 10.

⁷ [Enoch Jacobs], “The Meetings,” *Day-Star*, July 15, 1845, p. 40.

⁸ Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases* (Silver Spring, Md.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990), vol. 5, p. 192.

⁹ Ellen G. Harmon, “Letter From Sister Harmon,” *Day-Star*, Jan. 24, 1846, p. 31; *Early Writings* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1882, 1945), p. 15.

¹⁰ E. G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 116.

¹¹ R. F. Cottrell, “Did Jesus Wash the Disciples’ Feet Before, or After, the Institution of the Supper?” *Review and Herald*, Dec. 23, 1858, p. 36; W. H. Littlejohn, “The Order to Be Pursued in the Administration of the Ordinances,” *Review and Herald*, Jan. 9, 1879, pp. 9, 10; Jan. 16, 1879, pp. 17, 18.

¹² Uriah Smith, “Conference Address,” *Review and Herald*, July 24, 1856, p. 93; “Feet-Washing,” *Review and Herald*, Feb. 24, 1859, p. 108; “Feet Washing,” *Review and Herald*, Apr. 22, 1862, p. 165; “The Ordinance of John XIII,” *Review and Herald*, June 16, 1868, p. 408.

¹³ W. H. Littlejohn, “The Proper Time for the Administration of the Ordinances,” *Review and Herald*, Feb. 27, 1879, p. 66.

¹⁴ Ellen G. White, “Accusers Agent of the Adversary,” *Review and Herald*, Dec. 11, 1894, pp. 769, 770; “The Lord’s Supper and the Ordinance of Feet-Washing,” *Review and Herald*, May 31, 1898, pp. 341, 342; June 7, 1898, pp. 357, 358; June 14, 1898, pp. 373, 374; June 21, 1898, pp. 389, 390; June 28, 1898, pp. 405, 406; July 5, 1898, pp. 421, 422.

Thomas Eißner pastors four churches in Austria.

A Prophet's Strange Behavior

Q

In 2 Kings 4:34, 35 we are told that Elisha resurrected a child by placing his eyes on the child's eyes, his mouth on the child's mouth, and his hands on the child's hands. Why did he do this?

A

The biblical text doesn't provide an explicit answer to your question. However, we can draw some logical inferences from the text that may be helpful.

ONLY GOD CAN GIVE LIFE

Probably the main focus of the story is to show that only God can give life to the dead. This implies that not even His prophet has power in himself to give life. The exclusivity of God's power is manifested in the story in two ways. We don't know why the prophet asked his servant to go ahead and place Elisha's rod—a symbol of the presence and authority of the prophet—on the face of the child. But we know that it did not make any difference. We also know that the peculiar action of Elisha warmed up the body of the child but did not give him life.

A PRAYER

I would suggest that what we have here is an acted-out prayer. Elisha is praying in an unusual way because the petition is not a common one. As in prayer, he falls on his knees (Heb. *gahar*, "to bend, to crouch"; see 1 Kings 18:42) and lies down, not on the ground, but on the body of the child. This is in principle one of the postures of prayer, during which we humbly identify

ourselves with dust before the Lord of life. In this case Elisha, aware of the fact that he cannot restore life to the child, identifies himself with the dead child.

A REQUEST

If it's a prayer and Elisha is identifying himself with the child, what is the prophet asking the Lord to do? Well, He could be asking God to transfer to him the death of the child and let the child live, as Moses had done (Ex. 32:32). If that was the prophet's request, the Lord did not listen to Him, because the child was revived and Elisha did not die. The second option could be that by identifying himself with the child, Elisha is asking the Lord to restore to the child what the prophet as a living being already has: life. He would then be asking God to allow the eyes of the child to be opened, his mouth to speak, and his arms, standing for the whole body, to be vitalized. If this was the prayer, it was certainly answered: The Lord opened the eyes of the child, he was able to breathe, and his body was energized by the power of God. It's difficult to demonstrate beyond reasonable doubt that our comments correctly represent the intention of the text, but it's clear from the story that God is the only source of life, and that His servant could ask Him to manifest it by restoring life to the dead.

Elisha could not give his life for that of the child, but the Son of God did give His life for sinners destined to eternal death. He became one of us, fully identifying Himself with us, and took our death in order for us to be participants of His life. What humans cannot do, God did through Jesus the Christ. ©

Angel Manuel Rodríguez is retired after a career serving as pastor, professor, and theologian.

Dehydration

Who's most at risk?

Recently my grandmother was hospitalized for dehydration. I thought it was babies who were especially at risk for this problem. What are the specific risks? How much should we drink to avoid dehydration?

We are fearfully and wonderfully made, and the Creator designed marvelous systems to control body temperature, fluid balance, and the ideal pH (acid-base) environment for optimal function. The brain, kidneys, and large arteries that monitor the blood concentration and pressure contain specialized cells that stimulate our thirst and modify urinary output as needed. These mechanisms help ensure adequate intake of water to keep our bodies and minds functioning at their best.

Everyone is at risk for dehydration, but both the younger and the older populations are especially vulnerable when they experience such issues as vomiting, diarrhea, and fever. This is worsened by even helpful medications (diuretics) and comorbidity in older people. The risk for all age groups increases during hot and humid weather, especially with exercise. Prolonged heat exposure is a dangerous complication, both in sunlight or even in closed, unventilated structures in direct sun (such as parked cars and buildings with poor airflow).

Symptoms of dehydration include:

- thirst
- dry mouth
- dizziness
- fatigue
- confusion
- irritability
- headache

To prevent dehydration:

- drink plenty of fluids and increase the amount when exercising and exposed to heat and sunshine.
- schedule outdoor activities for the cooler parts of the day, such as early morning and late afternoon/early evening.
- use appropriate sports drinks to help maintain electrolytes such as potassium and sodium if engaged in rigorous exercise and physical training programs.

How much water should we drink every day? This depends on the heat, the humidity level, and our activity. In a temperate climate environment and sedentary situation, 2.7 liters (91 fluid ounces/

11 cups) for women and 3.7 liters (125 fluid ounces/16 cups) for men is a realistic goal.*

If your diet is rich in fresh fruits and vegetables, these will contribute additional hydration. As exercise, ambient temperature, and humidity increase, water consumption should increase.

Our thirst is finely tuned to prevent us from drinking too much liquid; it is overridden in very rare cases, which are usually associated with disease states.

Never ignore the amazing thirst mechanism that has been included in your nervous system. When you're thirsty, drink—preferably water. Soda/sugary beverages count toward fluid intake but aren't healthy choices.

It's interesting and important to note that alcohol is dehydrating (causes fluid loss through what is called a diuretic effect), adding further woes to its use and confirming that there's no safe level of alcohol intake.

A very helpful way of assessing whether our fluid intake is adequate is by observing the color of the urine. It should be approaching the color of clear water or light yellow. The more dehydrated we become, the darker the urine. Some foods (such as beets), vitamin supplements, and medications may discolor the urine, but generally the lighter the color the better.

Live life to the full, drink plenty of life-giving water each day, and drink freely of the Water of Life (see John 4)! ©

* <https://www.nationalacademies.org/news/2004/02/report-sets-dietary-intake-levels-for-water-salt-and-potassium-to-maintain-health-and-reduce-chronic-disease-risk>

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The Surgeon's Prayer



“May I Tell You a Story?”

BY DICK DUERKSEN

Everyone said she needed surgery, major surgery. “You have to do this if you are going to live,” her physician told her. Her friends agreed. All of them. So she began searching for a surgeon, the right surgeon, the very best surgeon. She wanted to live.

But she was afraid. Very afraid.

He was a surgeon. A good surgeon, sought after by many, recognized as one of the best. Willing to take hard cases no one else wanted. Despised by the nurses and technicians who worked with him.

“He’s plain nasty,” one nurse said. “If you disagree or don’t get something as quickly as he requires, he shouts and hollers and throws things. He’s not a nice person. But he is a very good surgeon.”

“He’s a miracle worker,” her physician said. “Let’s see if we can get him to do your surgery.”

“OK,” she agreed. Then she began to pray. Not for herself. For her surgeon.

When her surgery date arrived, a friend drove her to the hospital, where an employee brought a wheelchair and pushed her to the admittance office. When her name was called, she checked in, paid her portion, and was escorted upstairs to a cold plastic chair in the waiting room outside surgery.

He had many surgeries scheduled for that day, some in Suite One, and others

in Suite Three. A team of anesthesiologists, nurses, computer technicians, and medical assistants waited in each room. Ready to do his bidding. Quickly. Without question. Before he asked.

A hospital worker checked her name against his surgery schedule and told her she would be called in a few minutes.

She sat, worried, and prayed. This time she prayed for her family, her friends, her surgeon, and for herself. “I prayed for courage, and for God to give the surgeon special skill as he cut into my body.”

The surgeon was busy performing miracles in Suite One when his assistant came to the waiting room and called her name. “You are next,” the assistant said, his name embroidered above the pocket of his crisp white uniform shirt.

“Any questions, ma’am?”

“Yes, please. Before I go to the operating room, I’d like to have the surgeon come and talk with me. I will wait here for him to come.”

“He is a very busy surgeon, ma’am, and he does not come to the waiting room. If you want to talk with him, you will have to make an appointment in his office.”

“Please tell the surgeon that I cannot come in until I have talked with him. I will wait here.” She smiled as she said it, trying to look as friendly and nonthreatening as possible. Yet determined, too.

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Seventh-day
Adventist Church

"I will tell him," the assistant groaned. Then he slowly walked back to the big wooden door that kept unauthorized people from entering the surgical suites.

She prayed. So did the assistant. No one had ever made this request before, and the assistant knew what the surgeon would say. It would not be nice or pretty, and he did not want to deliver the message.

When the surgeon had completed his work in Suite One, his assistant tapped him lightly on the shoulder.

"Sir, your next case is the older woman who needs that very special surgery you told me about earlier today. She is in the waiting room and would like to speak with you before she comes in. For just a moment, sir."

He was a surgeon. A great surgeon. Sought after, especially for the hard cases. No one told him what to do. No one! Certainly not an old woman who was going to die if he didn't perform a miracle in her body. For a split second, he thought about the assistant's message. Then he exploded.

The surgeon swore. He called the old woman names. He called his assistant names. He swore louder. "You go back out there and tell that woman to get in here right now or I will *never* do her surgery, and she will die! Go! Tell her! NOW!"

The assistant went back to the woman in the waiting room. He reasoned with her. He explained that the surgeon was very busy. He was kind.

"Please tell him that I cannot come in until he comes here to talk with me," she responded.

The assistant found the surgeon at a sink, scrubbing his hands and arms in preparation for the old woman's case. He explained that the woman would not come until . . .

The surgeon scowled, said some loud choice words, and stomped through the waiting room door. That old woman was going to learn about life.

Before he could speak, the woman rose from her chair and met him halfway across the room, her hands extended as

Her voice, strong and friendly, as if she were speaking with a close friend, took over.

a mother would greet a well-loved son.

"Doctor," she began. "Would you please pray with me before I go into surgery?"

He was a surgeon, not a pastor, and he had not prayed for years, not even for himself. He was caught completely off guard. His mind raced to find a prayer worth praying. "Now I lay me down to sleep" came to mind and was quickly rejected. Then he heard the soft echo of a grade school teacher praying "Our Father" before class.

He allowed her to squeeze his hands and then closed his eyes, as if hoping to read the prayer words on the inside of his eyelids.

"Our Father," he began, having no idea what the next words were or what words this old woman might find meaningful.

"Who art in heaven."

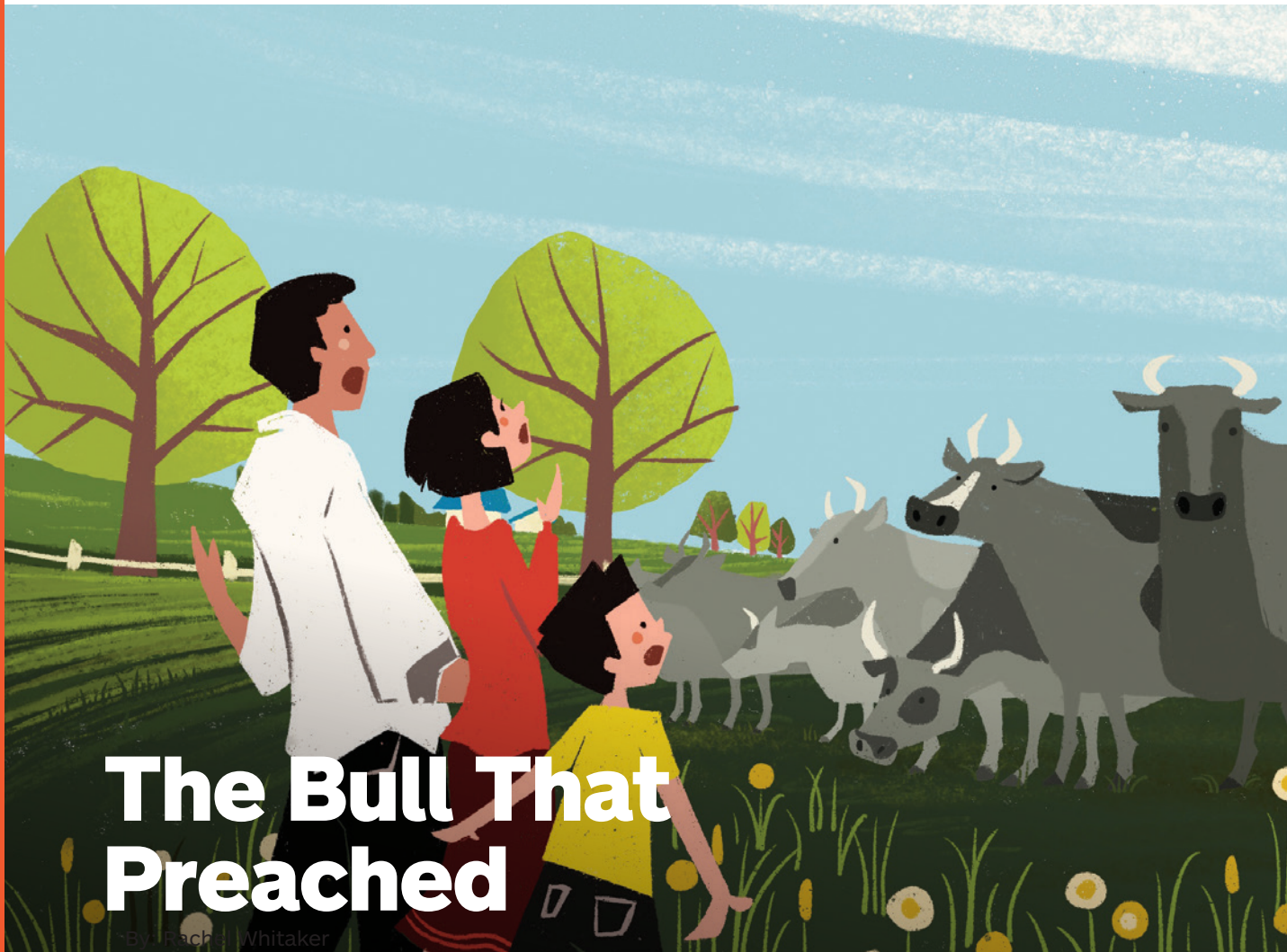
Her voice, strong and friendly, as if she were speaking with a close friend, took over. He stumbled, trying to match his words with hers.

"Hallowed be . . ."

He stammered on, not thinking about the words, but in awe of this woman whose determination had gotten him to do something he hadn't done for years. He was praying. Talking to God. Asking God for help. Promising God that he would listen, be kind, forgive, and love.

She finished, peered up into his heart, and led him back toward the big wooden door. "OK. I can come now. Thank you for being a great surgeon." ☺

Dick Duerksen, a pastor and storyteller, lives in **Portland, Oregon, United States.**



The Bull That Preached

By Rachel Whitaker

Pastor Timothy, I need your advice.” Nathaniel’s furrowed brow revealed his concern. “The nurses from the Seventh-day Adventist hospital in Atoifi are holding a clinic here in Kwaibaita. You’ve often warned about Adventists’ misguided doctrines. Is it safe to go to their clinic?”

Pastor Timothy thought carefully before replying. As a pastor and the paramount chief of the entire Kwaibaita district, he was well respected by the people of his community in the Solomon Islands.

“We do need medical care here in the village,” he admitted. “You can accept the Adventists’ medications, but don’t listen to

their teachings. If they tell you anything about the Bible or the church, just ignore it.”

After Nathaniel left, Pastor Timothy felt a pang of guilt. *In 20 years as a pastor, I’ve found some texts in the Bible that make me wonder if the Adventists are right about some things. Take the fourth commandment, for example . . .*

He quickly shoved that thought out of his head. What would his church members think if he suddenly changed his mind about Adventists and their teachings?

“We have a lot of work to do in the garden this morning,” Pastor Timothy said to his wife and their 10-year-old son, Bofanta,

one September day in 1990. It was a Sabbath morning, but that did not bother Pastor Timothy, since he did not believe that Saturday was the Sabbath. “The taro plot will be full of weeds after all the rain we’ve had.”

The three of them walked down the path away from the village. Pastor Timothy paused to open the gate of the cow pasture they had to cross to reach their garden gate.

As they neared the other side of the enclosure, his wife spoke up. “Look at how all the cows have lined up facing us. It’s almost as if they’re trying to block our way.”

“They look like soldiers on parade,” said Pastor Timothy



Bible Treasure

“My sheep
hear My voice,
and I know
them, and they
follow Me.”

John 10:27

with a laugh. “I suppose they’ll move when we get closer.”

But the cows didn’t move. *Odd*, he thought. *I guess we’ll have to go around them.*

At the end of the line stood a large, muscular bull that seemed to be staring straight at them. As the family approached, the bull suddenly spoke in the Kwaibaita language.

“Why are you going to the garden now? Don’t you know that today is the seventh day, the Sabbath of the Lord God?”

Pastor Timothy’s jaw dropped. “Did you hear that?” he croaked to his wife.

“I—I think the bull just talked!” she whispered hoarsely.

Pastor Timothy looked

around, certain that he must have been mistaken. No one else was in sight.

Then he heard the voice again. “Timothy!” His head swiveled toward the bull. “Timothy, I’m speaking to you!”

Yes, the sound was coming from the animal. Its mouth was even moving as it talked.

“Th-there must be a devil in you to make you talk like that,” Pastor Timothy said, his voice trembling.

“I am not the devil,” the bull replied. “I’m the voice of Jesus talking to you.”

Pastor Timothy really paid attention then! The bull went on: “Today is the Sabbath of God. Don’t you know that God gave

you six days to work, and the seventh day is the Sabbath? You have been a pastor, and yet you don’t know these things? How blind can you be?”

He’s right, Pastor Timothy thought. *I’ve been refusing to believe the truth all this time.*

But the bull was not finished. “You must not work in your garden today. Go home and read Jeremiah 1:5. Share it with your people. Then look for a Seventh-day Adventist pastor, Pastor Bata. He will further explain these things to you.” ©

To be continued next month!

This story was reprinted from *KidsView*, June 2011.

10 DAYS OF
PRAYER

BACK TO THE ALTAR

January 11-21, 2023

“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.”

JOHN 4:23, NKJV

JOIN AT WWW.TENDAYSOFPRAAYER.ORG

