

# THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT LAST-DAY EVENTS

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**There is a very shiny lining  
to the last-day clouds amassing on  
humanity's horizon.**

**Y**ears ago, three men waited for a train. At the station they fell into deep discussion and became totally oblivious of the train's arrival. When the whistle sounded, all three made a mad dash to the nearest door. In that part of the world, steps led up to a platform, from which the door could be opened. Two of them rushed fast enough to get onto the steps, but the last one couldn't quite make it, and the train left him behind.

In the deep shadows, a man observed all of this. He noticed the

three men deep in discussion until the whistle sounded and then the mad dash. He noted that the one left behind suddenly burst out laughing and had to find out why. So he came to him and asked, "Sir, I know it's none of my business, but I saw all that just happened. I saw your friends catch the train, and you left behind. Why are you laughing?"

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*\*Norman R. Gulley, Ph.D., has been a pastor, missionary, and college and university professor and dean. He resides in Collegedale, Tennessee.*

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The man chuckled. “Those two men came down here to see me off.”

How important it is to be focused! Some sincere Adventists are caught up in deep discussions about the times of trouble ahead while oblivious to Christ standing among them, waiting to take them through last-day events.

I once surveyed some students studying last-day events at Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, Tennessee. This took place near the beginning of a semester. The results: 49 percent said they were worried about the pre-advent judgment; 56 percent expressed fear about last-day events; in fact, 41 percent said they would rather die than go through last-day events; 37 percent expressed the belief that they would gain entrance to heaven through Christ's sacrifice plus their human works; 50 percent said they were not sure they would be saved if they died today; and yet 88 percent claimed they know Christ as a personal friend.

These are stunning revelations when you realize that these represent a cross-section of Seventh-day Ad-

ventist international youth, studying a variety of majors. They are among the final generation, yet many do not want to be! There's something radically wrong here. And who could say that the results would be any better if their elders were canvassed? These students have received the message about trouble in Scripture, but they have it out of context, and it has brought upon them unnecessary worry.

One student blurted out, “I'd rather die and go to heaven via resurrection than live through last-day events!” So many are afraid of Revelation 13. Yes, the chapter is bad news to many Seventh-day Adventists. They think of the sea beast (or what Adventist historicists have interpreted, along with a number of early reformers, as the Papacy). The Greek for beast is *therion*, or wild beast, and it is blasphemous (vs. 1), and wars against the saints (vs. 7). Then the earth beast (which we have believed points to the U.S.A) is the same kind (Gr. *allos*) of beast, a wild one (*therion*), just like the Papacy. The United States forces the world to

worship the Papacy (vs. 12), deceives the world through miracles (vss. 13, 14), passes a death decree against the saints (vs. 15), and forces everyone to receive a mark (vs. 16). Here's a global confederation led by the Papacy and enforced by America against the saints who are described as commandment keepers in Revelation 12:17 and as worshipers of the Creator in 14:7, suggesting they are Sabbath keepers. Seventh-day Adventists see the final battle over worship, and the Sunday/Sabbath issue as central.

The whole world follows the Papacy (Rev. 13:3), yet people from every nation, tribe, language, and people are Sabbath keepers. Here are two global churches: one that, with the world, worships Satan and the Papacy (vs. 4); and one that worships Christ, who made the heavens and the earth and gave humankind the Sabbath. There's no room here for congregationalism. God's end-time church is as global as the Papacy. Former Jesuit Malachi Martin didn't grasp this fact in his book, *The Keys of This Blood*, in which he says Seventh-day Adventists need to collaborate “in the building of a geopolitical structure” or they will “diminish in numbers

and influence, and finally lose their identity as operative parts in the new world order.”<sup>1</sup>

We have news for him, don't we? And that has everything to do with the good news that is found in the biblical context of Revelation 13. The issue in Revelation 13 is worship—false worship



is forced upon all humanity, but the saints will stand for the truth and worship Christ alone. The call to “worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water” (Rev. 14:7, NKJV) comes from the Sabbath commandment (Ex. 20:11).

### Three General Comments

Before looking at the context of Revelation 13, three general comments are in order:

*Resting in Christ, King of Kings.* Babylon is an appropriate name for this anti-truth conglomerate. They are like those who built the tower of Babel to save themselves apart from Christ. By contrast, Sabbath keepers worship the Lord of the Sabbath, and this means far more than mathematics—far more than keeping the seventh instead of the first day of the week. The Sabbath was given to humankind to show the distinction between the Creator and the creature, a fact that both Satan and end-time enemies of God refuse to admit.

But end-time saints believe it and practice it. They have given up on their efforts to go through final events. They rest solely upon His work. This is the end-time Sabbath test—the world never gives up on its own works; the saints give up on theirs and rest in His work to get them through.

So the distinction between Christ and the saints is crucial to final

events. His responsibility is to get us through this. Our responsibility is to rest in Him in utter trust. That takes away the fear. Anything less is only tower of Babel building, even if it’s done by worried saints wanting to survive the end. Just as Christ brought us into this world as a gift, so He will get us into the next world as a gift. The only difference is we can turn Him down now—or accept Him. To trust Him and not ourselves—that’s the good news about last-day events! Frightened saints are afraid because they want to take personal responsibility for getting through last-day events—a responsibility that belongs to Christ alone.

*Depending on Human Kings.* An overview of the end time of Revelation 13 is given in Revelation 17:12-14: “The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast. They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers” (NIV).

The kings of the world will support the Papacy. They have one purpose: to war against the Lamb of God, Christ in His office as humanity’s only Savior. Here is an utter repudiation of Christ’s substitutionary

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***As we approach them, we cry out, “Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling.” It is this picture of clinging to our substitute Savior that takes the saints through final events, just as Jacob clung to the pre-incarnate Christ during the typical time of Jacob’s trouble.***

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sacrifice. Satan has caused his papal system to replace Calvary with the mass, and the church and human works to replace Christ as the means of salvation. You will find this rejection of Christ’s atonement in spiritualistic and New Age literature. The final battle is against the Lamb. Even in our church some have rejected the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ, and this should raise a warning flag. It is urgent that we grasp the truth that Christ is our Substitute at the cross, today and in last-day events.

The coming crisis is Christ-centered. It’s more important to focus on Christ than on the crisis, for *final events have far more to do with who is coming than with what is coming.* The final confederate union is described as lasting only one hour—a small duration—for the King of Kings will defeat human kings and the whole world that supports the Papacy. And note: Those who follow the Lamb, who cling to His substitutionary sacrifice for them, will be saved.

Final events are Christ-centered and not Christian-centered. As we approach them, we cry out, “Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling.” It is this picture of clinging to our substitute Savior that takes the saints through final events, just as Jacob clung to the pre-incarnate Christ during the typical time of Jacob’s trouble (Genesis 32). Yes, we will go through the antitypical time of Jacob’s trouble, but we will be in the arms of our Savior as Jacob was. That’s the good news about last-day events!

*The Place of the Lamb in Final Events.* The place of the Lamb in final events is the crucial difference between the two sides. The Papacy influences the kings of the world. But end-time saints cling to Calvary and the King of Kings. This is the way they face final events. In its attempt to destroy the saints, the Papacy will use human rulers and the uniting of church and state.

By contrast, the saints depend solely upon Calvary for their salva-

*The saints depend solely upon Calvary for their salvation and Christ for their deliverance. This radically affects the way they look at last-day events. They see the coming crisis in the context of the crucified and conquering Christ, and are saved from all fear of the future. For “perfect love drives out fear.”*

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tion and Christ for their deliverance. This radically affects the way they look at last-day events. They see the coming crisis in the context of the crucified and conquering Christ, and are saved from all fear of the future. For “perfect love drives out fear” (1 John 4:18, NIV). It’s the wicked who depend on human power; the saints depend upon divine power. That’s the difference between the two sides. We have Christ; they choose not to accept Him.

#### **Context of Revelation 13**

Revelation 13 must be studied within three contexts. Its Old Testament source chapter is Daniel 7, its general context is the Book of Revelation, and its immediate context is chapters 12-15.

*Daniel 7 Source Chapter.* Non-Seventh-day Adventist scholars recognize the connection between Daniel 7 and Revelation 13, as seen, for example, in the work of Greg K. Beale of Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary<sup>2</sup> and Alan F. Johnson of

*The Expositor’s Bible Commentary.*<sup>3</sup> Although they arrive at different interpretations from Adventists, it is important that other scholars are connecting the two chapters. So should all Seventh-day Adventists, for this is one way to take the terror out of last-day events.

Daniel 7 clearly calls in question the dominance of the global Papacy in Revelation 13. Daniel 7 is the first mention of the Papacy in Scripture. Three times it is introduced, and immediately the results of the pre-advent judgment are given: the Papacy will be destroyed and God’s saints will be delivered. It is urgent that we realize why Satan has attacked our doctrine of the pre-advent judgment, for it is precisely in this judgment that his global system is condemned. It must be grasped by Adventists that the death decree verdict of Revelation 13:15 comes after the destruction-deliverance verdict of the pre-advent judgment.

Adventists need to look beyond the death decree verdict on earth to

the prior pre-advent verdict in heaven, for the heavenly verdict nullifies the verdict on earth. The heavenly court overrules the courts of the earth, which are bent on causing the whole world to conform to the Papacy and its day of worship. Compare verses from both chapters. Revelation 13:2-4 states, “The dragon [Satan] gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority. . . . The whole world was astonished and followed the beast [Papacy]. Men worshiped the dragon [Satan] because he had given authority to the beast [Papacy], and they also worshiped the beast [Papacy] and asked, ‘Who is like the beast? Who can make war against him?’” (NIV).

The rest of the Book of Revelation answers that question, showing that Christ Himself will make war against the beast. Daniel 7:13 and 14 shows why: “I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He [Christ] was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed” (NIV). So the true Christ will overcome the false christ and his system.

*General Context in Revelation.* Now to the general context of the

Book of Revelation. A throne-room scene precedes each of the seven divisions of the book that reveal troubles to take place on earth. They shout out, “Look up here, and see the Crucified Christ on the throne. He is in charge. He is here as the Son of man. He understands. He went through the great time of trouble for you. He has not forgotten you. He will be with you.” And sometimes the end-time saints are already pictured as being in heaven, so sure is their victory through the coming crisis.

Revelation 16–19 reveals the pre-advent, end-time destruction of the world’s powers and peoples that have combined in war against God’s saints. Plagues and Armageddon will decimate those warring against the saints. These judgments come to implement the pre-advent judgment verdict. Great will be the destruction of the powers of Revelation 13, and glorious will be the deliverance of the saints against whom they battle. Christ will stand up, and great will be the deliverance of His saints.

Revelation 17:12-17 shows that the 10 kings will turn on Babylon and on the false churches that are her daughters and bring them to ruin. This seems to agree with Daniel 7:11, 12, which says the little horn is slain and the other beasts, stripped of their authority, live on for a period of time.

*Immediate Context of Revelation*

13. Now to the immediate context of Revelation, that is chapters 12–15. It must be remembered that troubles for the remnant in Revelation 13 come after the church is first introduced in Revelation 12:1 as wearing a *stephanos*, a crown, or a laurel wreath of victory given to an Olympic winner. The saints are introduced as victors.

Revelation 12 gives an overview of the cosmic controversy and reminds us of two falls of Satan. He was thrown out of heaven (vss. 7, 8), then he was hurled down once more at Calvary (vss. 9-11). These are approximately the central verses of Revelation. It is *this final event* that determines all other end-time events. Satan was defeated at Calvary. When Christ cried out “It is finished” (John 19:30, KJV), Satan was doomed. The decisive battle of the Great Controversy was over.

But Satan is like the fighter who loses a boxing match but still flings his fists after the final bell. This causes pain but doesn’t alter his defeat. The final bell rang at Calvary. Satan flings his fists all he wants in Revelation 13, but Revelation 12 says the church has the crown because the church has the victorious Savior. That’s the good news about last-day events!

John describes this relationship of saints with their Savior, saying, “The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she

might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of” (vs. 14, NIV). Christ put His strong arms of love around His persecuted saints and loved them to the end. Some will die before the close of probation (Rev. 20:4), but nothing can separate them from the love of Christ (Rom. 8:38, 39).

In Revelation 14, the 144,000, or the translated saints, are pictured with the Lamb on Mt. Zion. Zion in Hebrew (*tsiyown*) means “fortress.” Obadiah says of Mt. Zion, in the Old Testament, “on Mount Zion will be deliverance” (vs. 17, NIV). In the New Testament, Mt. Zion is heaven (Heb. 12:22, 23), the place of deliverance to which saints go immediately after the second advent (John 14:1-3). Yet the saints in Revelation 14 are presented as already there. If chapter 12 portrays the translated saints as wearing the victor’s crown, then chapter 14 portrays them as already in heaven as victors. That’s the assurance that surrounds both sides of Revelation 13 with all its trouble!

The 144,000 are described as innumerable according to Revelation 7:9. “Then one of the elders asked me, ‘These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?’ I answered, ‘Sir, you know.’ And he said, ‘These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood

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of the Lamb. Therefore, “they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes”” (Rev. 7:13-17, NIV)

The translated saints, called the 144,000, are only twice mentioned by that name in Revelation, and both times the vision of them is in heaven with the Lamb. They are Christ’s senators and have an eternal mission with Him. What an awesome privilege to be in this group who will be translated—the modern Elijah people.

They sing a new song before the throne that no one else can learn, for they alone have lived during the great time of trouble. *The Great Controversy* says it’s a song of their

experience.<sup>4</sup> They will sing of the great time of trouble during the millennium in heaven and beyond, wherever Christ and they journey to tell their story throughout the inhabited worlds. What are they singing about? The answer is in Revelation 15.

The context of Revelation 15 is in heaven just before the seven last plagues come upon the wicked. Again God’s end-time saints are pictured as in heaven before the great time of trouble, so sure is their victory. Verse 2 says they “had been victorious over the beast and his image” (NIV).

Look at the focus of the song in Revelation 15:3, 4. “Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you [looking beyond the false global worship of Revelation 13 to the post-millennial time when every

*Clearly, the Christ who led His people through the Red Sea will lead His people through final events. In both, Christ's part is to get them safely through. Their part is to trust Him completely. No wonder Moses said, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still."*

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knee will bow], for your righteous acts have been revealed" (NIV).

The mighty acts of God in the great time of trouble fill the song! How awesome His destruction of the wicked. How wondrous His deliverance of the saints (Dan. 12:1). Not one word about trouble gets into the song. And this they sing during the millennium and forever as they follow Christ in eternity (Rev. 14:1-4). *If it's worth singing about so long after it happened, it must be worth going through!* That's the good news about last-day events!

What do you suppose the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace would have told their grandchildren? Was it about the flames heated seven times hotter or about the presence of the pre-incarnate Christ in there with them (Dan. 3:8-25)?

We must see beyond the coming crisis to Christ. What's the song of the 144,000 called? It's "the song of

Moses, and the song of the Lamb" (Rev. 15:3, KJV). The passage through last-day events is typified by the passage through the Red Sea. Isaiah said, "He who brought them through the sea, with the shepherd of his flock" (Isa. 63:11, NIV). Moses called Him the "angel of God" (Ex. 14:19, NIV). Luke said, "An angel appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush 'I am the God of your father'" (Acts 7:30, 32, NIV). Daniel said when Michael the archangel stands up, there will be the worst time of trouble ever, but at that time the saints will be delivered (Dan. 12:1). And Christ promises to be with us until the end of the world (Matt. 28:20).

Clearly, the Christ who led His people through the Red Sea will lead His people through final events. In both, Christ's part is to get them safely through. Their part is to trust Him completely. No wonder Moses

said, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still" (Ex. 14:13, 14, NIV).

This is the deeper meaning of the Sabbath in final events. It's resting in Christ and not being afraid of the whole world against us. There is rest in true worship. Like Jehoshaphat, surrounded by enemy nations, end-time saints will feel helpless. In 2 Chronicles 20:12 the king cried out, "O our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you" (NIV). That's the focus—on Christ, not on the crisis. There is no more need of a Mediator in heaven. The saints are sealed (Rev. 7:1-3). But they need a Mediator with them on earth. Christ will cross the Red Sea of final events with us even as He did with ancient Israel. That's the good news about final events! Or to change the analogy, Christ will be in the fiery furnace with them (Dan. 3:25-26).

In utter contrast, the third angel's message says that the wicked have no rest, for they worship the beast and His image. They have no rest because the Spirit is withdrawn from the world (not from God's people). Satan has full control of them. So in the great time of trouble, it's the

world that has no rest—not the saints! What's the use of controlling the world when they have no rest? They do not have Christ with them, but the saints do. That's the decisive difference in the end time. The Lamb makes all the difference! The wicked, and not the saints, will have the greatest time of trouble.

#### **How to Be Among the 144,000**

Have you ever wondered why the vision of the victorious 144,000 comes before the three angels' messages? The messages come to tell us how to be in the group. They say much more, but I want to focus on the experience they speak about—an experience that will lead to the experience that the 144,000 will have in the great time of trouble. The first angel's message says, Look to Christ. Reverence the One who is the Creator of heaven and Earth—especially in the judgment time. Do not look to yourself and be afraid of your name coming up in judgment, but look to Him, and by beholding Him become ever more like Him (2 Cor. 3:18). By beholding, become like Jesus.

Then the second message: Babylon is fallen. Babylon means self-dependence. Remember the tower of Babel (Genesis 11). This kind of self-dependence crumbles as we gaze on Jesus.

Then the third message about the image to the beast, the union of

church and state. What is this experientially? It means to try no longer to be religious (church) through our own secular (state) power. Put the three together. Behold Jesus and become like Him, so that you no longer depend upon self; even to the extent that you no longer try to be religious through your own secular power.

This is righteousness by faith. This is the total dependence upon Christ necessary to get us through final events. This is the essence of the end-time Sabbath test—resting in Him alone! As Luke 15:5 says that the Shepherd puts the sheep on His shoulders and carries it all the way home. That's the only way to go through final events.

### Armageddon

Armageddon is written large over Revelation 14-19. It clearly demonstrates that the greatest time of trouble is for the wicked and not for the saints. Consider two examples. Both are second-advent scenes. In Revelation 14:14 we read, "I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one 'like a son of man' with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand" (NIV). The focus is on the humanity of Jesus. The crown (*stephanos*) signifies Christ's victory over Satan in His life and death. The One who defeated Satan and His followers already at Calvary comes

vaulting through the heavens just as the Papacy and its fiends move to implement the death decree.

Revelation 14:6-13 presents the message of the three angels; verses 14-20, the mission of three more angels. The destruction of the wicked is effected by destroying angels, as in the Passover night of Israel's exodus. Jesus comes for the saints. He comes as one who has been through end-time troubles for us.

Revelation 19:14-21 is the other scene of Christ's second advent. Now Christ comes on a white horse, "With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns" (vss. 11, 12, NIV). The focus is on the divinity of Christ. He comes as "King of kings and Lord of lords" (vs. 16, NIV). These crowns are diadems—worn only by royalty, worn because of inherent power and authority, not through winning a race as a human, but worn because Christ is God. Whereas He comes as Son of man to deliver the saints in Revelation 14, He comes as Son of God to destroy their enemies in Revelation 19.

Note how the two beasts of Revelation 13—the Papacy and the U.S.A. as Apostate Protestantism—who confederate to destroy the saints—are singled out. Revelation 19:19-21 says, "Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make

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war against the rider on the horse and his army. But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse" (NIV).

Here is the outcome of the persecution of Revelation 13. The two beasts, the Papacy and Apostate Protestantism in the U.S.A., are overcome by Christ. *Armageddon needs to be understood in its context. It issues out of Calvary with its double verdict—deliverance to the saints and destruction to their enemies. This is precisely what is looked at during the pre-advent judgment.* The saints are those who have accepted what Christ did for them in their place when He was judged at Calvary for them, when He who knew no sin be-

came sin for them. Those who accepted His work for them will be delivered. Those who have not accepted His work for them will be destroyed.

The pre-advent judgment is not so much looking at what works we have done as it is looking at our acceptance or non-acceptance of Christ's work when He was judged in our place at Calvary. It's the acceptance of Calvary that saves the saints and takes them through final events.

The enemy and the world have not accepted Calvary and will not make it through the end time, even if they seem for a while to triumph. Armageddon issues out of two verdicts, the verdict of Calvary which is worked out in the verdict of the pre-advent judgment. So Armageddon has Calvary and the pre-advent judgment as well as Christ's intercession before it. The implementation of the pre-advent judgment verdict is the final implementation of Calvary during the pre-advent time.

The rejection of the Lamb is global

*In the great time of trouble, Christ's voice is heard saying to the saints, "Lo, I am with you. Be not afraid. I am acquainted with all your sorrows; I have borne your griefs. You are not warring against untried enemies. I have fought the battle in your behalf, and in My name you are more than conquerors."*

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in the end time. Only a remnant accept Him. Christ came in the first advent to a rebel world. He was despised and rejected by humankind, a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering (Isaiah 53). Just before His final events He looked at a clinging vine and said "That's how I feel"—"I am the vine" (John 15:1). That's the only way to go through final events—clinging to Christ. Jesus went through the greatest time of trouble that any human being will ever endure. His last-day events were infinitely worse than ours will ever be!

In Gethsemane, "The sins of men weighed heavily upon Christ, and the sense of God's wrath against sin was crushing out His life."<sup>5</sup> "Terrible was the temptation to let the human race bear the consequences of its own guilt."<sup>6</sup> Jesus "fell prostrate, overcome by the horror of a great darkness. The humanity of the Son of God trembled in that trying hour."<sup>7</sup> "Three times has humanity shrunk from the last, crowning sacrifice. But now the his-

tory of the human race comes up before the world's Redeemer. He sees that the transgressors of the law, if left to themselves, must perish. He sees the helplessness of man. He sees the power of sin. The woes and lamentations of a doomed world rise before Him. He beholds its impending fate, and His decision is made. He will save man at any cost to Himself."<sup>8</sup>

### Calvary

The scene is changed to Calvary. "The guilt of every descendant of Adam was pressing upon His heart. The wrath of God against sin, the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation. . . . Satan with his fierce temptations wrung the heart of Jesus. The Saviour could not see through the portals of the tomb. Hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave a conqueror. . . . He feared that sin was so offensive to God that Their separation was to be eternal."<sup>9</sup>

He cried out, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46, NIV). He plunged into God-forsakenness so we will never have to. He promises, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (Heb. 13:5, NIV). Even under such terrible circumstances, Christ didn't forsake us at Calvary in His final events, nor will He forsake us in our final events.

As our sin-bearer, He felt God-forsaken in His great time of trouble. Though Christ had promised to rise from the dead, build homes for the saints in heaven, and return in the Second Advent, now He could not see through the portals of the tomb. Hope did not present to Him a safe passage through death. He plunged into the abyss and perished. That's the ultimate meaning of Christ's substitutionary sacrifice for us. That's the ultimate of what it means to be the Lamb. And if He went that far for us, and we cling to Him, He will never let us slip out of His hands in final events.

He says to us today: "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32, NIV). That's

the good news about last-day events.

In the great time of trouble, Christ's voice is heard saying to the saints, "Lo, I am with you. Be not afraid. I am acquainted with all your sorrows; I have borne your griefs. You are not warring against untried enemies. I have fought the battle in your behalf, and in My name you are more than conquerors." "The precious Saviour will send help just when we need it. The way to Heaven is consecrated by his footprints."<sup>10</sup> That's the good news about last-day events. □

### REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> Malachi Martin, *The Keys of This Blood* (New York: Simon Schuster, 1990), pp. 285-292.

<sup>2</sup> Gregory K. Beale, *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St. John* (New York: University Press of America, 1984), 247.

<sup>3</sup> Alan F. Johnson, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Frank E. Gaebelin, ed., *Revelation*, vol. 12, p. 525.

<sup>4</sup> Page 649.

<sup>5</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 687.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 688.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 692.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 692, 693.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 753.

<sup>10</sup> *The Great Controversy*, p. 632.





# DID THE APOSTLE PAUL ABOLISH THE SABBATH?

**Careful study of Paul’s writings  
indicates no departure from the rest of Scripture’s  
seventh-day Sabbath.**

**C**olossians 2:14-17—the Apostle Paul’s only direct reference to the seventh-day Sabbath—has long been cited as evidence that Paul abolished the observance of the biblical Sabbath. In view of the nature of the fourth precept of the Decalogue and the weight of evidence drawn from the entire Bible, Seventh-day Adventists reject this position.

In recent years, however, some ministers who have left the Adventist ranks for various reasons now argue that the Sabbath command functioned as a ceremonial type to fore-

shadow the spiritual rest we may now have in Jesus Christ. (Evidently we have no more need of physical ceasing from labor!) Consequently, the observance of the Sabbath is no longer obligatory. The textual support for their argument is essentially Colossians 2:14-17 and Hebrews 4:1-11.

## **The Origin of the Bible Sabbath**

The Godhead worked together in

*\*The late Frank B. Holbrook was an Associate Director of the Biblical Research Institute at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.*

the creation of our earth. The New Testament observes that the Son served as the active agent to bring all things into existence. With regard to the origin of the Sabbath, the evidence is plain. God the Son set aside the seventh day of creation to be the Sabbath for the human family by His example and fiat. “He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made” (Gen. 2:2, 3, NKJV).<sup>1</sup>

It is evident that the Godhead intended the Sabbath to be both a universal and a permanent institution for humanity. Jesus endorsed this view many centuries later when He told the caviling Pharisees: “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27, 28). Obviously, the Sabbath was not a type or shadow of ceremonial instruction, because sin did not exist in the earth at Creation. The Sabbath as a day of rest focused on Creation and the Author of Creation. The fourth precept of the Decalogue underscores this fact: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. . . . For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it” (Ex. 20:8, 11).

## **New Dimensions of the Bible Sabbath**

Satan’s rebellion in heaven and his seduction of our first parents on earth led to hurtful consequences. When Adam and Eve sinned, God intervened with a plan designed to save sinful humanity—a gracious plan laid in eternity to meet such an emergency. Hence, it is necessary to recognize that both Testaments of the Bible teach at heart the same gospel, namely, salvation from sin through faith in God-provided redemption, even if most who offered sacrifices had little inkling that this redemption would ultimately come by way of a heaven-sent Sacrifice. The writer to the Hebrews declares: “Indeed the gospel was preached to us [Christians] as well as to them [Israelites]” (Heb. 4:2).

God intended Israel to learn about the gospel through the sacrificial rites and other rituals of the sanctuary system, just as Abraham learned it earlier through its simpler mode. Jesus said, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad” (John 8:56). Because he knew about substitutionary atonement through sacrifice, the patriarch would have known exactly what John the Baptist meant when he declared to a later generation of Abraham’s descendants: “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

The changes brought about by

the entrance of sin caused the observance of the Sabbath to take on certain new dimensions not needed in a sinless creation. The patriarchal record is too brief to take note of these, but we find them in Israel's early history.

*A Day of Assembly/Worship.* ““There are six days when you may work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, a day of sacred assembly”” (Lev. 23:3, NIV). The later institution of the synagogue developed this practice more fully.

*A Sign of Salvation.* ““Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you . . . that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you”” (Ex. 31:13). Many centuries later, God reminded the Jews in Babylonian captivity of what He had done for their ancestors: ““Moreover I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me, that they might know that I am the Lord who sanctifies them”” (Eze. 20:12).

“To sanctify” in the above contexts means more than simply to separate Israel from the pagan nations. It meant that God would separate them from their sins—would forgive and transform them by His grace. God's objective for His people was clear: ““You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy”” (Lev. 19:2).

Lexicographers define the participle used in the above texts to mean, “God, keeping His people

pure and sacred.”<sup>2</sup> To establish the observance of the Sabbath as a sign of God's sanctifying power emerges as a natural step from the Sabbath as a memorial of God's creative power, since it refers to God's re-creative grace. As the Apostle Paul describes it: “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Cor. 5:17). Ellen White has phrased it in this manner: “The Sabbath given to the world as the sign of God as the Creator is also the sign of Him as the Sanctifier. The power that created all things is the power that re-creates the soul in His own likeness. To those who keep holy the Sabbath day it is the sign of sanctification. True sanctification is harmony with God, oneness with Him in character.”<sup>3</sup> “The Sabbath is a sign of creative and redeeming power.”<sup>4</sup>

True, worshiping Israelites who participated in the gospel rituals with understanding and observed the Sabbath from their heart were assured of God's saving grace. By faith in God's promises they found spiritual peace. For them, the Sabbath was not a foreshadowing of a future spiritual rest, but a sign of a present reality, a present experience in grace. The observance of the Sabbath did not drop away as an unnecessary relic of the past. Rather, their love for God for saving them bound them more fully to God through this sign of divine grace.

*At Sinai, God personally proclaimed the Ten Commandments and arranged their sequence. The first four precepts dealt with humanity's duty to God; the last six with humanity's duty to fellow beings. God is referred to as Yahweh in three of the precepts. But it is in the fourth—the Sabbath command—that He also identifies Himself as the Creator. In this manner, the fourth precept functions as the seal to the document, certifying the authority behind the whole.*

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*A Sign of Creatorship and Authority.* The first biblical passage to identify the Sabbath as a sign of God's creative power is Exodus 31:12-17. It is in the same passage that defines it as a sign of His sanctifying power (vs. 13). ““The children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath. . . It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed”” (vss. 16, 17). By observing the Sabbath, the believing Israelite publicly acknowledged the full authority of his Creator. ““Hallow My Sabbaths, and they will be a sign between Me and you, that you may know that I am the Lord your God”” (Eze. 20:20).

*Centered in the Ten Commandments.* The content of the Ten Commandments was apparently known orally from the time of Adam's fall and onward. This is implied in the

Book of Genesis by references to specific sins and the Apostle Paul's sweeping statement: “By the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20), and sin truly abounded in the Antediluvian world (Gen. 6:5, 11).

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*The arrangement of the Israelite sanctuary that combined the moral law of the Ten Commandments with the rituals into one system did not thereby turn these precepts into temporary rites, nor did the obligation to obey the Ten Commandments cease when the system ceased. The system illustrated the great themes of the Godhead's plan of salvation and offered spiritual rest experientially right then in Old Testament times.*

moral command to maintain a clear distinction between the Creator and His human family.

*Reminder of Israel's Former Slavery.* In the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses repeats and explains the instructions God gave the nation at Sinai. When presenting the Sabbath precept, he links it to their former bondage in Egypt. “Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day” (Deut. 5:15).

#### **The Sabbath and the Sanctuary System**

Moses deposited the tablets of the Ten Commandments in a golden ark that stood in the most holy place of the sanctuary. Israel regarded the ark with the Ten Commandments, its

mercy seat lid, and attached cherubim as a symbol of God's heavenly throne. From this perspective, it is easy to see why the ark with its contents of the moral law was the hub to the wheel of Israel's ritual services. The Decalogue (including the Sabbath precept) served as the foundation of the Creator's throne, defining His will and His standard of righteousness. On the other hand, the gospel rituals taught Israel the divine way to find forgiveness and pardon when they realized their sinfulness and transgression against God's will. In this manner, the moral law, that is, the Decalogue and the gospel rituals, were joined together into one plan of salvation.

When the typical rituals of the gospel came to their end as type met antitype, the Ten Commandments—the foundation of God's rule and an expression of His character—naturally continued to func-

tion. God's will for humankind doesn't change. This fact can be seen in the central vision of the Book of Revelation (11:19–14:20).

The scene is introduced in this manner: “Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail” (Rev. 11:19). This heavenly scene indicates that the final events will focus on God's fulfillment of His covenant with His people and their fulfillment of the covenant they swore in return, represented by the Ten Commandments (the contents of the ark), and that the following references in the scene to God's commandments are dealing with the Ten Commandments (Rev. 12:17; 14:12) and thus include the Sabbath precept.

It is only natural that with the coalescing of the Ten Commandments with the ritual portrayals of the gospel into one system, that the Sabbath would take on some aspects of the rituals. For example, in addition to the daily morning and evening sacrifices, the priests offered two lambs (Num. 28:9). Probably because the Sabbath became a day of assembly and worship, it was sometimes listed with the ritual days of assembly. The following are examples:

The Levites served “on the Sabbaths and on the New Moons and on the set feasts” (1 Chron. 23:31).

- Services were conducted on the Sabbaths, on the New Moons, and on the set feasts of the Lord our God” (2 Chron. 2:4).

- Offerings were made for “the Sabbaths, the New Moons, and the three appointed yearly feasts” (2 Chron. 8:13).

- Offerings were made for “the Sabbaths and the New Moons and the set feasts” (2 Chron. 31:3).

- “The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies. Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates” (Isa. 1:13, 14).

- “Her feast days, Her New Moons, Her Sabbaths—All her appointed feasts” (Hosea 2:11).

- “When will the New Moon be past, That we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, That we may trade wheat?” (Amos 8:5).

- Finances were arranged to provide the sacrifices for “the Sabbaths, the New Moons, and the set feasts” (Neh. 10:33).

- The prince provides burnt offerings, grain offerings, and drink offerings “at the feasts, the New Moons, the Sabbaths” (Eze. 45:17).

The arrangement of the Israelite sanctuary that combined the moral law of the Ten Commandments with the rituals into one system did not thereby turn these precepts into temporary rites, nor did the obligation to obey the Ten Commandments cease when the system ceased.

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Nevertheless, it is important to note that both the moral law and the ritual rites also had a forward-looking perspective. The moral law convicted the sinner, while the gospel rituals, faithfully entered into, assured him or her of forgiveness. This faith stood in the place of faith in the coming Redeemer typologically represented in the rites, "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins" (Heb. 10:4).

According to the Apostle Paul, "the law" (the whole Jewish system) had a definite historical purpose. It functioned as a "tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Gal. 3:24). Naturally, this historical function ceased with the advent of Christ—the Antitype of the gospel rituals. The temple and rituals fell away as Christ's atoning death and subsequent priesthood in the heavenly sanctuary took their places. But the Ten Commandments never ceased to be the foundation of God's rule and authority in the earth, expressing His will and being a transcript of His character.

### The Sabbath and the Colossian Heresy

The Apostle Paul's letter to the Colossians (written during his first

imprisonment in Rome) did not address the more common problem of grace versus works that troubled the churches of Galatia and Rome. The apostle himself had not worked in the area of Colossae. Apparently, Ephras, one of the apostle's helpers, had been instrumental in developing a group of believers in this location. He had now come to Rome to request Paul's help in dealing with a heresy troubling his church.

The "Colossian Heresy" has been described as "an early and simple form of Gnosticism."<sup>5</sup> The expression (derived from the Greek word for "knowledge," *gnosis*) alludes to an erroneous system of belief that early invaded the Christian Church. Salvation could be obtained only through a mystical knowledge of certain secret beliefs. Up until the discovery of the Nag Hammadi or Chenoboskion "library" of Gnostic writings in Egypt in 1945, most of the information about these beliefs came from the writings of the post-apostolic church fathers. It is now known that many systems or sects of Gnostic thought functioned in the second and third centuries. All were syncretistic in nature—combinations of ideas drawn from many different sources, such as Greek, Jewish, Parsic, philosophies, religions, theosophies, mysteries, etc.<sup>6</sup>

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even the elements of Christianity it adopted.

"Christ is not the Savior who saves His people from their sins, and who gives them unceasingly, through union with Himself, deliverance from the power of sin. He is only one of the *aeons* [semi-divine beings mediating between God and man], though the highest of them [some said the lowest]. He is an originated being, not God. Thus Gnosticism has no place either for the creation of the universe by God, or for the incarnation and work of Christ. Once the essential evil of matter is granted, the possibility of Christ's having assumed a true human nature is excluded, simply for the reason that the world and human nature are originally and necessarily evil. Thus, as already seen, a form of Docetism is being espoused."<sup>7</sup>

With our present understanding of its nature, we can see the begin-

nings of this strange perversion growing in the apostolic age. For example, near the close of his life, the Apostle Paul warned his successor, "O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge [*gnosis*]<sup>8</sup>—by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith" (1 Tim. 6:20, 21).

A few years later, the Apostle John warned the churches not to receive the Gnostic doctrine of docetism. "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits. . . . Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God" (1 John 4:1-3).

A third, more detailed reference to this heresy is given in Colossians. It consisted of a Hellenistic "philosophy . . . according to the basic princi-

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ples of the world, and not according to Christ” (2:8). This philosophy involved a worship of angels and other astral powers (vss. 15, 18, 19), although such worship was forbidden by the Scriptures. In addition, it adopted a very strict code of asceticism (vss. 20-23). The severity of these practices reflected the beginnings of the notion that the material body was evil and needed to be mortified and punished. “These tendencies were identical with the more fully developed Gnosticism of later days.”<sup>8</sup>

In Colossae, the false teachers also added to their mix the Israelite sanctuary system. The apostle mentions circumcision and ritual eating and drinking, summarizing the worship system in an admonition: “Let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths” (vss. 16, 17). “The Gnostics would take any doctrine that they found valuable, without any regard for its origin or for

the context from which it was taken.”

In this case, the typical shadow system of worship was out of date, “obsolete” (Heb. 8:13). The Savior had already atoned for human sin and had ascended to heaven years before. When the apostle stated that the Israelite sanctuary system was “a shadow [*skia*] of things to come, but the substance [*soma*] is of Christ,” he seems to be describing to these Gentile Christians God's original intention for the sanctuary system—namely to prepare His people to recognize the function of the coming Savior. But their heresy misused the system and degraded the Christ.

This latter fact may be clearly inferred by the apostle's strong polemic to uphold Christ's supremacy, “that in all things He may have the preeminence” (Col. 1:18). Note the following passages:

“He [the Father] has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the

Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins” (vss. 13, 14).

“He [Christ] is the image of the invisible God. . . . For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist” (vss.15-17).

“For in Him [Christ] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power” (Col. 2:9, 10).

“Holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God” (2:19).

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God” (3:1).

In light of this background, we can see that Paul is referring to the misuse of the outdated sanctuary system. As we have noted earlier, the moral law of the Ten Commandments functioned as the driving force behind the gospel rituals. The precepts and principles of the Decalogue convicted sinners of their sins; the sacrificial rites showed them how to find forgiveness and change of heart through faith in God and

helped them feel sure they had received it. Thus, the Decalogue specifying the moral precepts of God's will and the typical rituals demonstrating the plan of salvation in type were combined together in one sanctuary system.

The Sabbath precept always belonged to the Decalogue as its seal. It had an important place in a system of typological shadows, though it was not itself shadowy, but the thing itself. Always it drew the believer back to Creation. After humanity's fall, it took on the nuance of a sign not only of faith in the Creator, but also as a sign of God as the believer's Sanctifier or Savior.

Because it became one of Israel's special days for assembly, it was only natural that the Sabbath came to be listed with the ritual assemblies and to have extra offerings attached to its observance (see the list of Old Testament passages cited above). We may infer from these listings that the expression (festival, new moon, Sabbath—or the reverse) formed a common “shorthand” to summarize Israel's worship system.

Thus, in a few words, the apostle could refer to the Jewish cultus: “Let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ” (Col. 2:16, 17). The apostle is not attempting to classify all elements of the sanctuary

worship as shadows. The Ten Commandments were a moral code, the adaptation of God's will for the moral guidance of the human family. They were never intended to be a code of temporary shadows. Paul's argument is that the sanctuary system—as a system—was “a shadow of things to come.”

Moreover, in the light of the growing heresy, we can see that in Colossians 2:16, 17, Paul is referring to the Gnostic misuse of the outdated sanctuary system. It is not the true observance of the Sabbath, but the Gnostic misuse of it, that the true Christian needs to be concerned about. Let no one judge you about *not* observing the Gnostic Sabbath.

When the sanctuary shadow system ended and the gospel ritual types met their antitype in Christ, then the whole system ceased from its historic function. The moral law of the Ten Commandments re-

mained, however, to define the Creator's will in the New Covenant. Thus, the seventh-day Sabbath continues to be obligatory. For the Christian believer—as a spiritual Israelite—it too is a double sign of God's creative power/authority and saving grace. □

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<sup>1</sup> Biblical citations are from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup> Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Boston/New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1907), p. 873.

<sup>3</sup> *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 350.

<sup>4</sup> *Education*, p. 250.

<sup>5</sup> Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1979), vol. 1, pp. 733-735.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* (1982), vol. 2, pp. 484-490.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 488.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 487.

<sup>9</sup> Justo L. Gonzalez. *A History of Christian Thought* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970), vol. 1, p. 129.



# CREATION CARE AND THE CHRISTIAN

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## Scripture urges a clear and consistent commitment to the protection of our environment.

**F**rom the very earliest description of God's creation of the Earth, Scripture urges the utmost care for our planet home. In the first of this two-part series, the importance of the stewardship of our resources was traced in the earlier books of the Old Testament.

A theology of creation is also conspicuous in the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. In fact, "The most characteristic feature of [Israel's] understanding of reality lay . . . in the fact that she believed man to stand in a quite specific, highly dynamic, ex-

istential relationship with his environment."<sup>1</sup> The different systems of life in the created world are thoroughly integrated in the wisdom literature—the natural order, the social order, and the heavenly. Qualities such as prudence, justice, and conscientiousness are all grounded in a creational perspective. Discerning these creation "orders" is considered

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*\*Jo Ann Davidson, Ph.D., teaches systematic theology at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Berrien Springs, Michigan.*

*Isaiah instructs that if God's covenant is broken and the responsibilities of stewardship neglected, deterioration and pollution of the earth will result: "The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt; therefore the inhabitants of the earth dwindled, and few people are left."*

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crucial. Behaviors that do not conform to these creational orders can ruin human lives and severely harm the created world. There is remarkable correspondence between the human and natural orders. For example: "Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, Which, having no captain, Overseer or ruler, Provides her supplies in the summer, *And* gathers her food in the harvest. How long will you slumber, O sluggard?" (Prov. 6:6-9, NKJV). "The righteous know the needs of their animals, but the mercy of the wicked is cruel" (12:10, NRSV). Hans-Jurgen Hermisson states the principle well: "Ancient wisdom starts from the conviction that the regularities within the human and the historical-social realm are not in principle different from the ones within the realm of non-human phenomena."<sup>2</sup>

Ecclesiastes also reminds of the

close connection between human and animal life: "I said in my heart with regard to human beings that God is testing them to show that they are but animals. For the fate of humans and the fate of animals is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and humans have no advantage over the animals; for all is vanity. All go to one place; all are from the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knows whether the human spirit goes upward and the spirit of animals goes downward to the earth?" (Eccl. 3:18-21, NRSV).

Within the prophetic materials, Isaiah instructs that if God's covenant is broken and the responsibilities of stewardship neglected, deterioration and pollution of the earth will result: "The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting cov-

enant. Therefore a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt; therefore the inhabitants of the earth dwindled, and few people are left" (Isa. 24:5, 6, NRSV).

Jeremiah concurs, and highlights how Israel's sins have affected the earth: "Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts: I will now refine and test them, for what else can I do with my sinful people? Their tongue is a deadly arrow; it speaks deceit through the mouth. They all speak friendly words to their neighbors, but inwardly are planning to lay an ambush. Shall I not punish them for these things? says the Lord; and shall I not bring retribution on a nation such as this? Take up weeping and wailing for the mountains, and a lamentation for the pastures of the wilderness, because they are laid waste so that no one passes through, and the lowing of cattle is not heard; both the birds of the air and the animals have fled and are gone" (Jer. 9:7-10, NRSV).

Hear God lamenting the destruction of His created world from sin. Jeremiah understands God's extensive involvement within the natural world: "It is he who made the earth by his power, who established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding stretched out the heavens" (Jer. 10:12, NRSV).

Hosea exhorts Israel that one of the dire consequences of their gross sinfulness will be severe harm to the

ecosystems: "Listen to the word of the Lord, O sons of Israel, For the Lord has a case against the inhabitants of the land, Because there is no faithfulness or kindness Or knowledge of God in the land. There is swearing, deception, murder, stealing and adultery. They employ violence, so that bloodshed follows bloodshed. Therefore the land mourns, And everyone who lives in it languishes Along with the beasts of the field and the birds of the sky, And also the fish of the sea disappear" (Hosea 4:1-4, NASB).

Joel portrays the devastation of nature linked with coming Day of the Lord: "Alas for the day! For the day of the Lord is near, And it will come as destruction from the Almighty. Has not food been cut off before our eyes, Gladness and joy from the house of our God? The seeds shrivel under their clods; The storehouses are desolate, The barns are torn down, For the grain is dried up. How the beasts groan! The herds of cattle wander aimlessly Because there is no pasture for them; Even the flocks of sheep suffer. To You, O Lord, I cry; For fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness And the flame has burned up all the trees of the field. Even the beasts of the field pant for You; For the water brooks are dried up And fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness" (Joel 1:15-20, NASB).

At the end of the Book of Joel,



God promises to restore all the damage done by the locusts and to restore abundant harvests. Judgment will be lifted, the curse driven back, and divine blessings again released. It is striking that the rejoicing over God's returning blessing mentions the natural world: "Be not afraid, O land; be glad and rejoice. Surely the Lord has done great things. Be not afraid, O wild animals, for the open pastures are becoming green. The trees are bearing their fruit; the fig tree and the vine yield their riches. Be glad, O people of Zion, rejoice in the Lord your God" (2:21-23, NIV).

The last verse of the Book of Jonah is striking. In dialogue with Jonah, God patiently explains the reasons for His mercy toward the city of Nineveh to his petulant prophet: "Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know the difference between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?" (Jonah 4:11, NASB). The book ends with God's intriguing reminder of His profound mercy that includes not only the wicked Ninevites, but also the animals.

God's statement to Jonah should not be surprising. We are often so confined within our busy routines that we forget how important the natural world is to the Creator. The concluding question in the Book of Jonah pointedly includes the animal

kingdom in God's tender regard. God instructed Jonah that by having mercy on Nineveh even the animals could be spared.

The psalmist already expressed the same sentiment: "Your righteousness is like the great mountains; . . . O Lord, You preserve man and beast" (Ps. 36:6, NKJV). "The Lord is good to all, And His tender mercies are over all His works" (145:9, NKJV).

Christians might be slow in linking their theology with ecology, but in God's thinking there is a close connection between redemption and creation. Christians rejoice in the doctrine of salvation, but they often need a more comprehensive theology of life!

The prophet Zechariah is another who reiterates the pervasive biblical theme of human sin destroying the earth: "Thus has the Lord of hosts said, "Dispense true justice and practice kindness and compassion each to his brother; and do not oppress the widow or the orphan, the stranger or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another." But they refused to pay attention and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears from hearing. They made their hearts like flint so that they could not hear the law and the words which the Lord of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets; therefore great wrath

*God's statement to Jonah should not be surprising. We are often so confined within our busy routines that we forget how important the natural world is to the Creator. The concluding question in the Book of Jonah pointedly includes the animal kingdom in God's tender regard. God instructed Jonah that by having mercy on Nineveh even the animals could be spared.*

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came from the Lord of hosts. And just as He called and they would not listen, so they called and I would not listen," says the Lord of hosts; "but I scattered them with a storm wind among all the nations whom they have not known. Thus the land is desolated behind them so that no one went back and forth, for they made the pleasant land desolate" (Zech. 7:9-14, NASB).

"Open your doors, O Lebanon, that fire may devour your cedars. Wail, O cypress, for the cedar has fallen, because the mighty trees are ruined. Wail, O oaks of Bashan, For the thick forest has come down. There is the sound of wailing shepherds! For their glory is in ruins. There is the sound of roaring lions! For the pride of the Jordan is in ruins" (Zech. 11:1-3, NKJV).

Again God laments the broken ecosystems of this earth. Repeatedly He instructs through many biblical writers that His concern includes all of the created order.

Strikingly, He also promises that ultimately the original perfection of creation will be restored: "I will make a covenant for them With the beasts of the field, with the birds of the air, And with the creeping things of the ground. Bow and sword of battle I will shatter from the earth, To make them lie down safely" (Hosea 2:18, NKJV).

Within the promises of the final removal of sin and the restoration of Eden perfection, the animal kingdom is pointedly included. The prophet Isaiah waxes eloquent as he describes the righteous reign of Christ re-establishing justice and righteousness on the earth: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, The leopard shall lie down with the young goat, The calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the

*Paul has a profound theology of life: “For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” Paul’s theology soars within and is shaped by his inclusive vision of all things under the Lordship of Christ, moving toward the final renewal when God will be all in all.*

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cobra’s hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper’s den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord As the waters cover the sea” (Isa. 11:6-9, NKJV).

#### New Testament

This same “theology of life” is also found in the New Testament, which again includes reference to God’s care for His creation. Jesus’ own appreciation for animals is demonstrated repeatedly in His teachings. He stresses that even the lowliest of creatures are loved by God: “Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God” (Luke 12:6, NKJV). This echoes Psalm 84, in which sparrows are welcomed nesting in God’s sanctuary!

Jesus stresses the divine concern for earth’s smaller creatures: “Look

at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them” (Matt. 6:26, NKJV). He also compares His care for Jerusalem with a mother hen’s concern for her chicks (24:37). And the Architect of two lavish Old Testament sanctuaries marvels at the astonishing beauty of the flowers He created: “Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these” (Matt. 6:28, 29, NASB).

Because of His incarnation, the human body is no longer only warped and sinful. Human flesh is once again exalted. Moreover, Jesus restores health to crippled limbs and damaged bodies as a “preview” of the perfect world He promises where sin, sickness, and death will be removed.

The Apostle Paul strikingly links

Christ’s resurrection to the environmental renewal of this planet: “I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope” (Rom. 8:18-20, NKJV). As Ben Witherington sensitively notes: “The resurrection of Christ, the destiny of believers, and the destiny of the earth are inexorably linked together.”<sup>3</sup> Jesus is not only the Savior of individual people, nor only the God of the historical people of Israel, He is also the Maker of Heaven and Earth, the gracious and powerful Creator and Restorer of the entire created order.

Paul has a profound theology of life: “For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Col. 1:16, 17, NIV). Paul’s theology soars within and is shaped by his inclusive vision of all things under the Lordship of Christ, moving toward the final renewal when God will be all in all.

He declares that the created world reveals the very nature of the

Godhead: “Ever since the creation of the world his [God’s] eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made” (Rom. 1:20, NRSV).

Paul represents the intricate intertwinning of all life, arguing that the entire creation has been affected by human sin, and is enduring the resulting suffering, reflecting Old Testament sentiments. He writes poignantly: “The creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now” (Rom. 8:21, 22, NASB).

Paul does not envision a redemption consisting of the removal of elect humans from the lower earthy regions to higher spiritual realms, as in Gnostic systems circulating at his time, but rather by Christ healing the earth itself. One does not find the negative Gnostic denial of the value of creation.

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul identifies Christ fully and explicitly with the Creator of all things, even the invisible powers of creation. Christ is also identified as the One in whom “all things hold together” (Col. 1:17, NIV). The power of Christ created everything and holds them in His providence (echoing Psalm 104).

In the final book of Scripture, the entire world is dramatically encompassed with divine judgment. In Revelation 7:1, four angels are pictured: “After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, so that no wind would blow *on the earth or on the sea or on any tree*” (Rev. 7:1, NASB, italics supplied). These four were joined by another angel having the seal of God, with the command: “Do not harm *the earth or the sea or the trees* until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads” (vs. 3, NASB, italics supplied).

After the seventh trumpet sounds in Revelation 11, the 24 elders fall on their faces and worship God as they cry out against those who have wreaked havoc on the created world: “We give You thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who are and who were, because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign. And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name . . . , *and to destroy those who destroy the earth*” (11:17, 18, NASB, italics supplied).

The Apocalypse concludes with the resplendent restoration of this world that the Old Testament prophets promised earlier, reminding

again that redemption involves the renewal of God’s original creation. The material world will participate in redemption. Salvation is never described as an escape from the earth, but rather, a reclamation of the earth! God’s salvation is earth-affirming! None of God’s creation is irrelevant. Throughout Scripture we are never allowed to forget the profound value that God places on all life.

This surely suggests that authentic Christian faith must include ecological concern. Since God is the creator and sustainer of this world, and we are created in God’s image and to be His image-bearers on the earth, certainly this must include loving concern for this world as manifested by the Creator. Any negative interference with His creation would be an audacious presumption.

As we have seen, biblical writers have forewarned some of the serious implications involved. And indeed, what they described is what has actually happened. Polluted air and contaminated water are among many currently grave ecological problems. How tragic that Christians have been delinquent in treasuring God’s creation as He does. We must not neglect creation care even though we expect the soon coming of Christ.

Pioneering ecological theologian Joseph Sittler insists: “When we turn the attention of the church to a definition of the Christian relationship

*Secular materialists believe that the world is unfolding in an endless process. Pantheists believe God is in eternal emanation with this world. Atheists think the world evolved by chance out of matter. New Agers worship the earth as divine. Buddhists and Christian Scientists do not believe the world is real. By contrast, biblical Christians believe God created this world with lavish care and declared it “very good.”*

with the natural world, we are not stepping away from grave and proper theological ideas; we are stepping right into the middle of them. There is a deeply rooted, genuinely Christian motivation for attention to God’s creation, despite the fact that many church people consider ecology to be a secular concern. ‘What does environmental preservation have to do with Jesus Christ and His church?’ they ask. They could not be more shallow or more wrong.”<sup>4</sup>

Secular materialists believe that the world is unfolding in an endless process. Pantheists believe God is in eternal emanation with this world. Atheists think the world evolved by chance out of matter. New Agers worship the earth as divine. Buddhists and Christian Scientists do not believe the world is real. By contrast, biblical Christians believe God created this world with lavish care and declared it “very good” (Gen. 1:31, KJV). As one hymn writer in-

sists: “This is My Father’s world.” Scientists are realizing more and more how intricately tuned this world is for life.

Bible writers also insist that God is no distant or absent landlord. His hand is still seen in the storms, the thunder, and the rain (Ps. 77:17, 18). He causes the wind and the darkness (Amos 4:13). God is active in and through all of creation, “for in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28, NKJV). In the Gospels, when Jesus walked on earth, He continued to demonstrate His Lordship over nature:

His first miracle changed water into wine for a wedding feast (John 2).

He walked on water (Matt. 14:25-27).

The stormy sea knew His voice and obeyed His command (Mark. 4:35-41).

His command immediately withered the fig tree (Matt. 21:18, 19).

*Perhaps an increased appreciation for life might help lay the foundation for linking ecology to theology. Our care of the earth would be sensitized if we deepen our appreciation for it, reflecting the loving relationship God exhibits toward all created life. Rather than wondering where God's creation fits into our lives, we would better ask: "How can our lives fit into God's purposes?"*

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Fish obeyed Him (Matt. 17:24-27; Luke 5:1-11; cf. Jonah 1:17; 2:10).

Disease was healed by His authority, including the dreaded leprosy (Luke 17:11-17).

Death could not remain in His presence (Luke 7:16; John 11).

Paul Santmire goes so far as to say of Jesus, that He "can be thought of as an ecological figure as well as an eschatological figure."<sup>5</sup>

Although disobedient human beings resist Him, "the Lord God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land" (Jonah 1:9, NASB) has a tender regard for His erring children, "as well as many animals" (4:11, NASB). The mighty Lord of history is the Lord of all life. He is active on our planet and promises to bring redemption to all life. The extensive data of both the Old and New Testaments encourage us—if they do not indubitably require us—to develop an ecological reading of biblical faith. Christians must not pit history against nature. The biblical

doctrine of life has obvious ecological implications for the church. There is more to good stewardship than returning tithes.

#### **What Can Be Done?**

Perhaps an increased appreciation for life might help lay the foundation for linking ecology to theology. Our care of the earth would be sensitized if we deepen our appreciation for it, reflecting the loving relationship God exhibits toward all created life. Rather than wondering where God's creation fits into our lives, we would better ask: "How can our lives fit into God's purposes?"

Christians should learn to value God's love of matter. This would help us become conscientious in recycling everything possible: glass, cans, plastic, batteries, newspapers, phone books, packing foam, plus using white paper on both sides. Many communities now have set up recycling centers. It takes extra time to sort and store materials at home

and then take them to a recycling center. But concern for our fast-depleting natural resources and quality of air could be important motivators. As Christians do this, they will be praising the Creator by caring for His creation.

Moreover, families could replenish the soil by composting. Burying fruit and vegetable peelings restores nutrients back to the soil. There are many other issues of water conservation that could be addressed. For example, turn off the water when brushing your teeth. Wet the toothbrush, and then turn off the faucet until needing to rinse. It has been calculated that one gallon of water could thus be saved each brushing. Keep a container near faucets to collect running water when changing temperatures (from hot to cold, or vice versa). Use that collected water for plants.

Christians could become more appreciative of the miracle of food itself! This would help sensitize us to the issue of wasting it. It is not easy to be motivated to be frugal with the earth's abundant treasures in a land of plenty. However, when Jesus fed the 5,000 and later the 4,000, He instructed the disciples to "Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost" (John 6:12, NKJV). Jesus, who could provide a miracle meal for thousands out of one small lunch, teaches us the value of food and the privilege of eating by urging

that nothing be wasted.

Diet is also related to ecological concerns. The vegetarian diet should be revisited for it is critically related to ecological issues. It is not hard to find statistics regarding the wastefulness of a meat diet. There is the wasteful "funnel effect" of many pounds of grain fed to a single steer. The same amount of grain could be used to feed far more people.

A few years ago, it was thought that animal protein was of paramount importance for optimal health. Today what we know of human physiology yields irrefutable evidence that the optimum diet for human beings does not include the flesh of dead animals. In fact, the ingestion of animal flesh puts an enormous strain on the human body. Furthermore, cattle are vegetarians. They get their protein from plants. By eating dead animal flesh, one is getting protein second-hand. The huge amount of water used to grow fodder for animals destined for slaughter is also well documented. The same amount of water could serve a much larger community of people. Some studies even show that not only is our water supply being slowly depleted on this basis, but also our deep underground aquifers are being polluted by the seepage from immense amounts of cow manure resulting from present methods of animal husbandry. These are but a few of the serious ecological issues

related to the meat industry, let alone the frightful cruelty to animals involved. Stephen Webb is correct: “As long as it is more acceptable to say that we love meat than it is to say that we love animals, our views on animals will continue to be deeply distorted.”<sup>6</sup>

In a time when many Seventh-day Adventists are turning away from a vegetarian diet, perhaps we need to revisit this matter in the light of ecological concerns. We already are aware of Ellen White’s advanced counsel that meat-eating brings disease. The damaging results of eating flesh foods: “Meat eating deranges the system, beclouds the intellect, and blunts the moral sensibilities.”<sup>7</sup> “We are composed of what we eat, and eating much flesh will diminish intellectual activity. Students would accomplish much more in their studies if they never tasted meat. When the animal part of the human agent is strengthened by meat eating, the intellectual powers diminish proportionately.”<sup>8</sup>

Importantly for Christians, Ellen White links meat eating to spirituality: “A religious life can be more successfully gained and maintained if meat is discarded, for this diet stimulates into intense activity lustful propensities, and enfeebles the moral and spiritual nature.”<sup>9</sup> “Eating the flesh of dead animals has an injurious effect upon spirituality. When meat is made the staple article

of food, the higher faculties are overborne by the lower passions. These things are an offense to God, and are the cause of a decline in spiritual life.”<sup>10</sup> “Whatever we do in the line of eating and drinking should be done with the special purpose of nourishing the body, that we may serve God to His name’s glory. The whole body is the property of God, and we must give strict attention to our physical well-being, for the religious life is closely related to physical habits and practices.”<sup>11</sup> “The highest interests of the being are imperiled by the indulgence of appetites unsanctioned by Heaven.”<sup>12</sup> “The moral evils of a flesh diet are not less marked than are the physical ills. Flesh food is injurious to health, and whatever affects the body has a corresponding effect on the mind and the soul.”<sup>13</sup>

Ellen White is no longer alone in connecting meat-eating with spirituality. Philosopher Stephen Webb refers to this issue through the biblical record of the life of Daniel, in his book *On God and Dogs*: “The Book of Daniel, for example, tells the story of how Daniel and his friends refused to eat the impure food of Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king. Instead, they ate only vegetables, and ‘at the end of ten days it was observed that they appeared better and fatter than all the young men who had been eating the royal rations’ (Daniel 1:15). It is tempting at this point to argue that even the Bible

*A meatless diet allows humans to live in peace with God’s creation even before the second coming of Jesus. We know from Scripture that at Christ’s return, the diet for both human beings and animals in Eden restored will again be vegetarian, as it was in the first Eden. One day, all killing will cease and people and animals will stop doing harm to each other.*

understands that eating less meat is better for one’s physical as well as spiritual health.”<sup>14</sup>

Adventists have been aware of these advanced principles for a century. And we have known that the meatless diet is part of the wholistic doctrine of life that the Bible teaches. But perhaps we haven’t paid due attention to the crucial ecological issues involved with eating meat. We should reconsider these ecological issues. Even worse is the extreme cruelty to animals involved in their slaughter.

Ellen White addressed this issue long ago: “Think of the cruelty to animals that meat eating involves, and its effect on those who inflict and those who behold it. How it destroys the tenderness with which we should regard these creatures of God!”<sup>15</sup>

The intelligence displayed by many dumb animals approaches so closely to human intelligence that it is a mystery. The animals see and

hear and love and fear and suffer. They use their organs far more faithfully than many human beings use theirs. They manifest sympathy and tenderness toward their companions in suffering. Many animals show an affection for those who have charge of them, far superior to the affection shown by some of the human race. They form attachments for man which are not broken without great suffering to them.”<sup>16</sup>

“What man with a human heart, who has ever cared for domestic animals, could look into their eyes, so full of confidence and affection, and willingly give them over to the butcher’s knife? How could he devour their flesh as a sweet morsel?”<sup>17</sup>

A meatless diet allows humans to live in peace with God’s creation even before the second coming of Jesus. We know from Scripture that at Christ’s return, the diet for both human beings and animals in Eden restored will again be vegetarian, as it was in the first Eden. One day, all

killing will cease and people and animals will stop doing harm to each other (Isa. 11:7-9).

As we await this glorious future, we can begin to live by the compassionate patterns of God's governance and care for all of His creation. Moreover, since what we eat matters, and affects us intellectually, ethically, spiritually, economically, and ecologically, Seventh-day Adventists could be at the forefront of ecological concerns with our long-standing counsel on meat-eating alone. In the process, we will be offering praise to God for His glorious creation by how we live and eat, in a better and more honest relationship with the created world—finally linking our theology with ecology as the Creator has been suggesting all along—and, as He also has tried to teach us throughout Scripture, how to love the world as He does. □

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*This article concludes a two-part series.*

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Gerhard Pfandl

During my recent travels in Africa, I learned that Herry Mhando, a successful Adventist evangelist from Tanzania who has baptized tens of thousands, has left the Seventh-day Adventist Church and started his own Adventist Pentecost Church in which he emphasizes the power of healing.

For several decades, the Christian world has been in the grip of a signs and wonders craze. People are looking for an experience, for a manifestation of the presence of God in their lives. Millions of Christians eagerly desire to receive one of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit such as speaking in tongues, physical healing, or prophecy. Thousands flock to healing services all over the world. On television, people can be seen standing in line waiting for the evangelist to touch them. And when he does, they fall over like tenpins and catchers behind them lay them out on the floor like fence poles.

Jesus warned us in Matthew 24:24 in regard to false christs and

**SIGNS AND WONDERS**

prophets. And Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, "The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders" (2 Thess. 2:9, NKJV).

Ellen White predicted, "Before the final visitation of God's judgments upon the earth, there will be, among the people of the Lord, such a revival of primitive godliness as has not been witnessed since apostolic times. . . . The enemy of souls desires to hinder this work; and before the time for such a movement shall come, he will endeavor to prevent it, by introducing a counterfeit. In those churches which he can bring under his deceptive power, he will make it appear that God's special blessing is poured out; there will be manifest what is thought to be great religious interest. . . . Multitudes will exult that God is working marvelously for them, when the work is that of another spirit. Under a religious guise, Satan will seek to extend his influence over the Christian world."<sup>1</sup>

**Speaking in Tongues**

That the tongues at Pentecost were real languages is shown in Acts 2:5 and 6. Modern tongue-speaking, called *glossolalia*, is not the same as the biblical gift of languages. Tongues-speakers today do not speak in real languages, but in some form of ecstatic speech that they call a "heavenly language." About 20 percent of today's Christians belong to a Pentecostal or charismatic church, and if one counts only committed Christians, the percentage is even higher. Nevertheless, in spite of all the manifestations of ecstatic speech today, nowhere does the Bible teach that the gift of tongues is anything other than human languages.

First Corinthians 14, which is often cited as evidence for tongues as ecstatic speech, describes a misuse of

the real gift of languages. Instead of using the languages for evangelism, the Corinthians used it to show off in church, where they claimed that no one could understand them except God, unless they had an interpreter. A principle of biblical interpretation is that an obscure text is explained by a clear text. Hence, the tongues in 1 Corinthians 14 need be explained by the clear passage in Acts 2. Both chapters use the same Greek word *glossa* for tongues, and there is no indication in the New Testament that God gave two completely different gifts, both called *glossa*.

Ellen G. White called the modern tongues "gibberish." "Some of these persons have exercises which they call gifts and say that the Lord has placed them in the church. They

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"Paul's comment [in 1 Corinthians 14:2 ] is not suggesting that tongues should be used as a 'prayer language'; he was using irony, pointing out the futility of speaking in tongues without an interpreter, because only God would know if anything was said. Spiritual gifts were never intended to be used for God's benefit, or for the benefit of the gifted individual. Peter made that clear in 1 Peter 4:10: 'As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another'" (John F. MacArthur, Jr.).

have an unmeaning gibberish which they call the unknown tongue, which is unknown not only by man but by the Lord and all heaven. Such gifts are manufactured by men and women, aided by the great deceiver.”<sup>2</sup>

### Healing

Every week, millions of viewers worldwide watch television preachers, many of whom are faith healers. With its “faith formula” for health, wealth and prosperity, the Faith Movement has taken many Christian churches by storm. Kenneth Copeland and Benny Hinn are prominent representatives of the Faith Movement, which teaches that the human mind and the tongue contain supernatural power. Psalm 33:9 says, “He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast” (NKJV). On the basis of this text, the Faith Movement teaches that when persons speak, expressing faith in divine laws, their positive thoughts and positive verbal expressions allegedly produce a “divine force” that will heal, produce wealth, and bring success.

Most of these so-called healings cannot be verified. Some years ago, a medical doctor who tested the claims of faith healers wrote, “Search the literature, as I have, and you will find no documented cures by healers of gallstone, heart disease, cancer, or any other serious organic disease. Certainly, you’ll find patients tem-

porarily relieved of their upset stomachs, their chest pains, their breathing problems; and you will find healers, and believers, who will interpret this interruption of symptoms as evidence that the disease is cured. But when you track the patient down and find out what happened later, you always find the ‘cure’ to have been purely symptomatic and transient. The underlying disease remains.”<sup>3</sup>

Though this may be true in many cases, I do not dispute that some genuine healings take place. The question is: From which power does the healing come? Ellen White predicted, “God’s Word declares that Satan will work miracles. He will make people sick, and then will suddenly remove from them his satanic power. They will then be regarded as healed.”<sup>4</sup> This does not mean that every healing must be from Satan, but we must be aware of possible counterfeit miracles.

### Prophecy

Once upon a time, Seventh-day Adventists were seen as a cult because we claimed to have a prophet in our church. Today, Pentecostal and charismatic churches have a number of prophets. Evangelical theologians have worked out a whole theology to justify the existence of these modern prophets. Wayne Grudem, who teaches at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School,

believes that Scripture is verbally inspired. In regard to modern prophets, he says: “Prophecy today is merely human words reporting what God has brought to mind, while the prophecies that were written down in the Old Testament were men speaking God’s words to report what God had brought to mind.”<sup>5</sup> This, of course, is valid only if one believes in verbal inspiration. As Seventh-day Adventists who believe in thought inspiration, we cannot make this distinction.

### Evaluation

In evaluating what is happening in many charismatic and also in some Adventist churches today, we need to remember the following:

Though the Bible clearly affirms that “‘In the last days,’ God says, ‘I will pour out my Spirit on all people’” (Acts 2:17, NIV), it also emphatically states, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1, NKJV).

Jesus warned of false prophets: “‘Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits’” (Matt. 7:15, 16, NKJV).

Miracles are not necessarily a proof of God’s power: “‘Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your

name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’” And then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!”” (Matt. 7:22, 23, NKJV).

Signs and wonders may be supernatural, but this does not mean they must be from God. “‘False christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect’” (Matt. 24:24, NKJV).

Ellen White indicated that we cannot rely on miracles: “The man who makes the working of miracles the test of his faith will find that Satan can, through a species of deceptions, perform wonders that will appear to be genuine miracles.”<sup>6</sup>

As Seventh-day Adventists, it behooves us to be alert and know what is happening in the world around us. As we see certain events taking place, we can rejoice, for Jesus said: “‘When these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near’” (Luke 21:28, NKJV).

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Roy E. Gane

THE DIFFERENCE  
OF LOVE,  
JOY, AND PEACE

“**B**ut the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law” (Gal. 5:22, 23, NKJV).<sup>1</sup>

After reading Acts 1–2, we would expect the fruit of the Spirit to be power for witness to God. Jesus promised His followers just before He ascended to heaven: “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). On the day of Pentecost, Christ’s gift of the Spirit came with a roaring sound like rushing wind, tongues of fire, and miraculous ability to speak messages from God in unlearned languages (2:2-4). This was partial fulfillment of Joel’s prediction that God’s people would convey revelations from Him (Joel 2:28-32).

Though we cannot see the Spirit, we can discern the influence of His divine presence (John 3:8). In that

sense the Spirit is like “wind” (same word for both in Hebrew and Greek). As wind can be forceful, so can the Spirit. Thus the Spirit impelled and empowered ancient Israelite deliverers to defeat powerful oppressors.

But Elijah learned that God’s presence can also come quietly and gently. When the Lord passed by him, there was a Category 5 tornado force wind that ripped into the mountains and split rocks like an invisible jackhammer. Cowering and attempting to shelter himself from flying debris, Elijah expected God to step out of the wind. But the Lord was not in the wind any more than a freight train is in the rush of air that results from its passing by.

Then the prophet was jolted by a seismic shudder as a violent earthquake grated its way up the Richter scale. But the Lord was not in this phenomenon any more than a brontosaurus was in the shaking caused by its footsteps.

Next Elijah started to sweat from

the blazing heat of a roaring fire. Surely God would be in the fire, as He was in the burning bush that appeared to Moses, the pillar of fire that guided and protected the Israelites at night, and the display of glory that attended His proclamation of the Ten Commandments. But the Lord Himself was not in this fire any more than a rocket is in the fire that follows it.

After the fire there was a “still small voice. So it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice came to him, and said, ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’” (1 Kings 19:12, 13). The implication is that God was in the still small voice, the gentle whisper.

Unlike forces such as wind, earthquakes, and fires, a voice comes from a person and communicates from one mind to another. Such personal communication is so basic to the divine-human relationship that Christ is called the “Word” (John 1). Powerful displays of impersonal forces can play an important role by getting our attention, but we must then keep listening and tune in to a lower decibel level in order to hear what is really important: God’s “still, small voice.”

God’s voice gave Elijah instructions for what he was to do. But there is another dimension of transfer from God’s mind to ours. Not

only do we need directions to guide our actions and thoughts, we also need attitudes in harmony with God’s attitudes. Attitudes are the source of more specific thoughts and of actions. Without God’s attitudes, we cannot do what He asks us to do, even if we want to.

This is where the Holy Spirit comes in. As God’s voice gently transferred a message to Elijah, so the Spirit teaches us. But the Spirit does more: He quietly pours God’s love into the hearts of those who receive Christ by faith. Love is the all-embracing, foundational attitude of God’s eternal relational character and the over-arching principle of His will as conveyed to us in Scripture. Love is the mother of all virtues and never comes without its children. So the “fruit of the Spirit” is not only love, but also “joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal. 5:22, 23).

We receive the Holy Spirit from Christ, where He is now. After Jesus rose from the dead, He breathed on His disciples in order to give them the Holy Spirit so that they could represent Him to the world. But when Christ ascended to heaven and began ministering as High Priest in God’s heavenly temple, He gave the Spirit in much fuller measure.

Now Christ is carrying out the final phase of atonement, which is headquartered in the heavenly

equivalent of the holy of holies. So that is where we need to go by faith to receive the Holy Spirit from Christ. Ellen G. White recognized this and saw that those who do not follow Christ there, as if He were still engaged in an earlier phase of salvation at a throne outside the most holy place, miss out on the gift of the true Spirit: “There [in the holiest part of the heavenly temple] I beheld Jesus, a great High Priest, standing before the Father. On the hem of His garment was a bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate. Those who rose up with Jesus would send up their faith to Him in the holiest, and pray, ‘My Father, give us Thy Spirit.’ Then Jesus would breathe upon them the Holy Ghost. In that breath was light, power, and much love, joy, and peace.”<sup>2</sup>

The difference between the two groups is that those who follow Jesus all the way receive the fruit of the Spirit. Satan can counterfeit light and power, which gives the impression of the Spirit. But Satan would not want to give love, joy, and peace even if he could because he is opposed to these attitudes. If he can get people to believe that they have the Spirit when they really do not, they will fail to recognize their lack and will live in harmony with Satan’s character. Satiated with spiritual junk food, they will die of starvation for real nutrition from heaven. Without love, joy, and peace, they

will also disrupt unity and happiness in the “Christian” community and thereby give God a bad name.

Seventh-day Adventists uniquely believe that Christ is presently carrying out the last stage of atonement in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. So we, of all people, know where to receive the Holy Spirit from Christ, where He is ministering right now. Therefore, we should see an overflowing of love, joy, peace, and the other fruits of the Spirit in our lives, congregations, and organizations. These attitudes, which foster heavenly unity among God’s true people, witness to the truth and presence of Christ like nothing else. They provide the kinds of relational reconciliation for which the world craves, and which prepare people for Christ’s second coming—reconciliation by an end-time equivalent to Elijah.

So what do we actually see in our lives, congregations, and organizations? Do we see warmth or coldness, tenderness or harshness, patience or paranoia, Christlikeness or criticism, true unselfishness or toxic, ungenerous self-promotion at the expense of others? The list of contrasts could go on and on. It is not particularly disturbing to see these words by themselves and savor their rhetorical effect. But when we attach to them names, dates, and faces, especially our own, the picture darkens and we cry out with Isaiah: “So I

said: ‘Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man [or woman] of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips’” (Isa. 6:5).

Yes, the Holy Spirit is active among us, and we praise God for that. But a key effect of the Spirit is to make us thirst for more of Him by convicting us of sin, righteousness, and judgment. Intellectually, we know the wonderful doctrine of where to receive the Spirit from Christ. But this doctrine will make a difference in our lives only as it guides our experience. Knowing the

location of water is crucial, but we die of thirst unless we go there and actually drink.

Let us daily go to the Source and drink deeply of the Spirit through prayer, not only talking to God, but waiting in silence and faith for His presence and influence. He is eager to fill us not only with His kind of light and power, but also with love, joy, and peace!

#### REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> All Bible texts in this article are quoted from the New King James Version.

<sup>2</sup> *Early Writings*, pp. 55, 56.

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Gary B. Swanson

Most anthologies tracing the historical development of the short story as a literary genre contain an engaging tale authored by Frank Stockton, first published in an American magazine in 1882, entitled “The Lady or the Tiger.”

This is an account of a despotic king who administers justice in extreme cases in an amphitheater with an elaborately arranged public spectacle. The accused is placed on a stage facing two doors and must choose to open one of them. Behind one door is a savage tiger; behind the other, a beautiful woman of age and station similar to the accused. If he opens the door hiding the tiger, the beast is primed to tear him apart. If he opens the door hiding the lady, he is immediately married to her, and he is set free. It matters not whether he is already married or in love with someone else. The king likes the idea that the accused is, in a sense, deciding his own guilt or innocence through his own choice.

One day the king discovers that

## TWO DOORS

his daughter and a young courtier have fallen in love. Furious at the young man’s audacity, the king refers the situation to his court of two doors. Nifty arrangement from the king’s perspective: either way, he puts an end to a relationship that he considers most inappropriate.

This particular case is further complicated, however, by the fact that the princess, always seated at the right of her father during these occasions, has been able to use her authority to learn what is behind each door. Furthermore, the young lady who has been chosen to stand behind a door for this event has been selected from the princess’s own retinue. And several times in the past, she has aroused the jealousy of the princess for the supposed mutual attraction between her and the young courtier now on the stage.

The young man, aware only of the princess’s love for him and not of her jealousy, looks quickly and expectantly at the princess. Because all eyes in the breathless audience are

upon him, he is the only one who sees a furtive signal from the princess as to which door to open. He turns and strides confidently toward it.

The concluding lines of “The Lady or the Tiger” doubtless bring a smile for some readers and a frown for others.<sup>1</sup> But in a sense, we all stand in the arena of time and face a choice between only two alternatives.

It’s interesting that people often use old and familiar expressions without any hint of where the sayings have come from. In the English language, it’s a pretty safe bet that the most frequent sources of such expressions are Shakespeare or the King James Version of the Bible.

In his play *As You Like It*, Shakespeare famously depicted the scenario of the role of each of us as participants in some kind of cosmic drama: “All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players.” This conceit at least implies an audience, something that users of this expression often deny.

But Ellen White, too, sometimes describes the narrative of the human experience in theatrical terms. She refers frequently to inhabitants of other worlds as audience to the scenes of history.<sup>2</sup> Her working title for this epic blockbuster was “The Great Controversy.”

And God’s Word describes the importance of choice through

Joshua’s dramatic flourish in confronting the people of Israel—like the young man in “The Lady or the Tiger”—to select one of only two alternatives: “[C]hoose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15, NKJV).

In today’s pluralistic culture, the concept of only two choices is too restrictive—in fact, too intolerant. With regards to choosing what to believe about truth, most of those in contemporary society much prefer to leave that decision up to the individual: What Jack has accepted as truth for him is every bit as valid as what Jill has decided is truth for her.

“The philosophically pluralistic theories hold that objective truth is inaccessible and that meaning resides not in external reality or texts but in the interpreter. . . . Nobody is any longer expected to give an objectively valid reason for whatever hope he or she retains.”<sup>3</sup>

Mega-celebrity actor Johnny Depp expressed this worldview simply and succinctly in a television interview with James Lipton: “In religion you pick and choose the things that work for you.”<sup>4</sup> This is cafeteria-style religion. It is worldview seasoned to taste. On the surface, it sounds so reasonable, so fair and



open-minded. And Johnny Depp is *so cool!*

But once the Bible has been accepted as God's Holy Word, the inspired written expression of His effort to communicate with the human race, there are truly only two choices—two doors from which to choose. “You shall have no other gods before Me” (Ex. 20:3, NKJV).

Even to many Christians, this sounds “so Old Testament.” But the New Testament is every bit as clear: Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6, NKJV). He never claimed to be one of many choices from which we can choose. This issue isn't multiple choice. Instead, it brings a whole new meaning of cosmic proportions to the true-false question.

Elsewhere He says, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18, NKJV).

C. S. Lewis: “A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell.”<sup>5</sup>

Jesus also said: “I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved” (John 10:9, NKJV).

Barclay describes ancient sheep-folds that were large open areas that were walled in with only one entrance. The entrance was open, so

the shepherd lay down and slept across the entrance. The shepherd was, literally, the door.<sup>6</sup>

During the Christian phase of Bob Dylan's creative life, he was very clear on the binary choice that humanity faces: “It may be the devil or it may be the Lord, but you're gonna have to serve somebody.”

There is an essential difference, however, between the two choices that humanity faces and those of the young courtier in “The Lady or the Tiger.” When we stand on the stage and must make our choice, we can look to the Love of our life with the utmost confidence that He has already indicated the correct door to choose.

We make that choice every day—every moment—of our lives. And it isn't mere guesswork.

#### REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> Those who have never read “The Lady or the Tiger”—or who would like to revisit it—may access it online, at their own risk, at <http://www.eastoftheweb.com/short-stories/UBooks/LadyTige.shtml>.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 78, 79, 336; *Prophets and Kings*, p. 148.

<sup>3</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, “Postmodernism: The New Spectre?” in David S. Dockery, ed., *The Challenge of Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1995), p. 41.

<sup>4</sup> *Inside the Actors Studio*, Episode 812, 2002.

<sup>5</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1981), p. 45.

<sup>6</sup> William Barclay, *The Gospel of John*, The Daily Study Bible Series (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), vol. 2, p. 58.