

# Our Firm Foundation

The Seventh-day Sabbath

Christ Our Righteousness

The Immutable Law of God

The Non-Immortality of the Soul

The Three Angels' Messages

The Sanctuary

Volume 15, Number 12

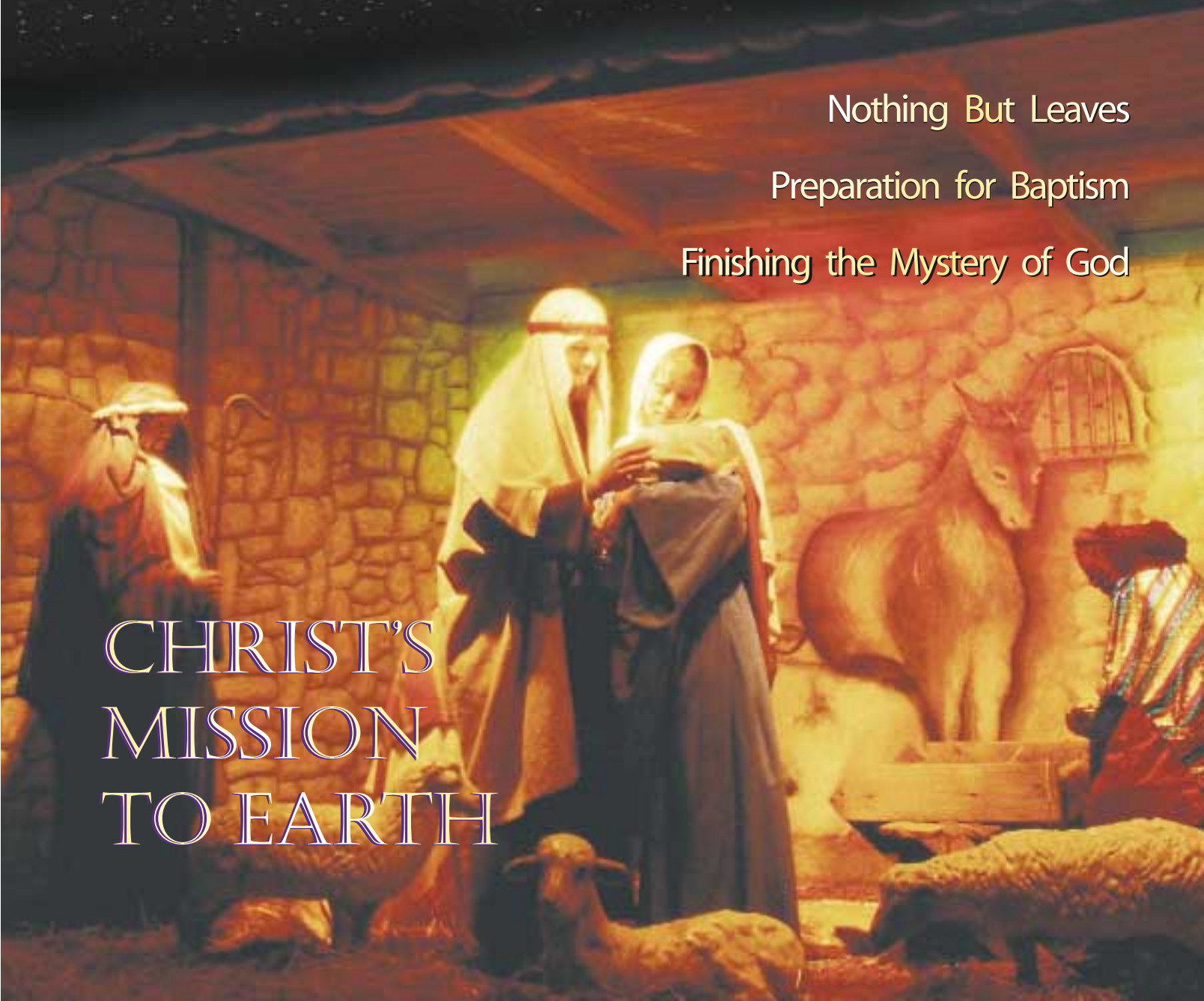
December 2000

Nothing But Leaves

Preparation for Baptism

Finishing the Mystery of God

CHRIST'S  
MISSION  
TO EARTH



# The King Is Coming

There is no one truth of Scripture to which so much prominence is given as to that of the second coming of Christ. The New Testament alone refers to it over three hundred times. There is good reason for this emphasis. First, the coming of Christ is the consummation of every Christian's hope—the event which transforms our bodies from mortal to immortal. Second, the true friend of Jesus will ever desire His physical presence.

Concerning the latter, Jesus said, "Can the children of the bride chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast." Matthew 9:15. When Jesus explained to His disciples that He would be with them only a little longer (see John 13:33), they were distressed and grieved. Peter said to Jesus, "Why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake." Verse 37. The disciples loved to be in His physical presence. They longed for that reunion after Christ's ascension. The hope of His return was one of the great motivating powers that led them to take the gospel to the whole world by the end of the first century. See Colossians 1:23.

In the last chapter of the Bible, Jesus said, "Surely I come quickly." In response, John breathed the prayer, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Revelation 22:20.

But throughout much of the Christian era—and even today—too many professed Christians enjoy the absence of Christ's physical presence. Even among those who call themselves Adventists, there is a lukewarmness toward the Advent hope. This lukewarmness has led to gross immorality, crude jesting, lower standards, and the blowing of every wind of doctrine in the church.

Seeing the Second Coming in its true light, both saint and sinner are motivated to repentance, watchfulness, prayer, and holy living.

Paul exhorts us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to "live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Titus 2:12-13.

James says, "Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door." James 5:8-9.

Peter says, "But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." 1 Peter 4:7. And again, "What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness. Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God." 2 Peter 3:11-12.

Dear reader, *soon* the trumpet will sound! The holy angels will gather the saints from the four corners of the earth, and we shall be changed. Loved ones who have been separated by death will be reunited. We will see dear Jesus at last! He comes not as a babe in Bethlehem's manger. He comes not to be treated with scorn. He will not sweat great drops of blood. He will not be crucified on a tree a second time. His garments will not be parted with a roll of the dice. Oh, no! He comes all glorious! Jesus comes to reign victorious. *Jesus is coming again.* He is our coming King, and we shall behold His splendor!

Let us therefore look for His coming and do all that we can to usher it in. Let us look for a city which has twelve foundations whose Builder and Maker is God. See Hebrews 11:10. That city will be the capital of the New Earth—the New Jerusalem—where God will dwell with the redeemed. O blessed thought!

Truly, our daily thoughts of Him should instill in us a desire to be with Him.

While it is true that we can enjoy His presence through the work of the Holy Spirit, the great joy of actually seeing Him who died for us, is indeed the blessed hope of the Christian! ✠

Jeff Wehr, Associate Editor

## About Hope International . . .

Hope International is a special ministry assisting in the God-given work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We believe this Remnant Church of Bible prophecy has been brought into existence by the calling of the Lord, and we look for its final triumph in purity at the second coming of Christ. That the church does not now perfectly reflect the will of our Lord is cause for sorrow, but not for discouragement. The Word of God stands pledged that all within her borders will be sifted and tried, and though the greater portion will fail the test, there will yet remain a remnant to honor the Lord by their obedience to all His commands. Therefore, Hope International urges upon all the duty to continue to be faithful to God and His cause.



It is the mission of Hope International and the editors of *Our Firm Foundation* to clearly present Christ and His truth. The days that yet remain of this world are few, and what we do we must do quickly. We must boldly proclaim the historic truths of Adventism that place us on so firm a foundation in the midst of this troubled world.  
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**4** Christ's Mission to Earth  
Ellen G. White  
**What did Christ prove by taking humanity upon Himself?**

**8** Nothing But Leaves  
Admiral Ncube  
**Are we bearing fruit for Christ?**

**12** Finishing the Mystery of God  
David Kang  
**The greatest of Revelation's three wonders**

**20** How to Help Sister White  
James White  
**"Let all the friends of truth and reform get on board and work together."**

**26** Preparation for Baptism  
Ellen G. White  
**How should we educate and examine candidates for baptism?**

## departments

Defending the Faith .....	10
News Watch .....	17
Health for Life .....	22
Index of Articles for Year 2000 .....	30
Letters to the Editor .....	31



# CHRIST'S MISSION TO EARTH

*Ellen G. White*

In heaven Satan had declared that the sin of Adam revealed that human beings could not keep the law of God, and he sought to carry the universe with him in this belief. Satan's words appeared to be true, but Christ came to unmask the deceiver. He came that through trial and dispute of the claims of Satan in the great conflict, He might demonstrate that a Ransom had been found. The Majesty of Heaven would undertake the cause of man, and with the same facilities that man may obtain, stand the test and proving of God as man must stand it.

Christ came to the earth, taking humanity and standing as man's Representative, to show in the controversy with Satan that he was a liar, and that man, as God created him, connected with the Father and the Son, could obey every requirement of God. Speaking through His servant He declares, "His commandments are not grievous." 1 John 5:3. It was sin that separated man from his God, and it is sin that maintains this separation. See Isaiah 59:2.

What a sight was this for heaven to look upon! Christ, who knew not the least moral taint or defilement of

sin, took our nature in its deteriorated condition. This was humiliation greater than finite man can comprehend. He was the Majesty of Heaven, but in the divine plan He descended from His high and holy estate to take humanity, that humanity might touch humanity, and divinity, combined with humanity, take hold upon divinity.

God was manifest in the flesh. See 1 Timothy 3:16. He humbled Himself. What a subject for thought, for deep, earnest contemplation; so infinitely great that He was the Majesty of Heaven, and yet He stooped so low without losing an atom of His dignity or glory! Christ stooped to poverty and to the deepest abasement and humiliation among men. "For your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be made rich." 2 Corinthians 8:9. "The foxes have holes," He said, "the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Matthew 8:20.

Christ submitted to insult and mockery, contempt and ridicule. He heard His message, which was fraught with love and goodness and

mercy, misapplied and misstated. He heard Himself called the prince of the devils because He testified to His Sonship with God. The circumstances of His birth were divine, but by His own nation, those who had blinded their eyes to spiritual things, it was regarded as a blot and a stain. But these insinuations and charges were but a small part of the abuse He endured in His life. There was not a drop of bitter woe which He did not taste, not a part of the curse which He did not endure, that He might bring many sons and daughters to God.

When we contemplate the fact that Jesus was on this earth as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; that in order to save fallen man from eternal ruin He left His heavenly home, we should lay in the dust all our pride. This fact should put to shame all our vanity, and reveal to us our sin of self-sufficiency. Behold Him making the wants, the trials, the grief and suffering of sinful man His own. Can we not take home the lesson that God endured these sufferings and bruises of soul in consequence of sin?

By taking upon Himself man's nature in its fallen condition, Christ did not in the least participate in its sin. He was subject to the infirmities and weaknesses of the flesh with which humanity is encompassed, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." Verse 17. He was touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and was in all points tempted like as we are. And yet He was without a spot. See Hebrews 4:15.

There should not be the faintest misgivings in regard to the perfect freedom from sinfulness in the human nature of Christ. Our faith must be an intelligent faith, looking unto Jesus in perfect confidence, in full and entire faith in the Atoning Sacrifice. This is essential that the soul may not be enshrouded in darkness. This holy Substitute is able to save to the uttermost, for He presented to the wondering universe perfect and complete humility in His human character, and perfect obedience to all the requirements of God. Divine power is placed upon man, that he may become a partaker of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. See 2 Peter 1:4. This is why repenting, believing man can be made the righteousness of God in Him.

The purity and holiness of Christ, the spotless righteousness of Him who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth, was Heaven's light in contrast with satanic darkness. In Him was a perpetual reproach upon all sin in a world of sensuality and sin.

The enmity referred to in the prophecy in Eden was not to be confined merely to Satan and the Prince of life. It was to be universal. Satan and his angels were to feel the enmity of all mankind. "I will put enmity," said God, "between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Genesis 3:15. The seed of Satan is wicked men, who resist the Spirit of God, and who call

the law, as did their father the devil, a yoke of bondage. "Sin is the transgression of the law," said Christ. "He that committeth sin is of the devil." 1 John 3:4, 8.

The enmity put between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman was supernatural. With Christ the enmity was in one sense natural; in another sense it was supernatural, as humanity and divinity were combined. And never was the enmity developed to such a marked degree as when Christ became a Resident of this earth. Never before had there been a being upon the earth who hated sin with so perfect a hatred as did Christ. He had seen its deceiving, infatuating power upon the holy angels, causing them to revolt, and all His powers were enlisted against

come to Him in repentance and have eternal life. See 2 Peter 3:9.

Intense worldliness has been one of Satan's most successful temptations. He designs to keep the minds and hearts of men so completely filled with worldly attractions that there will be no room for heavenly things. He controls the minds of men in their love of the world. The inordinate attachment to earthly things eclipses the heavenly, and puts the Lord out of the sight and understanding of men. False theories and false gods are cherished in the place of the true.

Men are dazed and charmed with the glitter and tinsel of the world. They are so attached to the things of earth that they will commit any sin in order to gain some worldly advantage. Satan thought to

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*By taking upon Himself man's nature in its fallen condition, Christ did not in the least participate in its sin.*

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Satan. In the purity and holiness of His life, Christ flashed the light of truth amid the moral darkness with which Satan had enshrouded the world. Christ exposed his falsehoods and deceiving character, and spoiled his corrupting influence.

It was this that stirred Satan with such an intense hatred of Christ. With his hosts of fallen beings he determined to urge the warfare most vigorously; for there stood One in the world who was a perfect representation of the Father, and in His character and practices was a refutation of Satan's misrepresentations of the character of God.

It was the purity and sinlessness of Christ's humanity that stirred up such satanic hatred. His truth revealed their falsehoods. Satan saw God, whom he had charged with the attributes which he himself possessed, revealed in Christ in His true character—a compassionate, merciful God, not willing that any should perish but that all should

overthrow Christ on this point. He thought that the humanity of Christ would be easily overcome by his temptations. "Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and said unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." Matthew 4:8-9.

But Christ was unmoved; and He used only the weapons justifiable for human beings to use—the Word of Him who is mighty in counsel, "It is written." Verse 10.

Had there been the least taint of sin in Christ, Satan would have bruised His head. As it was, he could only touch His heel. Had the head of Christ been touched, the hope of the human race would have perished. Divine wrath would have come upon Christ as it came upon Adam. Christ and the church would have been without hope. But Christ "knew no sin." 2 Corinthians 5:21.



He was the Lamb "without blemish and without spot." 1 Peter 1:19.

With what intense interest was this controversy watched by the heavenly angels and the unfallen worlds as the honor of the law was being vindicated. Not merely for this world, but for the universe of heaven and the worlds that God had created, was the controversy to be forever settled. The confederacy of darkness were watching for the semblance of a chance to rise and triumph over the divine and human Substitute and Surety of the human race, that the apostate might shout Victory, and the world and its inhabitants forever become his kingdom. But Satan reached only the heel; he could not touch the head.

entirely cut off. Christ's humanity will demonstrate for eternal ages the question which settled the controversy.

What was it that moved His own nation to throw such scorn upon Jesus? The Jews were expecting an earthly prince who would deliver them from the power which God had declared would rule over them if they refused to keep the way of the Lord, and obey His statutes, His commandments, and His laws. They had made their proud boast that Israel's king, the star arising from Judah, would break their thralldom, and make of them a kingdom of priests.

But it was not the absence of external honor and riches and glory

such an one as themselves. The Jews could have borne their disappointed hopes better than they could the righteous denunciation of their sins. In parables Christ laid bare their professed sanctity. He compared them to whited sepulchers, deceiving the people by their pretensions to piety. See Matthew 23:27.

That which Christ had specified would be His work, was fulfilled. The sick were healed, demoniacs were restored, lepers and paralytics were made whole. The dumb spake, the ears of the deaf were opened, the dead were brought to life, and the poor had the gospel preached to them. See Matthew 11:5. Had a man in the common walks of life done the same works that Christ did, all would have declared that he was working by the power of God. Every miracle wrought by Christ convinced some of them of His true character, which answered to the specifications of the Messiah of prophecy; but those who did not receive the light of Heaven set themselves more determinedly against this evidence.

In His youth Christ was subject unto His parents – an Example of obedience to all the youth. In His youth He learned the trade of a carpenter, and earned His bread by the sweat of His brow. Thus He

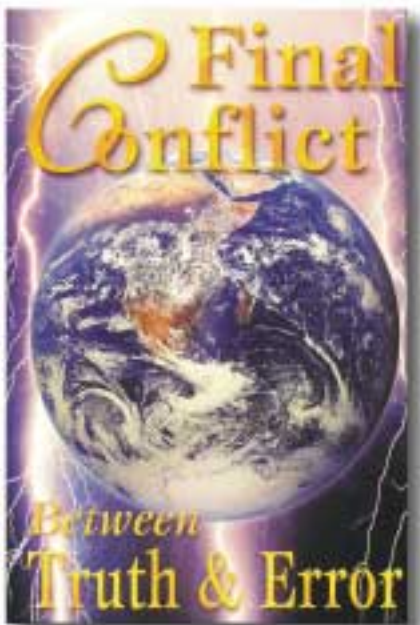
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*The Sun of Righteousness shining amid the moral darkness in such distinct rays, revealed the contrast between sin and holiness, purity and defilement, and such light was not welcome to them.*

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Now he sees that his true character is clearly revealed before all heaven, and that the heavenly beings and the worlds that God has created would be wholly on the side of God. He sees that his prospects of future influence with them will be

that caused the Jews to reject Jesus. The Sun of Righteousness shining amid the moral darkness in such distinct rays, revealed the contrast between sin and holiness, purity and defilement, and such light was not welcome to them. Christ was not



## Final Conflict Between Truth & Error

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honored physical labor, and gave it as a lesson in His practical life. It should be an encouragement and source of strength to every human being in the performance of the commonplace duties of life to know that Jesus labored and toiled to provide for His own temporal wants.

The teachings of Christ, in precept and example, were the sowing of the seed, to be afterward cultivated by His disciples. He scattered the heavenly grain like precious pearls, which minds and hearts that desired light and knowledge might skillfully gather up as precious treasures sent from Heaven.

Christ set forth truths more spiritual and deep than had ever before been heard from rulers, scribes, or elders. "I am the way, the truth, and the life," He declared. John 14:6. The rich treasures of truth opened before the people attracted and charmed their senses. They were in marked contrast with the dry, lifeless, spiritless expositions of the Old Testament Scriptures by the rabbis. And the miracles which He wrought kept constantly before His hearers the honor and glory of God. He seemed to them a Messenger direct from Heaven, for He spoke not to their ears, but to their hearts.

After listening to Christ the doctrines of the priests and rabbis were dry and painful to the ears of the people. These dignitaries of the temple saw that they could not hold the people, and they were filled with jealousy and hostility. Christ stood forth in His humility, yet in dignity and majesty, as One born to command. A power attended Him wherever He went, and hearts were melted into tenderness. An earnest desire was created to be in His presence, to listen to the voice of Him who uttered truths with such solemn melody.

The sayings of Christ are to be valued, not merely in accordance with the measure of the understanding of those who hear; they are to be considered in the important bearing which Christ Himself attaches to them. He took the old truths, of which He Himself was the Origina-

tor, and placed them before His hearers in Heaven's own light. How different was their representation! What a flood of meaning and brightness and spirituality was brought in by their explanation!

After His resurrection, Christ opened the understanding of His followers, that they might understand the Scriptures. See Luke 24:45. Everything had been transformed by the working of the arts of Satan.

Truth was covered up by the rubbish of error, and hidden from finite sight. When Christ referred to His humiliation, rejection, and crucifixion, the disciples could not take in His meaning. It had been a

glimpse. They close their minds as though there were no more for them to learn, and should the Lord attempt to lead them on, they would not take up with the increased light. They cling to the spot where they think they see a glimmer of light, when it is only a link in the living chain of truths and promises to be studied. They know very little of what it means to follow in the footsteps of Christ.

The harmonious relation of truth, like links in a chain, will—just as fast as the mind is quickened by the Spirit of God to comprehend light and in humbleness of mind appropriate it—be dispensed to others,

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*So dull has been the comprehension of even those who  
teach the truth to others that many things cannot  
be opened to them until they reach heaven.*

*It ought not to be so.*

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part of their education to expect Christ to set up a temporal kingdom, and when He spoke of His sufferings they could not understand His words. He reproved them because of their slowness of apprehension, and promised them that when the Comforter should come, He would bring many things to their remembrance.

Christ had many truths to give to His disciples, of which He could not speak, because they did not advance with the light that was flashed upon the Levitical laws and the sacrificial offerings. They did not embrace the light, advance with the light, and follow on to still greater brightness as Providence should lead the way.

And for the same reason Christ's disciples of 1897<sup>1</sup> do not comprehend important matters of truth. So dull has been the comprehension of even those who teach the truth to others that many things cannot be opened to them until they reach heaven. It ought not to be so. But as men's minds become narrow, they think they know it all, and set one stake after another in points of truths of which they have only a

and give the glory back to God. The development of truth will be the reward to the humble-hearted seeker, who will fear God and walk with Him. The truth which the mind grasps as truth is capable of constant expansion and new developments. While beholding it, the truth is seen in all its bearings in the life and character, and becomes more clear and certain and beautiful. As the mind grasps it in its preciousness, it becomes elevated, ennobled, sanctified.

The entire system of Judaism was the gospel veiled. Far, very far, are human minds from grasping the teachings of Christ. These are old truths in new settings. I have been shown that those who will not consider are like the Jews. It is humbling to their dignity and pride to work the mines of truth. The Light of the world is sending His divine rays back to enlighten the entire Jewish economy, and the minds that have been accepting the sayings of men as the commandments of God are now [to] look to God Himself as the Author of all truth.

*(Continued on page 25)*



# Nothing But Leaves

*Admiral Ncube*

And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there. Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered. And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon but leaves only." Matthew 21:17-19.

This incident depicts the condition prevailing among many professing Christians today. The fig tree in this incident was a normal-looking fig tree that had the potential to produce fruit. It had leaves and branches like any other fig tree, and it was placed in the open by the wayside where it received sunshine and rain in abundance. Though it was not the time for figs to be ripe, Jesus had reason to go to the fig tree expecting fruit on it because the fruit normally appeared before the leaves.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, on close inspection the fig tree had nothing but leaves to offer to Jesus, who was hungry at that time.

It is a sobering thought to note that many who claim to be Christians do not fully understand the duty they owe to God in this life. Many appear from a distance to be pious, zealous, and Christian by the fact that they attend and take part in church services, vibrantly singing

the songs of Zion, carrying their Bibles with them to church, and observing the Sabbath day. Yet God says, "All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits." Proverbs 16:2. As much as we may pretend to be godly and deceive our fellow men by appearing very pious, we can never deceive God. He knows the heart and tries the reins and gives everyone according to the fruit of his doings. See Jeremiah 17:10. When God looks at us He does not look on the outside. He is interested in what is in our hearts. You may deceive men, but not God. Under His close inspection, motives are revealed. Hypocrisy, pride, pretense, and selfishness—none are hidden before the Almighty.

The fact that we claim and profess to be Christians makes God expect something from us. He has every reason to do so, and, if we do not want to meet His expectations, then let us stop calling ourselves Christians—His children. God is expecting us to manifest His character in its fullness by our words, thoughts, eating and dressing habits—in fact, in our lifestyle. Many today are practicing a plastic religion—a religion that appears to

come alive on Sabbath, but that is dead at work and during the week. It is a religion of convenience that quickly disappears when tested or when brought into conflict with emotions, tradition, norms, and uncertainty. The time has come for the true followers of God to reveal to the world a deep, sincere, and true profession. God now, more than ever before, wants us to manifest a true reflection of His character. Just as much as sin no longer appears to be sinful in the eyes of many, just so much more firmly we today must stand for the right. Jesus has to be uplifted more because now the coming of Christ is nearer than it was before. We have been granted many blessings and privileges to enable us to live for Him and manifest His character.

Unfortunately, many of us are not putting to proper use the blessings that the Lord has bestowed upon us. "Many there are against whose names will be found written in the books of heaven, Not producers, but consumers."<sup>2</sup> Now is the time when Jesus must be seen alive within our hearts. "My fellow Christians, we are far from reaching the divine standard. Our works do not correspond with our privileges





and opportunities. Few devote themselves unreservedly to the service of God. Few are accomplishing all that they might accomplish if they would put to use the talents that God has given them.”<sup>3</sup> God’s grace is sufficient for us to bear fruit and bring forth fruits meet for repentance. See 2 Corinthians 12:9; Matthew 3:8. Let us not deceive ourselves by thinking that just because we are not manifesting outright rebellion against Him, we are doing Him service. The fruits of the Spirit—kindness, longsuffering, joy, mercy, and so forth—should be seen in our lives. See Galatians 5:22–23; 2 Peter 1:6–7. “God will surely condemn every member of every church claiming to be a Seventh-day Adventist, who is not doing Him service.”<sup>4</sup>

In any tree, leaves play an important part, but Jesus, being hungry, was not interested in leaves at that time. The barren fig tree with its profusion of leaves is just like we are—with our church attendance, participation, and endless prayers—these are not enough unless our lives reveal the God we claim to serve. Let us rise and grow beyond the obvious; a mere intellectual assent to the truth will not suffice.

This must be accompanied by a deep transformation. We have been called out of darkness into His marvelous light for a purpose: we must go forth to all the world evangelizing, preaching, and teaching of a soon-coming Saviour. In Luke 13:6–9, the parable is told of a fig tree that had been planted, and the owner came looking for fruit, but in vain. He wondered why it should be allowed to waste the ground after producing nothing. Jesus said in Matthew 7:19 that any tree that does not produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. God will not tolerate idleness, indolence, or inactivity in His followers. The reason why fictitious movies attract so many people today, though people know that they are fiction, is that those who take part in them make them appear real. Tragically, many Christians are failing to make their profession real. Though using the right phrases and attending the right functions, they fail to live the faith, hope, love, joy, and peace that they sing and talk about!

Paul in 2 Corinthians 13:5 exhorts us to examine ourselves and see whether Jesus Christ is in us. Take an honest inventory of yourselves—honestly criticize and

evaluate your life. Are you producing fruit? Is your life made up of constant self-denial and sacrifice? In fact, are you doing anything for the needy and destitute? Are you doing anything to win souls to Christ? Are you a soul-winner? If not, what is hindering you? Many who claim to be God’s children are merely religious—rather than being spiritual. Let us pray as never before for Christ to impart to us strength; for He is the Vine, and we are just branches. Without Him we can do nothing. See John 15:5.

Instead of cherishing pride, selfishness, gossip, evil surmising, and all forms of iniquity, we must fully live for God, for we have decided to take upon ourselves His name. If only we could understand what it means to love the Lord with all our soul, heart, strength and mind! I pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to enlighten His people in the work that is before us. ✠

Admiral Ncube writes from Zimbabwe, Africa.

References:

<sup>1</sup> See *The Desire of Ages*, 581.

<sup>2</sup> *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 304.

<sup>3</sup> *Review and Herald*, June 15, 1886.

<sup>4</sup> *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 19, 175.

# The Second Coming of Christ

## How to mark your Bible and know God's Word better

We present this study with the desire that it will encourage you, our readers, to pursue a deeper examination of God's Word. The warning has been given us that "none but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict." *The Great Controversy*, 593–594. It is our suggestion that you use this study personally, in group settings, or with your family. We also encourage you to add other Scriptural references to this study as you proceed in your own personal, attentive scrutiny of God's Holy Word.

The Editors

### Bible Marking Directions

1. In this month's study our Bible marking key letters are **SC**, which represent "**The Second Coming of Christ**."
2. On the blank flyleaf at either the beginning or the end of your Bible, write in the key letters followed by the first Scriptural text. This month's beginning entry should appear as follows: **The Second Coming of Christ, 1SC: Hebrews 9:28.**
3. Turn to the first reference and, in the margin near it, write the second reference. Then turn to the second reference and, in the margin near it, write the third reference, and so on to the end of the lesson. When you come to the last reference write "**End SC.**"

### 1SC: Hebrews 9:28.

Just as certainly and surely as Christ was offered on the cross nearly 2000 years ago, just so certainly He will appear the *second time*. May we earnestly and eagerly await His return. The KJV word "many" in the Greek is equivalent to "all." Also, "look for" is better translated "eagerly await."

### 2SC: John 14:1–3.

When Jesus was here on the earth 2000 years ago, He promised in just so many words that He would return to earth at the last day – at the end of time – to reward every man according to his works. See Matthew 16:27; 26:64. He said, "If I go...I will come again." So as surely as He went back to heaven, just so surely we may know that He will return to this earth at the right time. He has promised to come, and He does not lie.

### 3SC: Luke 24:36–43, 50–51.

He had a real body of flesh and bones – with hands and feet – after His resurrection, and He went back to heaven with that real body. The glorified body is not a disembodied spirit, but it is tangible flesh – immortal and incorruptible. We are told that we will be like Him. See 1 John 3:2.

### 4SC: Acts 1:9–11.

He will come in like manner as He went back to heaven at His ascension. He went back to heaven literally, bodily, personally, and

visibly. So when He comes in like manner at His second advent, we know that He will come from heaven literally, bodily, personally, and visibly. He also will come back with clouds of angels. This climactic, literal return of Christ from heaven will be in the sight of all people of earth, and cannot be a figurative or spiritual coming.

### 5SC: Revelation 1:7.

Every person, every eye, will see Him when He appears in the clouds of heaven. Christ will not appear at His second advent in any secret way to just the elect, but all the tribes of the earth shall see Him coming in the clouds, with power and great glory. See Matthew 24:30.

His coming will be just as open and visible to all people as is bright lightning that spans the sky. See Matthew 24:27.

### 6SC: Revelation 6:15–17.

The wicked will see Him as He approaches the earth at His coming, and they will try to hide. God's people will be able to stand, because they will have clean hands and a pure heart: every motive examined and every sin confessed. See Psalm 24:3–4.

### 7SC: Matthew 25:31.

All the angels of heaven – countless millions of bright shining angels (see Revelation 5:11; Hebrews 12:22) – will surround the Son of God as He comes down from heaven in glory.



**8SC: Matthew 24:30–31.**

The angels are coming with Christ to gather all the good and pure people of all ages and from all lands to meet Christ and be forever with Him. The supreme purpose of Christ's second coming is to take His people to that wonderfully prepared place in heaven—the New Jerusalem. See John 14:3; 17:24.

**9SC: I Thessalonians 4:16–17.**

Christ will not come down and walk around on the earth at His second advent, but will appear in the air above the earth in the sight of all the people. The saints will be caught up from the earth to meet the Lord in the air, and go back with Him to the mansions of the heavenly Jerusalem. Christ will not come secretly, but with a mighty shout of command that will be heard all over the earth.

That shout will cause the millions and millions of graves where the righteous are buried to open, and all the righteous dead will arise from their graves with immortal bodies. At the same instant the righteous who are then living upon the earth will be changed from mortality to immortality. See 1 Corinthians 15:50–53. Then the angels will take all the righteous up to meet Christ in the air, and they will go back with Him to the mansions of the city of God—the heavenly Jerusalem.

**10SC: Philippians 3:20–21.**

At the second coming of Jesus the righteous will have their bodies changed and made like Christ's glorious body. Then God's faithful people will each have a glorious, immortal body that will never have an ache or a

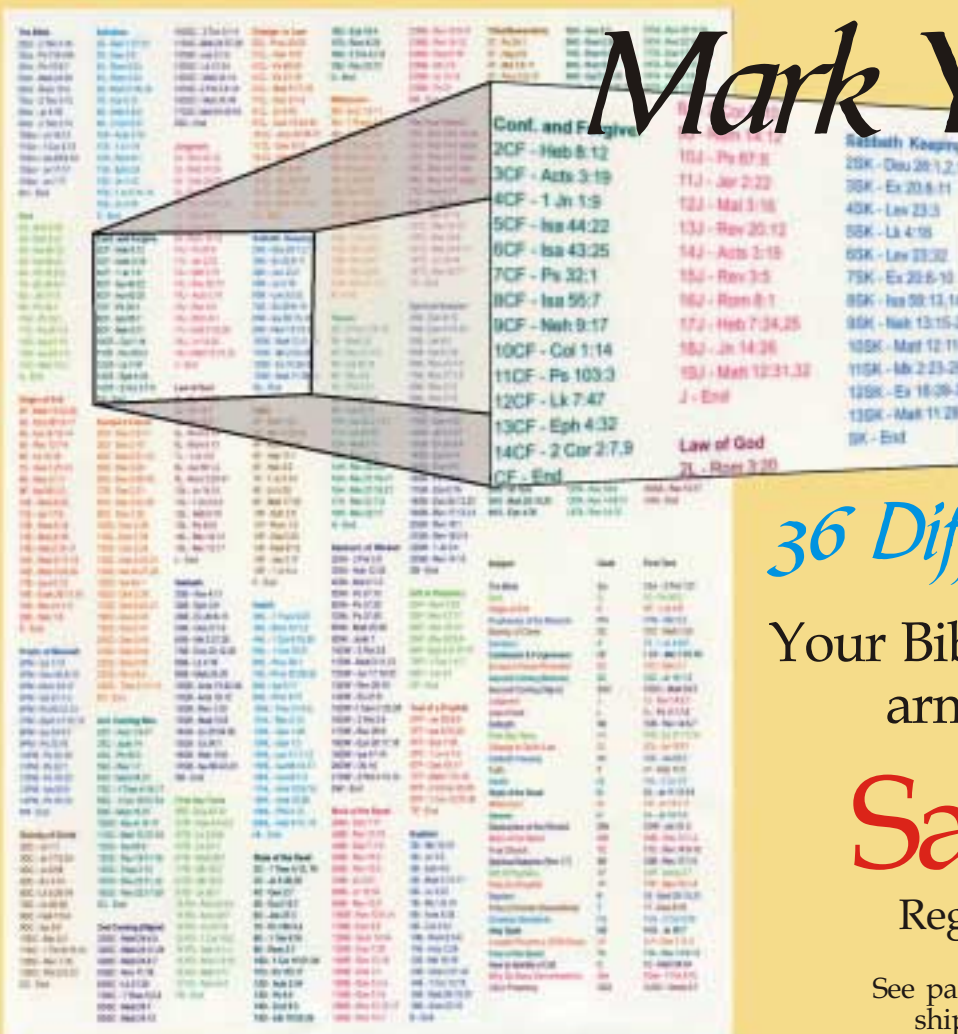
pain, that will never become old, and that will never die.

The coming of Jesus means that the redeemed will say Good-bye to this world of sin with all its troubles, trials, hardships, and sorrows, and they will then enter into everlasting happiness and joy with Jesus Christ. May each one of us be part of that happy throng!

The KJV word "conversation" in this text in the Greek means "citizenship," and "look for" means "eagerly anticipate." Thus, we who are faithful—eagerly anticipating Jesus' coming—are already counted as citizens of heaven, for the glorification of our bodies when Jesus comes is the climax of lives that are surrendered to His omnipotent sanctifying power. ✨

Adapted by Alan F. Esselbach from *Helps to Bible Study*, by J.L. Schuler.

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# Finishing the Mystery of God

*David Kang*

**T**here are three wonders in Revelation. One of them is called a sign, but all three wonders come from the same Greek root word *semeion*, which is frequently translated in the Bible as “miracle.” These three wonders are actually miracles that the entire universe is *wondering* at. Let us read the accounts of these three wonders found in Revelation.

**The first wonder** appears in chapter 12, verse 1: “And there appeared a great wonder in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.”

This first wonder is called a great wonder. We know that this woman represents the true church of God. This church was clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ (the sun), and was foreshadowed by the past experience of the ceremonial law in the Old Testament—the shadow of the Messianic kingdom (the moon). It also had the teachings of the twelve apostles (the twelve stars). This church is the woman from whom the remnant is derived.

Revelation talks about this church as being a great wonder. Its

members had a love for the truth and for each other, and they sacrificed greatly for the cause. Heavenly angels wondered, How can this church be so pure and loving in such a wicked, earthly environment? God’s church in its early stage was remarkable. Surely the early church was a great wonder to behold!

**The second wonder** appeared in heaven in the same chapter, verse 3: “And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.”

In verse 9 we read that this dragon is Satan. He is certainly one of the wonders in heaven. We ask, How could wicked Satan have come out of the pure environment of heaven? He started the rebellion right in front of the throne of the God of love. How could it be? It really is a wonder. That is why the Bible calls it “another wonder in heaven.”

**The third wonder** appears in chapter 15, verse 1: “And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the

seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.”

The verse says “another sign” rather than “another wonder,” but the same root word, *semeion*, is used. Revelation calls the seven last plagues, which are the wrath of God, a “great and marvellous” wonder—the greatest of the three wonders!

“For the LORD shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act.” Isaiah 28:21. The Bible calls the wrath of God a strange act.

Why would such a loving God judge mankind and pour out upon the earth the seven last plagues with wrath? That is a wonder in the eyes of men and angels. How could it be possible? So, here we have the three wonders in Revelation.

## **The First Wonder**

Now, we need to focus on the first wonder—the church of God. It is not just any church, but a church that has the whole truth of the Bible. Its members not only have the truth, but they are also sanctified



by it in the midst of a wicked, sinful environment and the ongoing attacks of Satan.

Here is demonstrated the power of Jesus—the power of the gospel—about which the angels would like to study. See 1 Peter 1:12. Heaven is waiting for this miracle to happen again at the end of earth’s history. Then the whole universe will again wonder at the church of God. That is why chapter 12 of Revelation calls our attention to the remnant of the seed of the woman, who “keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Verse 17.

In Ephesians 1:4–6, 9–10, Paul says, “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. . . . Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.”

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is trying to reunite the church of heaven and the church of earth as they were at the beginning of this world. When Jesus finally presents the remnant church as His pure bride before the angels, all heaven will wonder at the miracle—the wonder, the sign, as described in Revelation. We are a part of this great, wondrous movement! *Do we perceive its awesome importance?*

### **The Time and Location**

Revelation 12 even gives us the time frame and the location of the birth of the remnant of this wondrous woman—after the 1260-day persecution, in the New World called America: “And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto

the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which

“And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: and he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth, and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not. And the angel which I saw

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*When Jesus finally presents the remnant church as  
His pure bride before the angels, all heaven  
will wonder at the miracle.*

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keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Verses 13–17. Satan is waging a war to stop this wonderful miracle of God by carrying away the remnant church.

Prior to this, Revelation talked about this “wonder” experience and gave a more specific time frame to be understood and realized by the remnant church. We find it in Revelation 10. This chapter is a parenthetical chapter between the sixth trumpet in chapter 9 and the seventh trumpet in chapter 11.<sup>1</sup>

In Revelation 10:1, “another mighty angel” appears, who is none other than Jesus Christ Himself.<sup>2</sup> Since He comes down as another mighty Angel to give more weight to the importance of this vision, it must be very important for the remnant people of God to understand.

Yes, truly, for the whole existence of Adventism depends upon chapter 10 of Revelation. This is indeed the prophecy and the foundation of the remnant church in the last days! Let us read it again:

stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer: but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets. And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the angel’s hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey; and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. And he said unto

me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings." Revelation 10:1-11.

We see in this vision that Jesus has an open book in His hand, which is the book of Daniel—sealed at the time it was written, but open to us today. Jesus is standing with one foot on the water and the other on the earth, symbolizing that this message should go all over the world. He swears to God about a very important event in the history of redemption—that “in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished.” What tremendous words!

Jesus is saying, When the seventh trumpet sounds, I am going to make sure that my remnant

use His people, because all the essential light has been shed, and the right perspective of the sanctuary message has been understood.

It is time for the final phase of the redemption process—to enter into the Most Holy Place and wrap up the great controversy. Christ must investigate the whole matter before the cloud of heavenly witnesses, and vindicate God’s throne with the help of earthly witnesses. It is show time! Time to demonstrate! Time to show them the power of the gospel—the cross! It is time to finish the “mystery of God” as He declared to His servants the prophets. Since Adam, all the prophets have proclaimed the method of God’s salvation for mankind—namely, the eternal gospel, the mystery of God. When

is made manifest to his saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.”

Colossians 1:25-28. Christ, living in you, is your hope, and that is the mystery of God, according to Paul. Having the crucified Jesus in our hearts is the saving power, and that is the mystery of God.

### **The Sanctuary Explains the Mystery**

From the model of the sanctuary, we see the spiritual progress of the saints in their understanding and experience—both corporately as a whole church throughout the Christian era, and also individually as members. We were out of the grace of God at first, but by the drawing of the Holy Spirit we entered the sanctuary and saw the power of the cleansing blood of Jesus in the courtyard.

After the joy of forgiveness, we wanted to follow Jesus all the way. We realized our shortcomings and inabilities; yet we found God’s providing grace in the holy place. As we began to experience the power of that grace and learned to feel sorry for our sins, sin became hateful to us. Through beholding the Lamb of God, we received the gift of true repentance in our hearts, and we began to separate ourselves from unholy things. As we continued to walk with the Saviour, we came to understand that we must continuously receive repentance. Our only hope of salvation is to have the Saviour residing in our hearts all the time—not spasmodically.

Jacob’s fight was not with his enemy Esau; his fight was with the Lord. “I will not let thee go, except thou bless me” (Genesis 32:26) was his cry and prayer! He was desperate! Are we desperate enough to plead for Christ’s blessing as Jacob did? That is the prayer of overcomers—of spiritual Israel.

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*It is time for the final phase of the redemption process—  
to enter into the Most Holy Place and wrap  
up the great controversy.*

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church will again become a wonderful sign. All heaven will wonder at it and praise God’s name for the redeeming power of the eternal gospel. The text says that this “wonder” experience will begin after the great bitter Disappointment of the Advent movement. And Revelation 11:15-18 tells us when the seventh trumpet begins to sound—when the investigative judgment of the dead begins.

### **The Time Is Now!**

The purpose of the existence of the remnant church at the end of the earth’s history seems very clear to me. God had preserved the remnant of the woman’s seed throughout the onslaught of the Papacy in the Middle Ages up until the time that God’s people finally can realize not only the time frame of the Bible prophecy of 2300 days but also the implication of it—the experience of the cleansing of the sanctuary. Now the Lord is ready to

this mystery of God is realized and finished in the church, the whole universe will wonder at her. Then both churches—in heaven and on earth—will finally be reunited, and they will again safely live as neighbors. It is only when the mystery of God—the experience of the saving power of God—is experienced by His believers that all things can come to an end.

The apostle Paul was the last prophet to proclaim this gospel in John’s time. Paul frequently discussed the mystery of God in his letters, and perhaps that is why John uses the same terminology.

What did Paul have to say about the mystery of God which Jesus said would be finished at the seventh trumpet?

“Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now



Finally, we follow Jesus by faith into the Most Holy Place, to reside in the Shekinah glory, living in the presence of God with joy! Like Enoch, like Elijah, we will then be ready to live with God forever.

### **Demonstrated by Early Christianity**

The early Christians, most of whom were Gentiles, understood this hope of glory—experiencing the eternal gospel through Christ living in their hearts continuously. Not only did they understand the gospel, but they also knew where that gospel experience would lead them. They knew that it would prepare them to be presented before heaven as a perfect people—a people that all of heaven would wonder at—because they were ready to go home, to their eternal home. God’s redeeming power—power that restores humanity to live again with angels—was no longer an unbelievable theory. It was now a reality, demonstrated by God’s church.

The power of the true gospel spread so fast that the whole world knew about it in a short time! Satan feared that Jesus might come soon to claim His church as His own, so he made a strong counterattack from within the church. Consequently, the Papacy corrupted the understanding of the heavenly sanctuary, which is the key to understanding how to experience the mystery of God. Satan succeeded in the church for more than a millennium.

God’s plan was thus hindered and jeopardized, but on the horizon the escaped remnant of the woman’s seed began to emerge. That made Satan furious. He realized that the tables were turned in God’s favor, for the church began to understand the eternal gospel. They learned that Jesus had gone into the Most Holy Place, and that their final destination would be determined by the power of Jesus living in them.

### **The Seal of God**

When they are ready and perfectly presentable, God’s people

will be sealed. We know that the seal of the living God in the last days is the Sabbath. With that understanding, let us read these remarkable statements from the pen of Inspiration:

“Satan was seeking to exalt himself and to draw men away from Christ, and he worked to pervert the Sabbath, because it is the sign of the power of Christ.”<sup>3</sup>

“Then the Sabbath is a sign of Christ’s power to make us holy. And it is given to all whom Christ makes holy. As a sign of His sanctifying power, the Sabbath is given to all who through Christ become a part of the Israel of God.

will become a wonder in heaven!

The story is told of Policarp, the bishop of the church of Smyrna, a mighty man of God, who ordered his servants to treat those who came to arrest him with good food. After the soldiers were well fed, Policarp voluntarily bound himself and went to the Roman governor. The governor ordered his soldiers to give Policarp to the lions. “Sir, the lions ate too many Christians, and they are not hungry anymore,” they said. “Then send him to burn at the stake!” the governor cried. However, this man of God sang as he went to the stake, influencing many people to give their hearts to Christ. His last

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*We love to keep the Sabbath. It is the symbol of our sanctification—the seal of the living God—the token of His craftsmanship.*

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... The Sabbath points them to the works of Creation as an evidence of His mighty power in redemption. While it calls to mind the lost peace of Eden, it tells of peace restored through the Saviour. And every object in nature repeats His invitation, ‘Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’ Matthew 11:28.”<sup>4</sup>

God’s salvation has power—the Sabbath is the sign of it! Yet keeping the Sabbath does not make us holy. We keep it because Jesus recreates us and makes us holy by His blood, and because He gives us the uninterrupted breath of life through His Holy Spirit. We love to keep the Sabbath. It is the symbol of our sanctification—the seal of the living God—the token of His craftsmanship. Only those who know the mystery of God can make such a claim. Therefore, let us follow after the righteousness of God—not trying hard by our own efforts to be righteous—and let us enter into God’s Sabbath rest. May the Lord implant in us righteous desires and the power to follow them. Then we

words were: “My Lord has never denied me for 80 years. How can I deny Him after 80 years of friendship?” Let us give praise to God’s faithfulness!

### **What Miracle Will You Experience?**

In John, chapter 6, we find an interesting account of Jesus’ ministry. People were asking Jesus for miracles as a sign to believe Him. The Lord’s response was quite astounding! He said that He was the Bread of Life—the Manna from Heaven—and unless they partook of it, they could have no life. He told them to eat His flesh and drink His blood, otherwise they could have nothing to do with Him. The people did not understand what He meant. They questioned: “What does He mean, eating of His flesh?” Of course, He meant studying and meditating on His spoken words, which are spirit and life. See John 6:63. But the people kept asking for visible signs. They would only be convinced by the supernatural.

When Jesus offered them a real miracle—the change of heart and

character by eating His flesh and drinking His blood—the people lost interest and stopped following Him. The Bible says that they walked with Him no longer. See John 6:66.

Exactly the same thing is happening in these last days of earth's history. People are again asking for supernatural miracles to believe. And Satan is giving them miracles in abundance—every imaginable kind all over the world! Still today, as He did 2,000 years ago, the Lord is offering a true miracle—a change of heart and character by partaking of His flesh and blood, by receiving His Words of Life. The last conflict in this great controversy is going to center on miracles. What miracle will you experience—Satan's magic, or Christ's transformation? Are you becoming a sign for Christ?

Indeed, the early church was a wonder to the eyes of heaven! And the same heaven is waiting and yearning to see another great wonder. Are we ready to demonstrate it? ✠

*Elder David Kang is the pastor and founder of Light for Life, Inc., an outreach ministry which utilizes publishing, T.V. broadcasting, web-casting, and a Bible correspondence school.*

References:

<sup>1</sup> There are three parenthetical chapters in Revelation. First, chapter 7, which answers the question at the end of chapter 6, "who shall be able to stand?" by telling us about the 144,000 who will stand before the wrath of the Lamb. The second is found in chapter 10, which we are discussing here. Chapter 15 is the third parenthetical chapter—between chapter 14, which is a warning about the coming plagues and the wrath of God, and chapter 16, which is an actual account of the seven last plagues. Chapter 15 portrays the overcomers of the mark of the beast and the plagues singing a new song before the throne of God.

<sup>2</sup> The term "another angel" appears seven times in Revelation, and each one is connected to the prophecies of the last-day events in earth's history. Jesus sends "another angel," other than the one standing by John's side when he receives the visions, to give more emphasis to the particular visions.

<sup>3</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, 283–284.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 288–289.

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## Papacy Asserts Supremacy

**News Items:** "Reaction from religious leaders ranged from shocked disbelief to wholehearted agreement yesterday to a Vatican declaration that non-Catholic religions have 'defects' that render them inferior and that the Roman Catholic Church promises the most certain route to salvation.

"Faith organizations were abuzz over what effect the Vatican's latest declaration of doctrinal superiority would have on the newly established—and sometimes tenuous—relationships between Catholics and non-Catholics." *The Inquirer*, September 7, 2000, *philly.com*.

"The official statement, issued by the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, rejects the idea that other branches of Christianity could be considered equal to Roman Catholicism, whose authority comes directly from God through the pope, the successor to St. Peter, it says. . . .

"A Vatican letter to bishops, also released this week, reminds Catholics that they must evangelize adherents of other faiths. It also tells them not to use the term 'sister churches' in reference to Protestant churches. That term is used in reference to Orthodox churches, with which Rome was in communion for many centuries, it explains. . . .

"The churches born of the Protestant Reformation are automatically excluded from the list of 'sister churches,'" commented *La Stampa* of Turin, Italy, a leading newspaper."

Leaders of the Anglican Church, Southern Baptists, the Evangelical Church of Germany, and the Methodist Evangelical Churches of Italy responded with dismay and criticism of the declaration. *Religion Today*, September 12, 2000, *crosswalk.com*.

**End-Time Perspective:** "Protestants have tampered with and patronized popery; they have made

compromises and concessions which papists themselves are surprised to see and fail to understand. Men are closing their eyes to the real character of Romanism and the dangers to be apprehended from her supremacy. The people need to be aroused to resist the advances of this most dangerous foe to civil and religious liberty." *The Great Controversy*, 566.

"The Roman Church now presents a fair front to the world, covering with apologies her record of horrible cruelties. She has clothed herself in Christlike garments; but she is unchanged. Every principle of the Papacy that existed in past ages exists today. The doctrines devised in the darkest ages are still held. Let none deceive themselves." *Ibid*, 571.

## The Bible in Public Schools

**News Item:** "A new push to teach the Bible in [U.S.] public schools is gaining momentum. But the two widely available Bible-in-public-schools programs are drawing both religious and secular criticism. Some Christians object to the Bible being taught as literature, not history, while other critics say the Bible has no place as an object of study in public education.

"The National Bible Association [NBA] is sponsoring meetings and training workshops on how the Bible can be taught in public schools without violating U.S. Supreme Court rulings." The NBA also has issued a widely endorsed school guide. This all follows President Clinton's December 1999 introduction of revised guidelines for teaching religion in public schools. He declared that public schools ought not to be "a religion-free zone."

"Pilot programs in Pennsylvania, Florida, and North Carolina are now testing how to inform school administrators and teachers on bringing the Bible back into public-school classrooms."

A curriculum produced by the National Council on Bible

Curriculum is utilized by public schools in 29 states. *Christianity Today*, September 4, 2000.

## Church Property-Use Rights Protected

**News Item:** "The [U.S.] House and Senate have passed a bill that gives greater protection to religious organizations in zoning disputes with local governments. Under the new law, which awaits President Clinton's signature, governments would have to prove a 'compelling interest' in order to restrict the construction, use, or destruction of houses of worship.

"The Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act also gives greater leeway to prison inmates to practice their faith as long as they do not undermine prison security.

"Prison ministries say the bill also validates a number of faith-based programs that have helped rehabilitate inmates." *Ibid*.

## Religious Liberty Attacks

### Catholics Attack Protestants in Mexico

**News Item:** "In March, about 70 Protestant families were expelled from the Mexican village of Plan de Ayala, in Chiapas state, by the town's Roman Catholic majority. 'Fourteen homes were demolished by the mob as the Protestants fled to the hills for refuge,' reports Seventh-day Adventist pastor Isaias Espinosa....

"Recently, Plan de Ayala has been practically sealed off from outside contact since a quarter of the local police department fled along with 20 evangelical families in May. About 50 evangelical families who remain have been held as semi-hostages, according to Hortensio Vázquez, a Seventh-day Adventist attorney.

"The evangelicals are being harassed and threatened with expulsion again,' he says. Evangelicals' children are not



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allowed to attend school and the adults cannot go to their jobs.”

In its 1999 annual review of religious freedom around the world, the U.S. State Department “noted that municipal authorities in San Juan Chamula, Chiapas, have expelled 30,000 evangelicals in the last 30 years. The pope has aggravated the situation by expressing alarm about the growth of Latin American evangelicalism. During his 1999 visit to Mexico, Pope John Paul II urged Catholics to vigorously defend their faith against Protestant sects that have made inroads in Latin America. On previous visits to the region, the pontiff said that evangelicals are spreading ‘like an oil stain’ in the region and ‘threaten to pull down the structures of faith in numerous countries.’ ” *Christianity Today*, August 7, 2000.

**End-Time Perspective:** “The pacific tone of Rome in the United States does not imply a change of heart. She is tolerant where she is helpless. Says Bishop O’Conner: ‘Religious liberty is merely endured until the opposite can be carried into effect without peril to the Catholic world.’ ” Josiah Strong, *Our Country*, chapter 5, pars. 2-4, quoted in *The Great Controversy*, 565.

### Religious Liberty Under Attack in France

**News Item:** “In France the National Assembly has adopted Europe’s toughest anti-cult legislation, which would create a controversial new crime of ‘mental manipulation’ punishable by a maximum fine of \$75,000 and five years in prison. Both Protestant and Catholic leaders are concerned about the bill’s possible consequences. . . . The bill, which contains 11 articles, represents the latest effort to pass repressive legislation against minority religions. In 1996 the French government published a list of 173 ‘dangerous sects’ that included an

evangelical church with connections to Baptists in the United States, as well as Jehovah’s Witnesses and Scientologists.” *Christianity Today*, September 4, 2000.

### Chinese Feng Shui Practices Become Popular in the U.S.

**News Item:** Feng shui “has burrowed deep into American society.” Bureaucrats, Hollywood, the business world, real estate developers, and architects are embracing this ancient Chinese practice.

Feng shui “is based on the idea that landscapes, buildings and even whole cities have hidden zones of energy (*qi*), which can be manipulated by the shape, size and color of a structure as well as its entrances. A building that allows *qi* to flow freely is said to have good feng shui, which brings prosperity and success.” According to architect Clive Wilkinson, “If put to the test, a lot of architecture is based on feng shui [pronounced fung shway].”

“In the high end of Los Angeles property sales, a working knowledge of feng shui is essential, says Jeanne Valvo, a director at the Fred Sands real estate firm. ‘It’s like computers.’ Many clients bring their feng shui consultants on house viewings.”

According to feng shui, “success is largely a matter of orienting your surroundings.” Feng shui practitioners give personal, even on-site, consultation to their clients.

A number of feng shui products are available to enhance success. One businessman purchased a stone lion from a Chinese artist in order to compensate for his office’s proximity to a church. *Time*, July 3, 2000.

**End-Time Perspective:** Satan uses the occult—New Age teachings and paganism—as tools to tempt the world into accepting his power in their quest for financial and

personal success and happiness. May God’s people be witnesses to the world that the only real and lasting success comes from serving God and following His commandments and counsels by an intimate relationship with Him and a complete surrender to His will.

### Genetic Engineering to Invade Gardening and Lawns

**News Item:** Scientists are developing genetically engineered flowers, ornamental plants, and lawn grasses. “ ‘We can design a flower on paper and then grow it, determining what sorts of parts we want and how many,’ says Elliot Meyerowitz, head of biology at the California Institute of Technology.

“Meyerowitz and his colleagues found a gene that controls organ



development in *Arabidopsis*, a tiny flowering test plant studied in labs. By manipulating the gene, they can produce a plant with all petals and no leaves or vice versa. The gene also determines when flowers bloom. Although you wouldn’t plant *Arabidopsis* in your home garden, the genetic rules involved apply to other flowering plants, even grasses like rice, says Meyerowitz.

“Similar methods have produced ‘low mow’ grass, designed by Scotts Co. and Monsanto to grow at a slower pace, reducing the need for frequent lawn mowing.” Genetic manipulation “could be used to engineer grasses with any number of novel features: fancy leaf shapes and plant architecture, rich greens (or reds or blues), winter-hardiness, frost tolerance, and resistance to pests and drought.”



An Australian company is working on producing flowers in colors not naturally possible. "The rainbow of cut flowers will appear in U.S. markets beginning April 2001. Improving floral scent is another goal of the \$20 billion horticulture industry."

One result of modern plant breeding is that many popular varieties have little scent compared to their natural cousins of the past. Genetic research could result in producing "plants that possess stronger scents or produce them at certain times of the day—like in the evening when most people arrive home. But not everyone welcomes designer fragrances and 'Frankengrass.'"

This year, nearly 40 occurrences of vandalism have been cited at testing fields. Such testing has been opposed because it is feared that genes from test plants will migrate into nature and corrupt other plants. Government approval is still needed to release such products into the commercially available market. *U.S. News & World Report*, August 14, 2000.

**End-Time Perspective:** This corrupting of the genetic makeup of God's creation is a modern-day example similar to the sin of amalgamation that brought God's judgment upon the antediluvian world. At Creation God gave mankind stewardship of the earth to care for it unto God's glory. See Genesis 1:26, 28; 2:15. God warns in the Bible that following the judgment, He will "destroy them which destroy the earth." Revelation 11:18.

### Pro-Abortion Violence

**News Item:** "A new compilation of documentation on pro-abortion violence in Canada, the United States and Puerto Rico reveals thousands of cases where pro-abortionists have attacked persons, including assaults with guns, cars, acid, hypodermic syringes, and baseball bats, reported Human Life International [HLI]."

"The pro-life group's report, entitled 'Pro-Abortion Violence,'

includes over 55 murders committed by pro-abortionists. Unlike pro-abortion literature that commonly alleges widespread incidents of 'anti-choice' violence but never documents such claims, the HLI report lists more than 2,000 incidents of pro-abortion violence, ranging from mass murder to destruction of property." *National Catholic Register*, August 27–September 2, 2000.

### Environment, Not Genes, Determines Cancer Risk

**News Item:** "A new study shows that environment matters more than genetics in determining whether you get cancer." According to Dr. Robert Hoover of the National Cancer Institute, "the fatalism of the general public about the inevitability of genetic effects' on cancer is unfounded."

Using studies of twins, researchers analyzed the risks of both twins getting 11 types of cancer. Depending on the cancer, the genetic risk ranges from 4 to 50 percent.

"The so-called genetic component to cancer is undoubtedly modified by the environment and so may be overestimated: if you carry a gene that gives you stomach cancer only if you eat a lot of red meat, then the genetic contribution to stomach cancer falls to zero if you avoid red meat.

"The environment—what we eat, drink, breathe and smoke; how we live and what chemicals we are exposed to—accounts for roughly twice the risk of cancer that genes do. It's time to grow out of our love affair with all things genetic and figure out what is really killing the 1,500 Americans who will die of cancer every day this year." *Newsweek*, July 24, 2000.

**End-Time Perspective:** How unfortunate that Seventh-day Adventists have not energetically trumpeted the health message to the world! We have the answer to why so many people are dying every day of cancer and multitudes of other diseases. God's health laws

are not broken with impunity. Let us now enthusiastically live the health message and take advantage of our many opportunities to share the great light that God has given us!

### Bach's Music a Gospel Wedge in Japan

**News Item:** "Although Japan is among the least Christian countries in Asia, the music of J.S. Bach appears to be doing what few evangelistic crusades or missionaries have accomplished. Going far beyond a cultural fad, Bach's music has conveyed Christian teachings and concepts to a large and growing following, particularly among the nation's elites, writes Uwe Siemon-Neto in *First Things* magazine (June/July)."

Although figures show that less than 1 percent of Japan's 127 million population are members of Christian churches, "another eight to 10 percent sympathize with Christianity." According to Yoshikazu Tokuzen of Japan's National Christian Council, "Most of those sympathizers are part of the elite, and many had their first contact with Christianity through the music of Johann Sebastian Bach." Many Bach choirs have "sprouted around the country.

"Most of those interviewed say that the Japanese have lost their allegiance to Buddhism and Shintoism and are attracted to the message they find in Bach's music. The Christian idea of hope is an alien concept in Japanese society, and the composer's music and lyrics kindle a popular interest in what 'hope' means to Christians, Siemon-Neto writes." *Christian News*, June 26, 2000.

**End-Time Perspective:** What simple means God can use to aid the spread of the gospel to all the world! May we surrender our efforts to God that we can be guided and empowered to be part of His effort to bring the three angels' messages in supernatural power to our spiritually destitute world! ✨

# How to Help

## Sister White



*James White*

**M**rs. White needs the help of all who can help in the cause of truth and reform. The people generally are slow to move, and hardly move at all. A few move cautiously and well, while others go too fast. The work of reform is not brought about in a single day. The people must be helped where they are. They can be helped better by one standing on the line of truth nearest them, than on the side the greatest distance from them. It is best for them to be taught on all points of truth and duty by persons of judgment and caution, and as fast as God in His providence unfolds them to His people. He who is but partly reformed himself, and teaches the people, will do some good. He who sees the duty of reform, and is fully strict enough in any case, allowing of no exceptions, and drives matters, is sure to drive the reform into the ground, hurt his own soul, and injure others. Such do not help Mrs. White, but greatly burden her in her arduous work. We invite, yea, entreat, such to get out of the way, and let Mrs. White come to the people. She works to this disadvantage, namely: she makes strong appeals to the people, which a few feel deeply, and take strong positions, and go to extremes. Then to save the cause from

ruin in consequence of these extremes, she is obliged to come out with reproofs for extremists in a public manner.

This is better than to have things go to pieces; but the influence of both the extremes and the reproofs are terrible on the cause, and brings upon Mrs. White a threefold burden. Here is the difficulty: What she may say to urge the tardy, is taken by the prompt to urge them over the mark. And what she may say to caution the prompt, zealous, incautious ones, is taken by the tardy as an excuse to remain too far behind.

We say to those who wish to help Mrs. White in her work, You will not find her far ahead of the people, with a few extremists. No, she is back with the people, tugging away at the wheel of reform, and she has to lift all the harder because of your extreme advance. Come back, good, whole-hearted souls, and stand by her side, and lift where she lifts. What can you do there at such a distance from the people?—Come back. You must meet the people where they are.

By this, dear brother, we do not mean that any are to come back to the wrong habits of the people. No, indeed. Their habits should be right. In this respect we say to them, Go on. But those who have run ahead of the work should come back from their

heated zeal and want of Christian patience, and labor for their brethren in the cause of reform as they can bear it. In this way they can help Mrs. White, who is tugging along with a double burden of the work. There may be those whom others cannot reach that she can, if rashness on the part of others does not place them out of her reach. If one cannot mend a vase, he need not break it into fragments. It is possible that another can mend it.

We protest against the plan practically taught by some who say, "Cure or Kill," and give a dose accordingly. Some sores need help in their cure; others will work their own cure best. It takes time to reform a poor, sinful, intemperate, blind, stubborn piece of humanity. It is a large job. And those who come a good way short of the faith of Abraham and the patience of Job, had better lay out a little more time and toil on their own case, before going to work for others. He who deals with minds, engages in the nicest [delicate, requiring great precision or sensitive discernment]<sup>1</sup> piece of business ever undertaken by mortal man. And the greater the reform, and the closer, the more difficult and responsible it is.

Some persons can be converted in a day, others in a week, and still others in a month, while it takes from



one to two years to convert and thoroughly reform some. Those who have a work laid upon them for others, will patiently set before the people plain principles and clear facts, and then leave them to answer for the use they make of them. Those called to teach are responsible for what they teach, and how they live their own teachings. And it should be a matter of great relief to them that they are not responsible for the manner the people dispose of their teachings, providing they do their

reform in life, and cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. See 2 Corinthians 7:1. Those who drop all other points, and run their own testimony all on the health, and dress reform, will disgust the people, and before they are aware of it, they will introduce a spirit of discussion and contention into their meetings.

The health reform has not taken the place, in any respect whatever, of the third angel's message. It is a

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*Some leave off living out the sweet principles of the truth, and go to battling for it. Now if they cannot do both, they had better live out the truth, and leave the teaching of it to those who can both patiently live and preach the truth.*

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duty, both by precept, and example. Let him who teaches make haste to do his duty, then patiently [a]wait the result. Do not drive. "My sheep hear my voice . . . and they follow me." John 10:27.

God has called some to teach the truth, and has called all to live it—teachers, and all. Some leave off living out the sweet principles of the truth, and go to battling for it. Now if they cannot do both, they had better live out the truth, and leave the teaching of it to those who can both patiently live and preach the truth. In fact, those not especially called of God, and qualified for the work, will be safest for themselves and others in the position of learners.

Satan stands ready to tempt unconsecrated persons, and prejudice them against the truth. And those who practice it, and especially those who teach it, should be exceedingly careful not to give Satan good grounds to tempt people concerning their course. The day of the Lord is the great event before us. The keeping of the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus is the great duty of God's people. And that they may do this acceptably, they must

work designed to follow in its wake. Yet it is a fact that from the course of some, people might labor under similar difficulties of that of the colored boy at Johnstown Convocation, who differed with Mrs. White, and was filled with prejudice against her, because he could not see that the Health Institute was the third angel's message. Mrs. White explained the matter, patiently, and the poor boy appeared quite satisfied.

Let the work go on, saith my soul, in all its branches. Not a piece at a time, lest it go all to pieces; but let it move on as a complete whole. Not fluttering and trembling in the wind, but like an old seventy-four gunship, let all the friends of truth and reform get on board and work together. Yet, let all the friends of Jesus, His coming, and the future glory of the kingdom, patiently, cheerfully, joyfully unite and stand together in the work of preparation. ✨

REFERENCES:

<sup>1</sup> *The American Heritage College Dictionary*, 921.

*Review and Herald*, March 17, 1868, originally entitled "The Spirit of Prophecy and the Cause of Reform."

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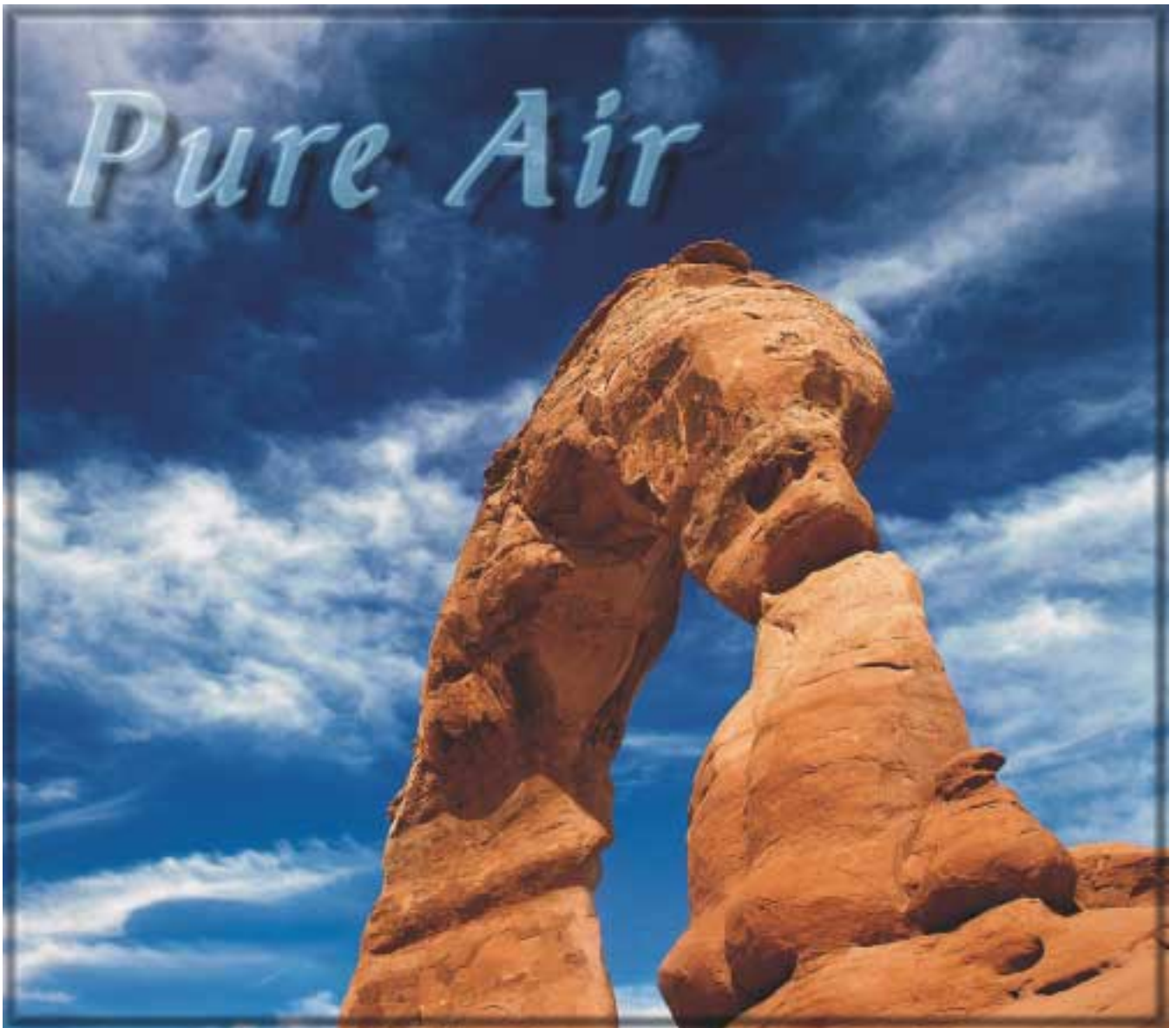
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**A**nd God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day." Genesis 1:6-8.

The "Heaven" mentioned here as being created by God on the second day refers to our atmosphere. It includes the air we breathe, and upon which life on earth depends. A 12-mile-thick layer wrapped around our planet, the atmosphere consists of about

78% nitrogen, 21% oxygen, and 1% argon, helium, carbon dioxide, and other gases. It also harbors a fair amount of water vapor and an unwarranted amount of pollution. As this mixture is inhaled into the lungs, about a fifth of the oxygen is retained, while the rest is exhaled along with carbon dioxide and water vapor.

The inside of the lung resembles a sponge. All of the tiny pockets in the lungs (about 300 million) provide over seventy square yards of surface area for the exchange of gases in and out of the bloodstream. An adult breathes about 16 times per minute, taking in about one pint of air per breath. This intake amounts to about 2,000 gallons of

air per day. During normal breathing this air travels about 50 miles per hour, but during a sneeze or cough it can reach speeds of 750 miles per hour. The maximum amount of air a person can inhale and exhale in one breath is called the vital capacity. A good vital capacity is related to a greater life expectancy. Several factors can affect a person's vital capacity – smoking, air pollution, posture, exercise, obesity, and shallow breathing.

For the person who smokes, the dangers are listed on the cigarette packages themselves. Lung cancer, emphysema, and carbon monoxide poisoning are among them. With every puff of smoke the air passages narrow, making it more

difficult to breathe. The cilia are paralyzed, thus preventing them from doing their job of cleansing the lungs. Mucous-clogged and irritated air passageways are ripe for emphysema and bronchitis. Carbon monoxide reduces the oxygen-carrying capacity of the blood. Nicotine constricts the blood vessels, elevates the blood pressure and heart rate, and irritates the heart itself. In pregnant women these poisons cross the placenta and harm the fetus. Cancer-producing tars blacken the lungs.

Marijuana smoke has many of the same health-damaging effects, plus some that are unique. Its active ingredient, THC, stays in the body longer than any other drug. With continued use it builds up in the fatty tissues, especially in the brain and in the gonads.

Cigarette smoke is also one of the main indoor-air pollutants. Those regularly exposed to second-hand smoke over an extended period of time are put at a significant risk for developing the same diseases and sharing some of the same physical impairments as the smoker. Small children, pregnant and lactating women, the elderly, and those with respiratory or heart diseases are the most vulnerable, and may not even be able to tolerate minimal exposure. These persons are also the ones most likely to be affected by other types of indoor pollution.

With the awareness of the energy crisis, one of the adaptations in society is to "weatherize" homes. Tighter living quarters decrease the exchange rate between inside and outside air. Weatherizing is good for keeping the heat in, but it also keeps in polluted air.

Natural-gas ovens, hair sprays, disinfectants, cleaning materials, wall paint, floor wax, cigarette smoke, radon, insecticides, urea-formaldehyde foam insulation, particleboard construction, new furniture, and carpets are a few of the sources of the fumes, gases, and particles that are emitted inside our homes. Solutions to the problem fall into three categories:

The best solution is the removal or alteration of the problem at its source—for example: replace unvented kerosene heaters with electric heaters, quit smoking, and so forth.

The second solution is to increase the ventilation. While this may involve the sacrifice of some energy efficiency, energy conservation should not be at the expense of one's health. One solution to this problem is not to overheat your home in the first place, and to put on more clothing. One should keep several windows around the home open a few inches to ensure that a good supply of fresh air is in circulation and that the bad air can get out. Bacteria, molds, fungi, house mites, and other disease-producing organisms have a hard time multiplying in rooms that are kept well-aired and sunned. The most comfortable temperature and relative humidity are 76–80° F and 40–50% respectively in summer and 72–76° F and 20–35% respectively in winter. Make sure your ceiling, walls, and floor are adequately insulated to minimize as much unnecessary heat loss as possible. Also to ensure a supply of fresh air while sleeping in bed, open the windows in another room and keep your bedroom door open. Thus the fresh night air can get in without your being in a draft and getting chilled. Of course, if it is warm outside, you should keep the windows wide open in your bedroom. Unfortunately, homes that are located in "low spots," or are surrounded by dense vegetation, may lack sunlight (driving up the heating requirements), and they do not get as much fresh-air circulation around them as is ideal. Bedding and clothing should be aired out often. Clothesline drying is advantageous, since it freshens and further cleans the clothes and saves money.

The third move toward cleaner air indoors is the use of air-cleaning machines. There are various kinds—electrostatic, charcoal filtration, and negative ionization. Each has its place in today's pol-

luted world. Each has its advantages and disadvantages (electrostatic and negative ionization may emit some ozone). Do your own research before you invest. Is the unit big enough to do the job? Is the expense warranted?

How do you know if you have an air-pollution problem inside your home? The symptoms may include: headache; dizziness; cough; and irritation of the eyes, nose, and/or throat; runny nose; difficulty in breathing; chest and/or abdominal pain; nausea; difficulty sleeping; diarrhea; and rashes. Only certain individuals may be affected. Since this list of symptoms contains some rather common complaints, a physician should be consulted.

But what if the outside air is polluted too? Unfortunately, this is a real problem in big cities and some other areas. About 150–200 million tons of pollutants are pumped into the air every year in this country alone. Some types of air pollution come from evaporation while others come from attrition (things grinding or wearing down). Most come from combustion. Heating units, power plants, incinerators, and industry are the major sources of air pollution, but the number-one cause is vehicular exhaust. Jets, airplanes, trains, buses, and automobiles have revolutionized transportation and our entire society; however, they have ruined the air in many places in the process. Three out of five people in this country live in areas that do not meet the health standards set up by The Clean Air Act of 1970.

Effects of air pollution include: eye irritation, respiratory symptoms and diseases, headaches, dizziness, shortness of breath, sore throat, chest pain, and nausea. The risks of major illness, all respiratory diseases, and colds, go up. Susceptible persons may die during smog alerts. In addition to hurting people and animals, smog can kill plants and trees, and damage stone, metal, and fabrics.

During a smog alert it is best to stay indoors, where there is about 50% less smog. Use air conditioners



and recycle indoor air. Get more rest and sleep. Avoid cigarettes and unnecessary driving.

If you live in the city, the early morning hours usually have the cleanest air. It is also a good idea to take advantage of clear days by getting outdoors. The best way to escape air pollution is to live out in the country. To give you an idea of the potential differences in air quality, mid-Pacific ocean air contains about 15,000 particles per cubic inch of air as compared to 5,000,000 in big cities. In summary: "When the air is bad, try not to breathe it."

There is something else that makes air fresh besides oxygen and the absence of pollutants—and that is the type of ionization in the air. Ions are tiny, electrified particles of matter. Fresh air may contain between 2–3 million ions in each breath, which is 5–10 times more than stale air. Oxygen usually carries a negative charge, and carbon dioxide a positive charge. Aerospace research and experience have suggested that air ionization is in itself a health factor apart from the oxygen content alone.

We do not yet understand how it works, but numerous studies have associated negative ions, specifically negatively ionized oxygen, with several health benefits. These include the following: an increased rate and quality of growth in plants and animals, dilation of the air passageways, and improvement in the cleansing action of the lungs, heart rate, blood pressure, and metabolic rate.

Mentally, one can experience a sense of exhilaration, or become more relaxed and mildly tranquilized. Hay fever and asthma symptoms may improve. Tumor growth was slowed in laboratory animals. Rats learned twice as fast. Positively charged air, on the other hand, produced the opposite responses and tended to be associated with headaches, dizziness, nausea, and fatigue.

Negative ions are lost as they adhere to walls, fabric materials, and air-conditioning ducts; tobacco

smoke, smog, and crowds of people tend to use them up, too. Radiation from space, the air, the rocks, and even from some soils, adds negative ions back into the air, as do sunshine, living green trees, and the breakup of water droplets—as occurs around waterfalls and the ocean surf.

Now that we have cleared the air, there is one more thing to do—breathe properly. Breathe in and out through the nose as much as possible. The nasal mucosa moisturizes, filters, and warms the air as it is breathed in. As it is breathed out, some heat and moisture is returned to the membranes to affect the next breath.

Oxygen is the most crucial element for our survival. We can survive weeks without food, and days without water, but only minutes without oxygen. Yet because of shallow breathing habits, we can deny ourselves optimal levels of oxygen for better health. Early signs of insufficient oxygen are impaired judgment and memory, dulling of the intellect, and a tendency for impatience and irritability. Slow, deep, abdominal breathing is the correct way to breathe. This type of breathing is better understood if it is demonstrated. Any respiratory therapist would be delighted to show you how. Basically, it involves using the diaphragm to "suck" air into the lower portion of the lungs and the abdominal muscles to "push" it out. One way to check yourself is to lie down with a book on your stomach. Then breathe in such a way that the book goes up and down each time you inhale and exhale.

Good posture while sitting and standing is necessary for proper breathing. There are several exercises that can help your posture. Try these: Bend your elbows and try to touch your shoulder blades together in back. Lie on your back and try to flatten your lower back to the floor by tilting your pelvis. Pretend a string is attached to the top of your head that is pulling your head slightly up and back.

This eases stress on your lungs and vocal cords. Hold your arms straight out to the sides and make little circles, then raise them straight up and reach for the sky.

Many people are forced to stoop or sit for much of the day. This usually makes for poor posture and causes many back problems. Maintaining good posture, taking stretch breaks often, and getting exercise whenever you can, will help. A good aerobic exercise program, combined with muscle toning and stretching exercises, is necessary for good health—besides being an aid to proper breathing and maintaining a set of strong lungs.

Tight clothing around the chest or abdomen makes proper breathing difficult, as does restrictive clothing that does not allow the free movement of the arms above the head.

Normal deep breathing aids digestion by massaging the abdominal organs. Blood is assisted in its return to the chest by the negative pressure that is developed with each deep breath. This pressure helps to reduce the chances of congestion headaches, the pooling of blood in the legs, and aids in the digestive process. Deep breathing gets more oxygen into the blood with each breath, allowing the heart to slow down a little.

A good habit is to go outside in the fresh air and take 10–20 slow, deep, abdominal breaths after each meal and just before retiring for the night. And as we enjoy this time of relaxation, we can give thanks to our Creator God "that giveth breath unto the people." Isaiah 42:5. Remembering that "he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things" (Acts 17:25), so, "let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD." Psalm 150:6. ☼

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## CHRIST'S MISSION TO EARTH

(Continued from Page 7)

Man's inventions and traditions are not only unreliable, but dangerous, for they place men where God should be. They place the sayings of men where a "Thus saith the Lord" should be. The world's Redeemer possesses the key, and unlocks the treasure house of the Old Testament. He explores hidden things. He separates the precious truth from superstition and error and the devisings and imaginings of men.

Christ's habits and customs and practices were not after the standard of the world. What a lesson He gives to the Christian churches throughout the world not to exalt themselves above the Majesty of Heaven, their Redeemer! What do men find in the example of Christ to justify their feeling of superiority, keeping them-

selves apart from their fellow men, hiding themselves from their own flesh, because they have obtained more of this world's goods than their neighbor? Because the world honors the wealthy and despises the poor, shall those who claim to follow Jesus do the same? Whose leading and example are such following? Certainly not the example of Him who said, "He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised," "to preach the gospel to the poor." Luke 4:18.

Very many teachers are content with a supposition in regard to the truth. They have crude ideas, and are content with a surface work in searching for truth, taking for granted that they have all that is essential. They take the sayings of other men for truth, being too indolent to put

themselves to diligent, earnest labor, represented in the Word as digging for hidden treasure.

Sharp, clear conceptions of truth will never be the reward of indolence. Investigation of every point that has been received as truth will richly repay the searcher in finding precious gems. In closely investigating every jot and tittle which we think is established truth beyond controversy, in comparing scripture with scripture, searching to see if there is no flaw in their interpretation, errors may be discovered. Christ would have the searcher of the Scriptures sink the shaft down deeper into the mines of truth. If the search is properly conducted, precious jewels of inestimable value will be found. The Word of God is the mine of the unsearchable riches of Christ. ✠

*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 16, 115-125.

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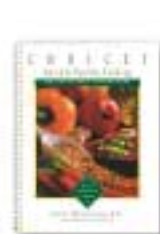
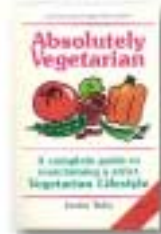
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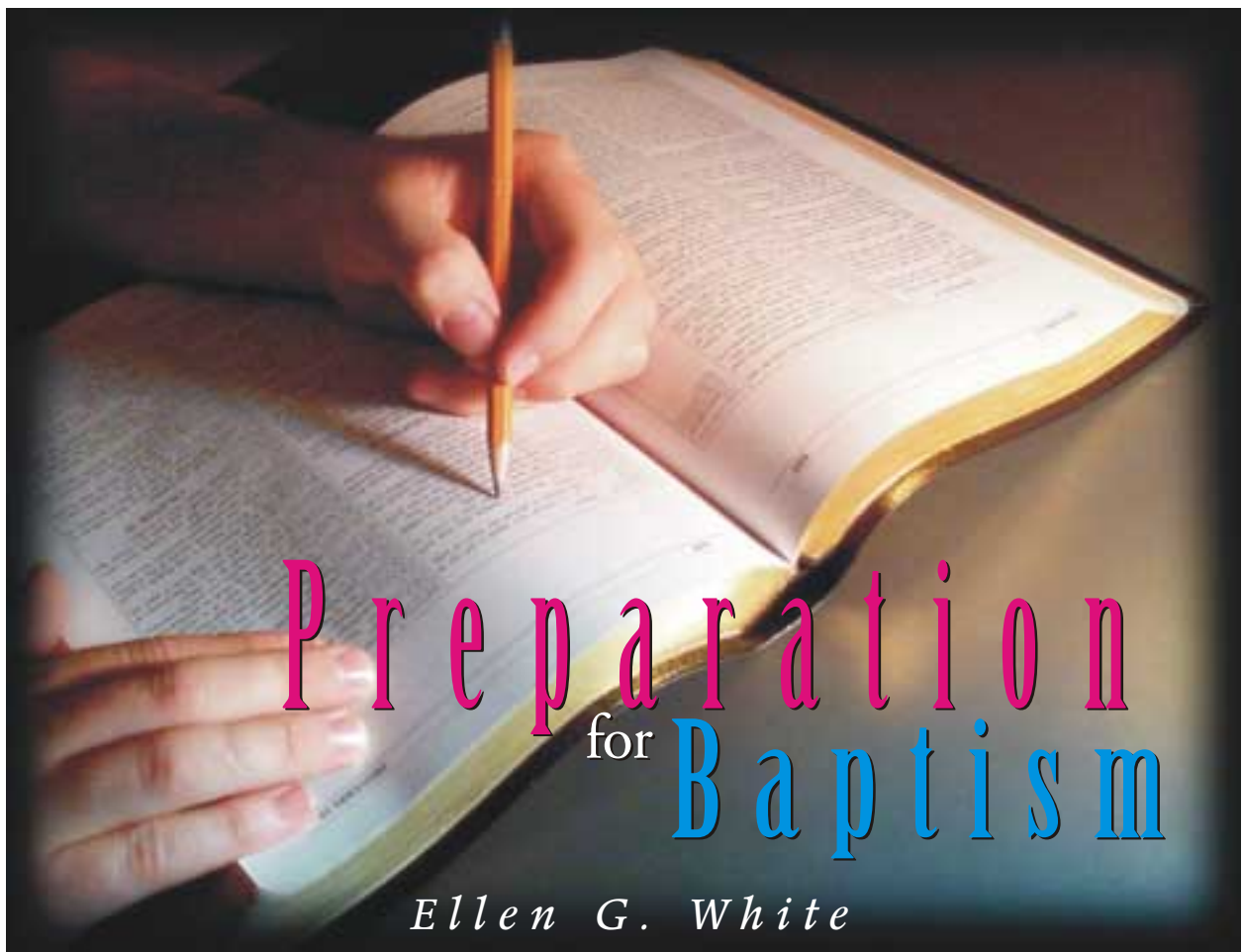
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# Preparation for Baptism

*Ellen G. White*

**T**he preparation for baptism is a matter that needs to be carefully considered. The new converts to the truth should be faithfully instructed in the plain, "Thus saith the Lord." The Word of the Lord is to be read and explained to them point by point.

All who enter upon the new life should understand, prior to their baptism, that the Lord requires the undivided affections. In the Sermon on the Mount are given most precious lessons from the lips of the great Teacher. He says, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Matthew 6:24. Again He says, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. . . . Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall

enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Matthew 7:13-14, 21. The practicing of the truth is essential. The bearing of fruit testifies to the character of the tree. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit. The line of demarcation will be plain and distinct between those who love God and keep His commandments and those who love Him not and disregard His precepts. There is need of a thorough conversion to the truth. We are not only to say, I believe, but to practice the truth. The light of the Word carefully studied, the voice of conscience, the strivings of the Spirit, produce in the heart genuine love for Christ, who gave Himself a whole Sacrifice to redeem the whole person, soul, body, and spirit.

The question put to Christ by a lawyer was, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Luke 10:25. There stood the wily priests and rulers expecting to hear from the lips of Christ an answer that would give them opportunity to condemn Him. He who reads every heart as

an open book understood their purpose. Turning to the lawyer, Christ said unto him, "What is written in the law? how readeest thou?" Verse 26. He gives him an opportunity to answer his own question. And the lawyer answering said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live." Verses 27-28. Christ will not accept a divided heart. The life of the receiver of truth should witness to the change wrought by the transformation of character. "Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD." Isaiah 43:10. Why?—Because they have an indwelling Saviour, who works the mind and heart to reveal that love for Christ which leads them to do His will, not their own. They have that faith which works by love and purifies the soul.

There is need of a much more thorough preparation of the candidates for baptism than has been



given them. Satan does not want anyone to see the necessity of an entire surrender to God. When the soul fails to make this surrender, sin is not forsaken; appetites and passions are striving for the mastery; temptations confuse the senses, so that true conversion may not take place. Whenever one renounces sin, which is the transgression of the law (see 1 John 3:4), his life will be brought into conformity to the law, into perfect obedience. This conformity to the mind and will of Christ is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Before baptism, there should be a thorough inquiry as to the experience of the candidate. Let this inquiry be made, not in a cold and distant way, but kindly, tenderly, pointing the new converts to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. Bring the requirement of the gospel to bear upon the candidates for baptism. Christ is represented as bearing the griefs and sorrows caused by sin, and He does this, not only as our sympathizing Friend, but as our Substitute. Therefore our sins of selfishness, of unamiable temper, of indolence, of wrong habits and practices, are to be positively and firmly put away. The one who breaks with Satan is to give no place to his temptations. Let the souls who come to Christ consider that He is the Sin-bearer, "wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." Isaiah 53:5. "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." Matthew 8:17. All this is done for the sinner, and as the sinner comes to Christ, helpless, penitent, and humble; as he views the expensive expiation made in his behalf, let the repenting soul lay hold by faith of the provision made to save him, not *in* his sin, but *from* his sin. Christ as the Sin-bearer must take away the sin and rescue the sinner from his morbid spiritual condition. As he asks for a change of heart, the answer comes, "My son, give me thine heart." Proverbs 23:26. "A new heart also will I give

you." Ezekiel 36:26. I will restore you to a pure, holy atmosphere, that you, being dead to sin, may live unto righteousness.

"Thy sins be forgiven thee." These words are spoken to the repentant, believing soul. Wonderful Saviour! All need to understand the process of conversion. The fruit is seen in the changed life. True repentance will be shown to be sincere by producing fruit in good works. None can depend upon their profession of faith as proof that they have a saving connection with Christ. It is by conformity to the will of God in our words, our deportment, our character that we prove our connection with Him. We cannot depend on any other one to do our work for us. We must perform our duties for ourselves. We must work

appearance. In the tabernacle service, God specified every detail concerning the garments of those who ministered before Him. Thus we are taught that the Lord has a preference in regard to the dress of those who serve Him. Very specific were the directions given in regard to Aaron's robes, for his dress was symbolical. So the dress of Christ's followers should be symbolical. In all things we are to be representatives of Him. Good taste should be exercised in the selection of appropriate colors. Our dress should be tidy and well-fitting. The hair should be carefully arranged. Our appearance in every respect should be characterized by neatness, modesty, and purity. But the Word of God gives us no sanction in making changes in our apparel

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the will of God, and delight to do His commandments. Then we shall not lean upon anyone but Jesus Christ for support and efficiency.

One of the points upon which those newly come to the faith will need faithful instruction is the subject of dress. In the examination of candidates for baptism, this subject should not be lost sight of. Let the new converts be faithfully dealt with. Are they vain in dress? do they cherish pride of heart? The idolatry of dress is a moral disease. It must not be taken over into the new life. In most cases submission to the gospel requirements will demand a decided change in the dress. True conversion of the heart will work wonderful changes in the outward appearance.

There should be no carelessness in dress. Teach the young converts that dress is a talent. For Christ's sake, whose property we are, we should seek to make the best of our

merely for the sake of fashion, that we may appear like the world. When the desire for display in dress absorbs the mind, vanity is manifested. All this must be put away.

The words of Scripture in regard to dress should be carefully considered. The Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul says, "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works." 1 Timothy 2:9-10. And through the apostle Peter the instruction is given, "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." 1 Peter 3:3-4.

Christians are not to decorate the person with costly array of expensive ornaments. All this display imparts no value to the character. The Lord desires every converted person to put away the idea that dressing as worldlings dress will give value to our influence. The ornamentation of the person with jewels and luxurious things is a species of idolatry. This needless display reveals a love for those things which are supposed to place a value upon the person. It gives evidence to the world of a heart destitute of the inward adornment. Expensive dress and adornments of jewelry give an incorrect representation of the truth that should always be represented as of the highest value. An overdressed, outwardly adorned person bears the sign of

outward adorning than to the inward graces, which love of truth and righteousness display as the fruit borne upon the Christian tree. If the enemy can keep the minds of believers centered upon their dress and outward appearance, he is well pleased. They injure their influence, and the cause of truth which they profess to love.

Many indulge a passion for dress. They spend their money for that which is not bread, and are as foolish as was Esau, who sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. Many bar their own souls from entering the strait gate because they cannot indulge their love for display and yet believe in Christ and walk in His footsteps.

“If any man will come after me,” said Christ, “let him deny himself,

ished, the whole person will express the same. The grace of Christ in the heart finds expression in a dignified, decorous deportment. The truth is manifest in the flesh. And truth lived always has an influence in favor of the truth, testifying of practical godliness. All such experiences are of the highest value. The usefulness of the Christian testifies to the genuineness of his conversion.

As those who claim to believe the truth give expression to the truth in appropriate dress and in their words and conduct, they are living epistles for God, known and read by all who behold them. Their chaste conversation is a sign of the inward adorning. They have enlarged influence; a field of usefulness is ever open before them. They are as signs in the world, perpetuating a saving knowledge of divine truth, as salt that has not lost its savour.

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,” (John 1:14) — the same Word that was in the beginning with God, and was God (see verse 1). Through His own life in human nature, Christ has revealed to us His methods of usefulness in saving souls. His character is to be revealed in His followers. The reception of the great testing truths for these last days never makes the receiver coarse and rough and uncourteous, harsh in conversation and spirit. The truth genuinely believed is a reality to the receiver. It never degrades, but always refines, elevates, and ennobles the receiver. Through sanctification of the Spirit it makes him an agency through whom the unseen angels of God work out His holy principles.

The principles of the Christian life should be made plain to those who have newly come to the truth. Faithful, Christian men and women should have an intense interest to bring the convicted soul to a correct knowledge of righteousness in Christ Jesus. If any have allowed the desire of pleasure or the love of dress to become supreme, so that any portion of their mind, and strength, is devoted to selfish

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*Evidence that the taste is really converted will be seen in the dress of all who walk the narrow path of holiness, the path cast up for the ransomed of the Lord to walk in.*

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inward poverty. A lack of spirituality is revealed.

Extravagance in dress requires the expenditure of means that is needed to advance the work of the Lord. Extra ribbons and bows mean pennies and shillings spent needlessly. The trimming of ladies' hats with high-standing bows is a needless expense, and it is unbecoming to a Christian. In the house of God the overtrimmed hats are a positive annoyance. The congregation desire to see the face of the speaker as well as to hear his voice; but the ladies' hats with their high-standing ribbons and bows, obscure the view. Many in the congregation may be seen peering this way and that to get a glimpse of the speaker; but often their efforts are in vain. Their enjoyment of the service is marred, and the minister, who observes all this, is disturbed.

Satan has a snare laid to captivate unwary souls by leading them to give more attention to the

and take up his cross, and follow me.” Matthew 16:24. Self-denial and self-sacrifice will mark the Christian's life. Evidence that the taste is really converted will be seen in the dress of all who walk the narrow path of holiness, the path cast up for the ransomed of the Lord to walk in.

Christians should not neglect to search the Scriptures on these points. They need to understand that which the Lord of heaven appreciates in even the dressing of the body. Those who are earnest in seeking for the grace of Christ will heed the precious words of instruction inspired of God. Even the style of the apparel will express the truth of the gospel. Their dress bears its testimony to their own family, to the church and the world, that they are being purified from vanity and selfishness. They demonstrate that they are not idolaters.

Wherever the grace of humility, a meek and quiet spirit, is cher-

indulgences, the faithful believers should watch for these souls as they that must give an account. They must not neglect the faithful, tender, loving instruction so essential to the young converts, that there may be no half-hearted work. The very first experiences should be right. If those who have been long in the way will try to help the one who is just beginning the Christian course, they will often be as the Lord's living agencies. All who will be true and faithful in the performance of their duty are representatives of Christ, the true Shepherd. If all realized the conflict which each soul must wage with satanic agencies that are seeking to ensnare and entice and deceive, there would be much more diligent labor done for those who are young in the faith.

The atmosphere of the world is charged with spiritual malaria. All who accept of Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour must count themselves dead to all things in their life conduct that Christ would not approve. These newborn souls seldom have sufficient instruction. They are left too much [to] themselves, and are often tempted, and do not discern the evil of the temptation. Let these souls newly come to the faith feel that it is their privilege to solicit counsel. If they seek the society of those who can help them, they will soon possess the refined taste that will ever choose the company of those who love and fear God. Our conversation with these souls should be of a spiritual, encouraging character. The Lord marks the conflict of every weak, doubting, struggling soul, and He will help all who call upon Him. They will see Heaven open before them, and angels of God ascending and descending the ladder of shining brightness which they are trying to climb.

After the believing soul has received the ordinance of baptism, he is to bear in mind that he is dedicated to God, to Christ, and to the Holy Spirit. These Three all cooperate in the great work of the covenant made by baptism in the

sight of the heavenly universe. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit receive the believing soul into covenant relation with God.

All who study the life of Christ and practice His teaching will become like Christ. Their influence will be like His. They will reveal soundness of character. They are established in the faith, and will not be overcome by the devil because of vanity and pride. They seek to walk the humble path of obedience, doing the will of God. Their character exerts an influence that tells for the advancement of the cause of

mighty power amid the corrupting influence of the transgressors of His law. From the lowliest subject to the highest in positions of trust, they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

In His prayer to the Father, Christ says of His followers, "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." John 17:22-23. O what

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*In these thoroughly converted souls the world has a witness to the sanctifying power of truth upon the human character.*

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God and the healthful purity of His work.

By the reception of the doctrines revealed and the performance of the duties required in the Word of God, the professed followers of Christ are to witness to the world of their unity with Christ. They are to show that they have been given to Christ by His Father, and are overcomers through the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony. See Revelation 12:11. They love Him who hath redeemed them. They increase in knowledge of Christ through exemplifying His character. And they cherish expectations that will not be disappointed: they expect to see His face and to rejoice in the sunshine of His countenance.

In these thoroughly converted souls the world has a witness to the sanctifying power of truth upon the human character. Through them Christ makes known to the world His character and will. In the lives of God's children is revealed the blessedness of serving the Lord, and the opposite is seen in those who do not keep His commandments. The line of demarcation is distinct. All who obey God's commandments are kept by His

possibilities and probabilities are for God's people if they will humble themselves and exalt the Lord Jesus!

In His prayer the Saviour says further, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." Verses 24-26.

The knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ expressed in character is an exaltation above everything that is esteemed in earth or in heaven. It is the very highest education. It is the very key that opens to us the portals of heaven, that we may obtain eternal life, an immortal inheritance, and eternal substance. All who have this knowledge are constantly advancing heavenward. They have a good report in their own family, in the church, and in the world. ❀





# Index of Year 2000 Articles

- Autumn Counsel, General Conference**  
“Guidelines Toward an SDA Philosophy of Music,” September
- Bell, Jeff**  
“A Thought for Mothers,” May
- Fiedler, David**  
“Heart Worship, Hero Worship,” March
- Floyd, Clark**  
“Two Gospels Within the Church,” October  
“O Worship the Lord,” November
- Garber, Diana**  
“Am I One of God’s Peculiar People?”  
Special Issue
- Garber, Philip**  
“Separation of Church & State Under Attack,” June
- Hansen, Harry**  
“Why Me, Lord?” Special Issue
- Haskell, Stephen N.**  
“The Gospel in Type and Antitype,”  
January
- Hildreth, D.**  
“Waiting for Christ,” February
- Hohnberger, Jim**  
“Holding the Truth in Unrighteousness,”  
Special Issue
- Hohnberger, Matthew**  
“New Millennium—New Life,” February
- Hohnberger, Sally**  
“Where Is My Child’s Heart?” April  
“A Better Marriage,” June
- Jensen, Samuel**  
“Strange Fire—Part 1,” August  
“Strange Fire—Part 2,” September
- Kang, David**  
“Finishing the Mystery of God” December
- Lewis, Rosalie and Silvia**  
“Why Be a Seventh-day Adventist?”  
September
- Millard, Kent**  
“The Law and the Prophets,” January
- Ncube, Admiral**  
“Nothing But Leaves,” December
- Paulson, Kevin**  
“False Evangelical Theories About the Antichrist,” February  
“Conceived in a Crisis,” May  
“Studying the Bible,” October
- Priebe, Dennis**  
“Is Jesus Really Coming Soon?” January  
“What’s Wrong With *Perfection?*” March
- Reeves, Gwen**  
“The Venom of the Serpent,” April
- Reiswig, Adam**  
“Though He Slay Me,” May
- Robinson, D. E. and White, E. G.**  
“Sunday Laws: A Study of Principles,”  
May  
“Sharp Thrusts and Christian Politeness,”  
June  
“When Prejudice Is Strong,” August
- Smith, Sally J. W.**  
“My Miraculous Conversion,” August
- Smith, Uriah and White, James**  
“The Seven Churches,” May
- Spear, Ron**  
“The Impregnable Shield,” February  
“The Cleansing of the Sanctuary,” March  
“The Jewish Church Duplicated,” April  
“The Three Angels’ Messages,” Special  
Issue  
“God’s Remnant Church in the Last Days,”  
June  
“Prepare to Meet Thy God,” July  
“The Latter Rain,” November
- Standish, Colin D.**  
“The Unification of the Church of Rome  
With the Church of England,” May  
“The Shaking and the Latter Rain,” Special  
Issue  
“Hate Crimes and Christian Evangelism,”  
June  
“The Name of God,” September  
“The Dual Baptism,” November
- Standish, Colin and Russell**  
“The Preparation of God’s People,” March  
“Making the Spirit of Prophecy of None  
Effect,” July
- Standish, Russell R.**  
“Shall We Stand Up for Religious Liberty?”  
January
- Steck, Harvey,**  
“The Feast Days,” August
- Vierra, Danny**  
“Into the Ranks of Spiritualism,” Special  
Issue
- Wainright, Milton**  
“Worship That Pleases God” November
- Waters, Alane**  
“A Glorious Reunion,” July
- Wehr, Jeff**  
“Consecration, Spiritualism and the  
Terrible Ordeal,” January  
“The Investigative Judgment,” February  
“Oh How He Loves Us!” April  
“Our Prophetic Times,” Special Issue  
“Freedom in Jesus,” Special Issue
- Wesley, John**  
“Holy Living: Is It Legalism?” October
- White, Ellen G.**  
“The Snares of Satan,” January  
“Satan’s Devices,” January  
“Love Among Brethren,” February  
“Serving God Fervently,” March  
“A Vital Connection,” March  
“Genuine Conversion,” March  
“The Condition of God’s People,” April  
“An Appeal to Live the Truth and Share  
It,” April  
“How to Be Saved,” May  
“Reform in Sabbath Observance,” Special  
Issue  
“The Proper Attitude in Prayer,” June  
“Keeping the Heart,” July  
“Words to Ministers,” July  
“The Law of God,” August  
“Showdown on Carmel,” September  
“Christian Privileges and Duties,”  
September  
“The Most Important Question,” October  
“Faithful Shepherds,” October  
“Cain and Abel Tested,” November  
“The Perils and Privileges of the Last  
Days,” November  
“Christ’s Mission to Earth,” December  
“Preparation for Baptism,” December
- White, James**  
“The Spirit of Prophecy,” Special Issue  
“How to Help Sister White,” December

**Our Firm Foundation 2000**

# letters to the editor

## Have a letter to share?

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I'm sending a donation for God's work. God bless each one of you. We appreciate your bulletins and letters.

We love you all. Maranatha!

*DS, Oregon*

I have been an Adventist all my life, but drifted away from the church because I was uncomfortable with the non-spiritual aspects of the church and its services. It felt like a club, and I never felt like a member.

Then came Hope International and a spiritual awakening for me! I need *Our Firm Foundation*, and I pray that the Spirit will transform me into a reflection of Christ's love.

*JC, Oregon*

I must say how blessed I am to be introduced to your ministry via an elder at my church. My soul has been blessed indeed! The Lord is coming really soon. God bless your staff and your ministry.

*SE, Illinois*

Thank you for the Special Issue of *Our Firm Foundation*.

I have been reading every article in it, and I just praise God for His love and blessings to have this information on the end times. I've been an Adventist since 1974, and I'm so happy for God's leading me into this truth! I praise Him for dedicated men and women who are doing this wonderful work in getting the message out to all people. I too believe the end of all things is nearer than we may think.

*ET, California*

### From Overseas

Greetings in the name of our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ!

I thank God because of you for the gift of literature you are offering us. Through your magazine *Our Firm Foundation* I have learned a lot about our fundamental beliefs. Through your magazine I came to know the true Sabbath of our Lord and the messages of prophecy. I thank you so much for the gift subscription you have offered.

God bless you as you keep on spreading the Third Angel's Message. Many people are perishing because of lack of knowledge.

God bless!

*DA, Kenya*

First of all, may grace and peace be unto you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I understand that you are the true followers and apostles of Jesus Christ because you are preaching the light of the gospel to reach all over the nations. You are not only preaching the gospel, but also giving literature for evangelism service. I need spiritual books to be strong in my faith and to feed the flock. I really appreciate whatever help you can give me.

*AA, Ethiopia*

I am a newly converted Christian from Roman Catholicism to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I am an interested reader of *Our Firm Foundation* and was interested in some of the books advertised in it. I am hoping to have them. They would be a big help to myself and my family.

*SK, Fiji Islands*

I first greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! May His name be glorified for the good work you are doing in giving the last warning message throughout the world. I want to assure you that the messages you spread through books, cassettes and tracts, are reaching the souls of many. I have witnessed many souls joining the church after the distribution of the New World Order tabloid.

I would like to thank you for the magazine *Our Firm Foundation*. I am an Adventist and have a passion for doing God's work. I will use them to the glory of God.

*EG, South Africa*

I wish to thank all of you for your never-failing love of sending reviving magazines and books to us. We received your parcel some three weeks

ago. Your materials reached us safely and we really thank God for sparing *Our Firm Foundation* and Hope International.

We can't imagine how our spiritual standard would be without Hope International. We would be in complete darkness. We say so because every publication you send us is as a big flame that helps us to search and sweep our soul temples! Indeed, we want to thank our Good Father for sparing your ministry.

May the Goodness of our Lord God be with you all at Hope.

*EK, Zambia*

It gives me the greatest pleasure to write to your organization. I am very proud to be an Adventist. I am a boy of sixteen. I like reading much especially books that would help me grow in the Spirit and that would improve my health.

I need your help to enable me to proclaim the Word of God. This is the main reason for writing to your organization. By giving us books, booklets, and Bibles to give to the people, I believe by the will of God we can open a small branch Sabbath School in my town. I know through this I would be able to proclaim the Word of God.

*SH, Ghana*

I have the pleasure to convey warmest greetings to you while expecting that you are growing even stronger in the Lord.

The purpose of this letter is to express my deepest, heartfelt, and sincere appreciation for the study materials you sent me in June of last year. I have gone through all the books and they have worked in me a tremendous growth in the Lord.

I have greatly enjoyed reading books like *Christ's Object Lessons*, *The Desire of Ages*, and *The Great Controversy*. Please accept my sincere thanks for those study materials and books. I am sharing the message with my friends and church members.

May God bless you most abundantly!

*LO, Kenya*



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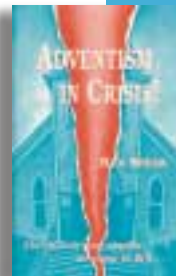


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