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Last Call for Heaven



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Sabbath School Action Units

Meet the Principal Contributor to This Quarter's Lessons



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Pastor Jones earned his bachelor's degree from the University of the State of New York and studied religion at Pacific Union College. He has worked as a Bible instructor, pastor, and chaplain in several conferences in North America.

Pastor Jones enjoys writing and reading, with a special interest in church history, especially of the Reformation era. He has written a book entitled *The Blessed Hope* and numerous articles for Adventist periodicals. He enjoys listening to classical religious music and plays the clarinet. His wife, Elizabeth, is a nurse and a writer.

Check with your local Adventist Book Center for the companion book to the Sabbath School lessons.

Introduction to the Three Angels' Messages

Last Call for Heaven

God's redeeming love is the central theme of the Bible. In ways that appeal to every faculty of our being and every avenue of our experience, each book of Scripture reveals Christ as our Saviour. Drawing together the accumulated and progressive light of the ages, the book of Revelation points us to Jesus, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. In this final book of Scripture He is exalted above every earthly attraction and power as He ministers for the salvation and enlightenment of humanity and the protection of His redeemed.

The three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-12 bring the themes of the everlasting gospel into keen focus. They give us safe guidance in an age of relativism, doubt, counterfeit gospels, and lying wonders. These angels speak to help us both discern error and appreciate the truth as it is in Jesus.

We shall better understand the content, purpose, and unity of the three angels' messages if we bear in mind their prominent characteristics.

1. These messages are the everlasting gospel, permeated with light, life, and love. Even in their sternest features, their purpose is, not to condemn, but to save us. Rejection, however, invites the judgment of God.

2. They apply with equal relevance to all the world, excluding no person, culture, or condition of humankind.

3. They are highly concentrated, summarizing divine revelation in a celestial shorthand. We can best understand their intent by studying them phrase by phrase in sequence, letting Scripture explain itself. We do not, however, want to lose sight of their organic unity, for they blend into one harmonious appeal to earth's last generation. They contain no chord that clashes with the essential truth that God is love.

4. Finally, we should consider these messages in light of the world conditions they address. Christ and His prophets forecast the unparalleled evil, error, and turmoil of our time. It is no wonder that these messages are distinguished by urgency and depth of concern for the human family in its current plight.

We have every reason to thank God for the all-sufficiency of His answers found in the three angels' messages. They teach us to follow the Lamb wherever He leads.

Angels With a Global Mission



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Rev. 14:1-12; Luke 2:13, 14.

MEMORY TEXT: "Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?" (Hebrews 1:14, NIV).

KEY THOUGHT: The three angels' messages of Revelation 14 are meant for everyone in all parts of the world. Because God desires us to share this message, He will give us the resources to help us do so.

LED BY AN ANGEL. Daniel lived in the lush highlands of western Tanzania. One night a heavenly messenger visited Daniel in his mud-and-pole hut with the following message: "Go to the hospital high on the hill. They have the truth of God, and it will change your life. After you have learned about God's message, you must take it to the Rundi area." After two years of study in a baptismal class at the Seventh-day Adventist Heri Hospital, Daniel moved to the Rundi country, where, as a result of his preaching, there arose a Seventh-day Adventist congregation to proclaim the three angels' messages. (Adapted from Robert H. Pierson, *501 Illustrations*, p. 49.)

Christ promised that His gospel will reach all the world (Matt. 24:14). He has provided for everyone to be saved (1 John 2:2). His final proclamation of truth (Rev. 14:6-12) is designed to reach all humanity with its diverse cultures, political, and social conditions. The three angels' messages take into account every phase of human experience and history. We are to live and teach this truth under the direction of the Holy Spirit and heaven's angels.

A STRICKEN WORLD (Matt. 24:3-14).

How does the Bible describe world conditions during the time of the gospel's final proclamation? Matt. 24:3-14 (compare 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 2 Peter 3:3, 4).

Recall recent news reports. Did they include stories of natural disasters, wars, greed, and unholiness? Have such reports increased over the past few years? The present state of world affairs leaves people confused and demoralized. Because of its shallow concept of salvation and its disregard for God's law, Christendom is largely powerless. In desperation, people have turned to false religions that, appealing to carnal human nature, leave them essentially unchanged. They envision paradise without purity, freedom without accountability, happiness without holiness, and riches without integrity. While society crumbles, governments feed their people with false hopes of a new world order ushered in by human prowess. Sensing the futility of this promise, some take "refuge" in cynicism, despair, crime, or other antisocial behavior.

But God refuses to abandon us to ruin. He "so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16, RSV). He pleads with ardent love, "Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other" (Isa. 45:22, RSV). He does not wish "that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance" (2 Peter 3:9, RSV).

How does God want His people to live in the midst of these turbulent and trying days? Phil. 2:14-16. What is the source of our power to live this way? 1 Peter 1:3-5; Eph. 3:16-20.

God weighs and measures all our trials and offers strength proportionate to our needs. "The Lord will have a people as true as steel, and with a faith as firm as the granite rock. They are to be His witnesses in the world, His instrumentalities to do a special, a glorious work in the day of His preparation." —*Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 594, 595.

Ask God now to strengthen your faith and guide you to a witnessing opportunity this week.

HEAVEN'S HELP (Ps. 91:10-12).

God looks with loving pity upon this suffering world. He sees Satan's cruel devices to deepen our misery. And even though we have often cooperated with the archenemy to our own and others' injury, God does not lightly give us up to our ruinous ways (Hosea 11:8). At Calvary He made full provision to ransom us from the one who is stronger than we.

What resources has God provided to rescue us from sin? How has each of these resources kept you spiritually safe?

Rom. 5:6-8 _____

Rom. 8:14, 15 _____

Eph. 6:11-18 _____

Ps. 91:11, 12 _____

"What an ocean of love is circulating, like a divine atmosphere, around the world!"—*That I May Know Him*, p. 19.

How deep is God's desire for us to receive the gift of His salvation? 1 Tim. 2:3, 4; 2 Peter 3:9.

God is willing to help us. He lovingly strives to awaken in us an awareness of our real condition and desperate need. He moves with might and speed to help us, to save us from our sins, and initiate us into the glorious life of His kingdom. "Every one that will submit to be ransomed, Christ will rescue from the pit of corruption and from the briers of sin. . . . Do not think that *perhaps* God will pardon your transgressions and permit you to come into His presence. God has made the first advance. While you were in rebellion against Him, He went forth to seek you. . . . The soul, bruised and wounded and ready to perish, He encircles with His arms of love and joyfully bears it to the fold of safety."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 188, 189.

Think of times when God mercifully protected you from spiritual disaster. Ponder the effects of His love upon your heart. Ask God to help you make His love more clearly known to a neighbor or work associate this week.

THE MINISTRY OF ANGELS (Heb. 1:7, 14).

Today we will explore the close connection between God's earthly witnesses and the angels of heaven as implied in Revelation 14:6.

How are angels of God described? Heb. 1:7, 14.

To what kind of people are angels especially near? Ps. 34:7. Besides protecting us, what other work do angels do for our benefit? Acts 7:53; Rev. 1:1.

"While some are in the valley of decision, angels are uniting with true, wholehearted servants of Christ to help these needy souls.

"If angels occupied the place of man in the administration of the gospel, there would not be whole regions left in darkness and the shadow of death. The work would have been as it is represented by the angel flying in the midst of heaven proclaiming the everlasting gospel to them that dwell on the earth. But the Lord does nothing without the cooperation of man. . . .

"Angelic agencies, though invisible, are cooperating with visible human agencies, forming a relief association with men. Is there not something stimulating and inspiring in this thought that the human agent stands as the visible instrument to confer the blessings of angelic agencies? . . . Human agencies are the hands of heavenly instrumentalities, for heavenly agencies employ human hands in practical ministry. . . . This is Heaven's way of administering saving power. The knowledge and actions of the heavenly order of workers, united with the knowledge and power which are imparted to human agencies, relieve the oppressed and distressed."—*My Life Today*, pp. 304, 305.

Review the activities of angels in the rapid growth of the early church. Acts 1:10, 11; 10:7, 30; 12:7.

Can you testify to the way God has guided you in special ways as you have worked for others? Why not thank God now that He has provided His angels to work with and through you to win souls? Claim the presence of the angels in your witness this week.

MESSENGERS OF LOVE (Rev. 14:6).

The mission of the church is to spread the gospel to the world. God uses angels to work in close partnership with His church to draw the world to Christ.

What is the identity of the angel in Revelation 14:6?

The Greek word used here for angel means "messenger" as it is sometimes translated in the King James. These messengers can be humans (Mark 1:2; Luke 7:24; 9:52; James 2:25). When a person speaks under divine inspiration, or in faithful harmony with Scripture, the message borne is no less authoritative than if a heavenly angel or God Himself spoke it directly (Matt. 10:40, 41; 1 Thess. 2:13).

"This is a symbolic vision. The angel represents God's saints engaged in the task of proclaiming the everlasting gospel, especially the features mentioned in this verse, at a time when the 'judgment is come' (v. 7). It is, of course, also true that literal angels assist men in the task of proclaiming the gospel, but this is not the predominant idea here."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 827.

Since these angels primarily represent God's people who bear the everlasting gospel to the world, why are they represented as flying in the midst of heaven (Rev. 14:6)?

"The angel's flight 'in the midst of heaven,' and the 'loud voice' with which the warning is uttered, and its promulgation to all 'that dwell on the earth'—'to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people'—give evidence of the rapidity and worldwide extent of the movement."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 355.

"The love of Christ, revealed to us, makes us debtors to all who know Him not. God has given us light, not for ourselves alone, but to shed upon them."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 81.

List some ways or ministries by which the church can carry (or is carrying) the gospel to the world. Also list some ways in which *you* are involved in gospel work.

GOD'S UNIVERSAL LOVE (Eph. 2:11-22).

The three angels clearly set forth God's impartial-but-personal love for "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." The whole world is His parish.

What does the following parable reveal about Christ's view of people from diverse backgrounds? Luke 10:25-37.

Comment on the effect of the cross of Christ concerning relations between different cultures, nationalities, and races. Eph. 2:11-22.

"He who is closely connected with Christ is lifted above the prejudice of color or caste. . . . The divine Author of truth is to be uplifted. Our hearts are to be filled with the faith that works by love and purifies the soul. The work of the good Samaritan is the example that we are to follow."—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 209.

The messages of the three angels enlarge human sympathy, intellect, and experience. These messages are designed to make us reformers and benefactors. Christ has commissioned His church to make faithful disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19, 20). We should expect, then, that the final proclamation of the gospel will direct us to all needed instruction on how to live wholly for God.

"Every feature of the third angel's message is to be proclaimed in all parts of the world. This is a much greater work than many realize. . . .

"This message is a testing message. Received into honest hearts, it will prove an antidote for all the world's sins and sorrows. No conditions of climate, of poverty, of ignorance, or of prejudice can hinder its efficiency, or lessen its adaptability to the needs of mankind."—*The Upward Look*, p. 277. [Often in the Spirit of Prophecy writings and in Seventh-day Adventist terminology, the phrase *third angel's message* is a reference to the threefold message of Revelation 14:6-12 and does not refer exclusively to the words of the third angel alone.]

Does any open or hidden prejudice find room in your life? Are you willing to let God's love lift you above this sin? In what practical ways can we cooperate with Christ in removing prejudices against others from our hearts?

FURTHER STUDY: Ponder the interrelationship between God, human beings, and angels in conveying the message of salvation to a stricken world as you read the following texts: Luke 15:10; John 1:51; 1 Timothy 5:21; 1 Peter 1:9-12; Revelation 22:8, 9.

Read also "Agency of Evil Spirits," in *The Great Controversy*, pp. 511-517; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 143, 240; *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 152-154; *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 79, 231, 236.

"Let me tell you that the Lord will work in this last work in a manner very much out of the common order of things, and in a way that will be contrary to any human planning. There will be those among us who will always want to control the work of God, to dictate even what movements shall be made when the work goes forward under the direction of the angel who joins the third angel in the message to be given to the world. God will use ways and means by which it will be seen that He is taking the reins in His own hands."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 300.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Write one or more ways in which this lesson has strengthened your appreciation of Heaven's interest in the salvation of humankind.
2. How can you cooperate with Heaven's angels in proclaiming the gospel to the world? What changes do you need to make in your life so that you can fully unite with God and His angels in this special work?
3. This lesson has emphasized the intensity and urgency of God's desire to make Himself known to a spiritually dark world. How can you make sure you are a child of light, living in close partnership with God as His witness?

SUMMARY: How deeply God loves us! He sees our world blighted and alienated by sin. Longing to save all people, He sends them a message coupled with a mission for His people. He plans to redeem all who will say Yes to Him. To accomplish our salvation, He mobilizes all the resources of His infinite love and wisdom. He works through men, women, and children to declare and exhibit His love. He supports all willing helpers with angels who are strong and skilled to do His bidding. With overflowing power and grace, God's final message of salvation is to go to all the world. Let us unite with Him in this grand enterprise.



The Man With a Black Book

James H. Zachary

The sun disappeared behind the hills of Central Sulawesi, Indonesia as we hiked up a narrow jungle trail. In the darkness we stumbled over fallen trees, slippery stones, and across logs that bridged rushing streams. The three-hour hike stretched to seven hours before we arrived at the tiny village hidden among jungle spice orchards.

Quickly I fell asleep on my bed of rough boards with no mattress or blankets, and awoke to the sound of children at play.

The local Adventist church elder invited me to his home. Like most of the villagers, the elder lives in a tree house high above the clove orchards. In the days of tribal wars, villagers found safety from enemies by climbing into their tree houses and pulling their ladders up after them.

The elder's wife, with an infant tied to her hip, quickly mounted the 30-foot bamboo ladder to her house. "Come on in," he invited, ascending the ladder. Slowly I climbed the rickety steps, certain that my weight would break the slender bamboo steps that led to their two-room house. Gingerly I sat down in the doorway, enjoying the sights and sounds of the village as he told me a story.

Many years before, a village woman dreamed that a man came into the village carrying a black book. The villagers gathered around the stranger as he spoke. "Friends I have brought with me the Book of the God of heaven. This book tells us about Jesus, who died for our sins, and about the Sabbath of God."

Years passed. Then one day a pastor hiked over the same trail on which I had walked. He carried a Bible and spoke the same words that the woman had heard in her dream years before.

The woman shouted in joy, "Brothers, this man has a message from God for us!" Today almost everyone in the village is a church member. They have carried the gospel of the black Book to 11 neighboring villages.



Thousands of villages still wait for someone to bring the story of Jesus. Will you help?

James H. Zachary is an associate director of the Ministerial Association of the General Conference.

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The Everlasting Gospel



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Rev. 14:6, 7; Rom. 1:16, 17; 5:1, 2; Col. 1:20-23.

MEMORY TEXT: "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (Revelation 14:6).

KEY THOUGHT: The gospel is the good news that Jesus saves us from sin and restores us to fellowship with God. The cross of Jesus is the focal point of that good news.

FROM MIMIC TO MINISTER. William Miller's skepticism regarding religion caused him to entertain his friends by mimicking his grandfather, who was a minister. But one day in May of 1816, he took God's name in vain, and instantly became convinced of his sinfulness. Finally, he testified, "When brought almost to despair, God by His Holy Spirit opened my eyes. I saw Jesus as a friend, and my only help, and the Word of God as the *perfect rule of duty*."—Francis D. Nichol, *The Midnight Cry* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1944), p. 28. Miller then began to devote himself to prayer and Bible study. The gospel changed him from a cursing mimic to the leader of a religious movement that set the stage for the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Miller learned that the gospel reveals God's character of love manifested in the plan of salvation. He also learned that through the gospel, healing waters flow into bitter, barren lives to bring forth the fruit of holiness, happiness, and health. The three angels' messages present the whole gospel in concentrated form.

THE GOSPEL DEFINED (Rom. 1:16, 17).

Romans 1:16, 17 explicitly defines the gospel. Analyze these verses by filling in the blanks below.

The gospel is the power of _____ unto _____.

This power is to _____ who believes.

The gospel reveals the _____ of God.

His righteousness is received by _____.

Persons who have faith live _____ lives.

Although the gospel comes to us in words, those words describe the experience by which we are re-created through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The gospel comes from and leads us to Christ, the living Word (John 1:1-5, 12-14). Our word *gospel* is from the Anglo-Saxon *god-spell*, which conveys the meaning of "good tidings" and "God's story." From the Greek term, we derive the word *evangelism*. The gospel is the good news about God's saving power and mercy for the lost.

How do the following verses describe the gospel?

2 Cor. 9:13—the gospel of _____

Matt. 24:14—the gospel of _____

Eph. 1:13—the gospel of _____

Acts 20:24—the gospel of _____

Rom. 10:15—the gospel of _____

"A great work is to be accomplished in setting before men the saving truths of the gospel. This is the means ordained by God to stem the tide of moral corruption. This is His means of restoring His moral image in man. It is His remedy for universal disorganization. It is the power that draws men together in unity. To present these truths is the work of the third angel's message."—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 11.

What can you do to increase your own knowledge of and interest in the gospel?

THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL (Ex. 34:5-7; Rom. 8:33-39).

What evidence is there of the gospel's everlasting character?

Gen. 22:1-14; Gal. 3:8 _____

Phil. 2:5-11 _____

1 Peter 1:18-20 _____

Rev. 13:8 _____

"[The plan of redemption] was an unfolding of the principles that from eternal ages have been the foundation of God's throne. From the beginning, God and Christ knew of the apostasy of Satan, and of the fall of man through the deceptive power of the apostate. God did not ordain that sin should exist, but He foresaw its existence, and made provision to meet the terrible emergency."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 22.

What does the *everlasting* gospel reveal about God's character? Ex. 34:5-7; Rom. 8:33-39; Heb. 13:8.

The implications of the eternal existence of the gospel are measureless. God plans for us to have an eternally expanding appreciation for His character and purpose (Eph. 3:16-21; 1 Cor. 2:9). He does not offer us a casual acquaintance or a generalized goodwill that overlooks our individual being. Nor does He scatter His bounties with impersonal profusion, requiring us only to gather up the blessings He leaves behind. Everything He does is designed to bring us into the closest and most ennobling union with Himself, an alliance that gives us a name because it bonds us intimately to Him (Isa. 56:5; John 17:21-26; Rom. 8:32). Throughout eternity the redeemed will obtain a constantly broader and higher experience of Christ's righteousness and the matchless wonders of His love (Ps. 36:5-9; 27:4; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 677, 678).

Meditate on God's goodness. Ask Him to give you an enriched fellowship with Christ, through His Holy Spirit. Make use of opportunities that come your way to express God's goodness to others in word and deed.

CALVARY, THE KEYSTONE OF THE GOSPEL (John 12:32).

The foundation of the gospel is Christ's sacrifice on Calvary. It is to this sacrifice and all its transforming power that the first angel's message points.

Why is the cross so important? John 12:32; 1 Peter 1:18, 19.

We cannot exalt the cross of Christ too highly or explore its significance too deeply. It is *the* means of salvation. It is *the* key that unlocks the treasure house of all truth. Sin has so darkened our understanding that only the blood of Christ can cleanse our spiritual and intellectual perceptions and purify us from all sin (1 John 1:7; Col. 1:19-23; Eph. 2:12, 13).

"This is the highest science we can learn—the science of salvation. The cross of Calvary, rightly regarded, is true philosophy, pure and undefiled religion. It is eternal life to all who believe."—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 231.

What the devil meant to be a crude, bloody lynching turned out to be the most exalted exhibition of God's love. "The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. . . . Those who study the Redeemer's wonderful sacrifice grow in grace and knowledge."—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 221.

The Bible presents Christ's cross as an instrument both of death and of life, as the following texts show:

Who died and for whom? 1 Cor. 15:3 _____

Who lives with Christ? Rom. 6:8 _____

What dies and how? Rom. 6:10, 11 _____

For whom and for what do we live? 2 Cor. 5:15-21 _____

Peter and Paul found in the cross great spiritual illumination. It was to them the tree of life, the fountain of pardon, cleansing, and restoration. It was the moral chart and compass of their existence.

How can the cross become the spiritual taproot of my life, as it was for Peter and Paul?

THE GOSPEL AND CHRIST'S SACRIFICE (1 Cor. 1:18).

Christ's sacrifice embraces the whole plan of salvation, revealing to us (1) the great controversy between good and evil and (2) God's perfect solution to the problem of sin. Christ's sacrifice makes it possible for us to be redeemed from sin and reconciled to God.

How did Paul perceive the cross? 1 Cor. 1:18; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4.

What seemed to be the embodiment of weakness and defeat is really the grandest exhibition of strength and victory—the strength and victory of love over hate, of truth over lies, of life over death, of salvation over condemnation. We must always remember that Christ's death on the cross was voluntary (John 10:17, 18) in order that we might be pardoned and reconciled to God (Rom. 5:10). Moreover, He arose from the dead to grant us victory over all sin through His indwelling power (Rom. 8:3, 4). These great gospel facts should command our constant attention. They are not only a doctrine; they are the ground of our hope and the warranty of our future. Calvary explains it all—God's abhorrence of sin, His love for the sinner, and the true worth of our souls.

What benefits can we personally appropriate from the redeeming sacrifice and work of Jesus? Eph. 1:5-7; Heb. 10:9, 10, 14-23.

From pardon to Paradise, the atonement spans the whole range of blessings that come to repentant sinners. And every blessing we receive refers us to Jesus' sacrifice. "We are to have free access to the atoning blood of Christ. This we must regard as the most precious privilege, the greatest blessing, ever granted to sinful man. . . . How deep, how wide and continuous is this stream! To every soul thirsting after holiness there is repose, there is rest, there is the quickening influence of the Holy Spirit, and then the holy, happy, peaceful walk and precious communion with Christ."—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 226.

Why did Christ have to die in order for us to be saved? How does His death affect my life and experience with Him? Pray that the Holy Spirit will illuminate your mind with a growing appreciation of Christ's sacrifice.

THE GOSPEL PROCLAIMED (Col. 1:25-29).

All who are truly converted by Christ will hunger to tell others about Him. Under the inspiration of the Spirit, this will be the foremost purpose of their lives.

What was the chief interest of converts to Christ in Bible times? Col. 1:25-29; Eph. 3:6-11.

"No sooner does one come to Christ than there is born in his heart a desire to make known to others what a precious friend he has found in Jesus. . . . If we are clothed with the righteousness of Christ and are filled with the joy of His indwelling Spirit, we shall not be able to hold our peace. . . . We shall seek to present to . . . [others] the attractions of Christ and the unseen realities of the world to come. There will be an intensity of desire to follow in the path that Jesus trod. There will be an earnest longing that those around us may 'behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.'"—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 78, 79.

Why does God commission human beings to teach others the gospel? Rom. 10:13-15; John 1:6, 7. Is it possible for those who do not hear the gospel taught to be saved? Rom. 2:11-16.

In what manner are we to present Christ and His gospel to others? 1 Thess. 1:5 (compare 2:4-8; 1 John 1:1-4).

"The gospel is to be presented, not as a lifeless theory, but as a living force to change the life. God would have His servants bear testimony to the fact that through His grace men may possess Christlikeness of character, and may rejoice in the assurance of His great love. He would have us bear testimony to the fact that He can not be satisfied until all who will accept salvation are reclaimed, and reinstated to their holy privileges as His sons and daughters."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 99.

What correlation does today's lesson have with the proclamation of the first angel's message? Ask God to give you opportunities to share Christ with someone this week in some way that will benefit their lives.

FURTHER STUDY: Reread at least two of the four accounts of Christ's death on the cross: Matthew 27:24-54; Mark 15:15-41; Luke 23:13-49; John 19:13-37.

Also read *Sons and Daughters of God*, pp. 220-230.

"The gospel is glorious because it is made up of His righteousness. It is Christ unfolded, and Christ is the gospel embodied. Every page of the New Testament Scriptures shines with His light. Every text is a diamond, touched and irradiated by the divine rays.

"We are not to praise the gospel, but praise Christ. We are not to worship the gospel, but the Lord of the gospel."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 907.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How has this lesson made the cross more real to you personally?
2. Relate Paul's idea of being crucified to the world (Gal. 6:14) with being an active witness to the world.
3. What effect does Christ's sacrifice have on our pride, personal ambitions, and attitude toward others, including those who dislike us? How does the cross affect our home life?
4. Why is the understanding of the true gospel so important that Scripture pronounces a strong curse upon those who teach a false gospel? (Gal. 1:6-9).
5. How would you help a person who says, "I have accepted the gospel, but I do not have peace"?

SUMMARY: The everlasting gospel, which is the essential content of the three angels' messages, exalts the sacrifice of Christ and all the benefits that result from His death and resurrection. The Holy Spirit and all the powers of heaven are directed to exalting the cross because at the cross are revealed the love, wisdom, power, and saving grace of God. As we personally accept Christ's sacrifice for us, we shall die to our sins, and our lives will become transformed into His likeness. It is the privilege and desire of all who have been redeemed by Christ to make Him known to others through proclamation and unselfish service.



Olivia's Decision

Adly Campos

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Night after night 11-year-old Olivia sat alone on the front row, absorbed in the Family Life Seminar I was presenting in her church. She seemed mature far beyond her age.

At the end of the first week of meetings, I asked those who wanted to give their lives to Jesus through baptism to come forward. Without hesitation Olivia jumped up and walked to the podium.

Following the meeting, Olivia approached me and said in a quiet, almost pleading voice, "I want to give my heart to Jesus, to be baptized. But I fear my parents. I don't think that they will allow me to be baptized."

Olivia had been reared in a Catholic home. Her uncle, a Seventh-day Adventist, had taken her to Sabbath School and church for a year. Olivia was a decisive girl whose heart had been touched by the Spirit of God.

I offered to visit her parents. When I arrived at Olivia's home, she introduced me to her father, and we sat down to talk. After congratulating him for the decision Olivia had made, I told him that there were very few persons her age who had such a good perception of spiritual things.

Olivia's father felt that she was too young to take such a serious step. "She has never been to a dance, taken a glass of liquor, or smoked a cigarette; she doesn't know what social life is. Therefore, I think she is not ready to make such a decision," he stated.

I shared my personal testimony. "I was baptized at 9 years of age. I had never drunk wine or smoked a cigarette, and my social life has revolved around the church." I explained that I had never regretted not smoking, drinking, or dancing.

For each excuse the father gave, the Lord supplied an answer. Finally, Olivia's father agreed that she could be baptized. The last Sabbath of the meetings Olivia was baptized. Her father witnessed her baptism, and decided to attend church with Olivia. God used a child's faith to bring her father to church.



Adly Campos is an administrative assistant in the Ministerial Association of the General Conference and an evangelist who has been used of God to bring hundreds to a knowledge of His truth.

Fear God



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Rev. 14:7; Ps. 34:7-22; 112:1, 7; 130:4; Heb. 12:28.

MEMORY TEXT: "The Lord confides in those who fear him; he makes his covenant known to them" (Psalm 25:14, NIV).

KEY THOUGHT: Godly fear (love and reverence for God) is the foundation of a healthy religious experience. It opens the way to all the blessings of the gospel and preserves us against evil.

THE FEAR OF THE LORD. David Livingstone had been in Africa for 16 years. But he had never been so afraid before. Surrounded by hostile natives, he was in danger of losing his life. As he contemplated escaping, he read Christ's words in Matthew 28:18-20. His Saviour's command to teach all nations and His promise, "Lo, I am with you always," changed his fear of death into fear of the Lord. His life was spared, and he was enabled to continue his work.

Fearing God as spoken of in Revelation 14:7 means to approach Him with reverence and awe. "It conveys the thought of absolute loyalty to God, of full surrender to His will." —*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 827. Such fear banishes all destructive fears and brings us into peaceful intimacy with God. While such fear teaches us not to trifle with His patience and mercy, it also teaches us to rely on Him for guidance. The first angel's call to approach God with reverence and awe is especially crucial now, when so many people everywhere worship gods of their own making.

THE NEED OF GODLY FEAR (Eccl. 12:13, 14).

John Newton, sea captain, was once a slave dealer who had no regard for God or his fellow humans. But after years of hard living, he himself was captured and sold as a slave. While in captivity he recalled the teachings and prayers of his godly mother and became overwhelmed for the first time by his sins. Then he remembered Christ's merciful sacrifice for sinners, repented, and gave his heart to Jesus. Out of that experience was born his hymn "Amazing Grace." A line in that hymn says, "'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved."

Christ's grace leads us to realize our lost condition and the inevitable result. But when we respond to Christ's love, His grace replaces human fear with godly fear. No longer are we afraid of condemnation, because we are delighted to be relieved of it (Rom. 8:1). Fellowship with Christ imparts to us a new and legitimate sense of security.

What are the characteristics of godly fear?

Ex. 20:20 _____

Lev. 25:17 _____

Deut. 5:29 _____

Prov. 8:13 _____

While at a dinner with some friends, Daniel Webster (1782-1852; American statesman and orator) was noticeably silent. After the table talk subsided, one of the company inquired, "Mr. Webster, what is the greatest idea which you have ever considered?" After a few moments' reflection, Webster replied, "The most important idea which occupies my mind and is ever before me, is that of my personal accountability to God for all my thoughts, words, and actions." This sober idea is embodied in the words of the wise man: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Eccl. 12:13, 14).

Do you see ours as an age lacking in the fear of God? If so, how has that lack affected modern life? What can you do this week to encourage others to fear God?

GODLY FEAR AND CARNAL FEAR DISTINGUISHED**(Prov. 29:25).**

Revelation 14 presents two contrasting types of fear: (1) fear of persecution if God's way is accepted; (2) fear of God, that leads to obedience to His will. In each person's life, one fear will eliminate the other.

What is the effect of fearing people? Prov. 29:25; John 9:18-23; 12:42, 43.

In Matthew 10:28-32, Jesus taught that even if people threaten to harm us because of our faith, we should not fear them more than we reverence God. No one but God has any rightful power over our conscience. And no one has divine sanction to exercise dominion over our faith or religious practice. The Lord stands by His faithful children. Although we should be law-abiding citizens, our loyalty to God has priority. God cautions us not to allow fear of others to shame us out of our faith or restrain us from obedience to Him (Acts 4:19, 20; 5:29; Isa. 51:7-11).

The most grievous kind of earthly fear results from accepting a distorted view of God's character that causes us to be afraid of Him.

What effort did the Lord deplore in the days of Isaiah? Isa. 29:13.

"It is Satan's constant effort to misrepresent the character of God, the nature of sin, and the real issues at stake in the great controversy. His sophistry lessens the obligation of the divine law and gives men license to sin. At the same time he causes them to cherish false conceptions of God so that they regard Him with fear and hate rather than with love. The cruelty inherent in his own character is attributed to the Creator; it is embodied in systems of religion and expressed in modes of worship." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 569.

Were you ever afraid of God, in the sense of dread? Why? How did you overcome that fear? If you have not, how can you do so?

A fellow Christian expresses to you a negative fear of God. How can you help that person understand and develop true godly fear?

THE BLESSINGS OF GODLY FEAR (Jer. 32:38-40).

The everlasting covenant is the basis of the everlasting gospel. God's gift of reverence empowers us to be loyal without being coerced. It also helps to counter the trend toward disrespectful familiarity. A widespread characteristic of modern society is irreverence. Blasphemy, self-worship, and flippancy pertaining to holy things are common. Such irreverence results in the degeneration of all aspects of life. The revival of reverence for God leads to improved quality of life. The Hebrew word is translated in the King James Version as both "reverence" and "fear." (Compare Ps. 33:8 with Ps. 89:7.) "Christ's followers today should guard against the tendency to lose the spirit of reverence and godly fear."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 48.

Identify some of the blessings associated with the fear of God as given in each of the following texts:

Ps. 31:19 _____

Ps. 85:9 _____

Ps. 112:1 _____

Ps. 130:3, 4 _____

Scripture is full of refreshing surprises. What may appear on the surface to be forbidding, we discover to be delightful and attractive. True fear of God is like this. Instead of being cold, stern, and rigorous, it overflows with grace and comfort. Isaiah calls the fear of the Lord a "treasure" (Isa. 33:6) because it keeps the heart for God and makes it receptive to Heaven's choicest blessings (Prov. 22:4; compare Heb. 12:28).

Who lacks the fear of God?

Prov. 1:24, 29, 30 _____

Eccl. 8:13 _____

Mal. 3:5 _____

Do you see the fear of God as a positive experience, to be cultivated in your life? Why do you think the first angel's message begins with a call to fear God?

THE FRUIT OF GODLY FEAR (Mal. 3:16-18).

The first angel's call to fear God is a positive command. But every command of the Lord is a promise. The fruit of obedience is blessed beyond description or calculation. The Lord does not wish us to be in terror of Him. He does want us to be free from the light, flippant attitude toward holy things that blights our age. The fear of the Lord prevents a loss of spirituality. It is also a stimulus to obey God's will as stated in His Word. Godly fear instills in us a healthy self-distrust. It shields us against hasty, overconfident acts that would hurt others and misrepresent Jesus. It gives us strength of character to do what is right in the face of opposition, misunderstanding, and mockery.

Concerning Daniel and his companions, Ellen White wrote, "The fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom, was the foundation of their greatness."—*Messages to Young People*, p. 243.

What are some of the fruits that come to those who fear God?

Ps. 34:7, 9 _____

Ps. 85:9 _____

Mal. 3:16-18 _____

1 John 4:18 _____

What a picture emerges from the study of these texts! Godly fear, instead of being an oppressive burden, is the very means by which God gives us holiness, peace, joy, and deliverance from all carnal fears that enslave and paralyze the soul. "For you who fear [reverence] my name the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings" (Mal. 4:2, RSV). They will hear Him say, "Fear thou not [do not be afraid]; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isa. 41:10).

What implications does today's lesson have on the acceptance or rejection of the three angels' messages?

How can godly fear make you a happier and wiser person?

EXEMPLARS OF GODLY FEAR (Rev. 15:1-4).

Spiritual lessons are often best learned by studying the lives of people who embody the faults or virtues we wish to consider. Today we will examine the character and influence of persons in Scripture who had the fear of God.

Who is the first person mentioned in the Bible as fearing God? Gen. 22:12.

This is significant because Abraham is specially noted as the father of the faithful and is distinguished by his obedience to God (Rom. 4:9-17; Gal. 3:6-9; Gen. 22:16-18; 26:5). Godly fear, faith, and obedience are compatible qualities. When they flourish together in our lives, we enjoy vibrant spiritual health.

Who else exemplified godly fear? How did they express this fear?

Gen. 42:18 _____

Job 1:1, 8 _____

Matt. 26:6-13 _____

Acts 9:31 _____

Rev. 15:1-4 _____

"The opposition which you meet may prove an advantage to you in many respects. It will develop a class of Christian virtues which seldom spring up in the path of prosperity and sunshine. . . . If you fear God, you need not fear anything beside. If you please Him, you will secure everything your soul requires."—*This Day With God*, p. 47.

Identify from the following texts people who did not fear the Lord. What kind of spiritual experience did they have? Ex. 5:2; 9:27-30; 1 Kings 19:1, 2; 21:20-24; Luke 18:1-6; 23:39, 40; Acts 5:1-10; 12:21-23.

What can you say about the relationship between godly fear, a healthy spiritual experience, and obedience?

FURTHER STUDY: Read Joshua 4:23, 24; 1 Samuel 12:24; Psalm 2:11; Proverbs 2:1-5; 2 Corinthians 5:10, 11; 1 Peter 1:13-16.

Also read *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 74.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Write down your thoughts about the following quotation: "Wherefore, my beloved, . . . work out your own salvation with fear and trembling' (Phil. 2:12). Well, then, you say, am I to go around fearing and trembling all the way? Yes, in one sense, but not in another sense. You have the fear of God before you, and you will have a trembling lest you will depart from the counsels of God. There will be that trembling. You will be working out your own salvation all the time with fear and trembling. Does it rest here? No, let us hear how the divine power comes in: 'For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure' (verse 13)."—*This Day With God*, p. 344.

TRUE OR FALSE:

- _____ The fear of God is only for inexperienced Christians.
- _____ To fear God, in the biblical sense, means to live in perpetual dread of damnation.
- _____ To fear God means to love, revere, and obey Him.
- _____ The fear of God will be outgrown by every saved person.
- _____ The call to fear God is Heaven's way of forcing us to obey His will.
- _____ The chief incentive to fearing God is dread of His judgment and wrath.
- _____ The chief incentive to fearing God is the realization of His infinite love and care for us.
- _____ The Scriptures associate the fear of God with having strong confidence in Him.

SUMMARY: The fear of God (love, reverence, and respect for Him) is one of the Bible's major teachings. The fear of God teaches us to love and trust God. It teaches us never to allow any influence or authority to come between us and the Saviour. The fear of God is inspired by a sense of His infinite greatness, holiness, and self-sacrificing love. It helps us to receive the gospel. It puts us on guard against Satan and arms us against every delusion and false doctrine. It keeps the heart attuned to holy influences and gives vigor and steadiness of step as we march toward Zion.



The Epsom Connection

Don McFarlane

A telephone call interrupted my work one afternoon. The caller identified himself as a lorry (taxi) driver from Epsom, a town of 70,000 on the edge of London. "I read a lot of Christian literature because I am trying to find the true church," he explained, outlining his disappointment with churches he had visited. "As a result of my reading, I have come to the conclusion that Saturday, not Sunday, is the Bible Sabbath."

Now such a statement is good news, especially in the British Isles, where fewer than one in 3,200 people is an Adventist, and where secularism has a strong hold. So great has been the decline of Christianity in Britain that many once-fine churches have been converted into warehouses, shops, or community centers.

So in a predominantly secular society, a telephone call from someone telling us he's convinced that Saturday is the Sabbath is not treated lightly!

The caller wanted literature on the Sabbath to present to a house group with whom he was fellowshiping and studying the Bible each week. We were happy to comply with his wishes.

Several weeks later the lorry driver and a friend visited one of our churches. He was thrilled with the Sabbath services, and he invited the pastor to meet with his house group. The pastor has met with the group regularly since then, and is gradually unfolding to them the biblical foundation on which the Seventh-day Adventist Church stands.

With no Adventist church in Epsom, our prayer is that this house group will form the nucleus of a new congregation. The pastor sees signs of the Holy Spirit's working in the lives of members of the group.

Despite antipathy to religion within British society, there are thousands who are searching for the hope that the Advent message brings. We invite you to join us in praying for the work in Epsom and in the British Isles. Let us also ask God to prepare us to share truths with others, whenever the call comes.

Don McFarlane is president of the South England Conference in Britain.

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The Hour of His Judgment



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Rev. 14:7; Ps. 48:9-11; 96:11-13; Isa. 16:5; Dan. 7:9, 10, 13, 14; 2 Cor. 5:10.

MEMORY TEXT: "Vindicate me in your righteousness, O Lord my God" (Psalm 35:24, NIV).

KEY THOUGHT: God's pre-Advent judgment vindicates His truth, His people, and His dealings with both believers and unbelievers.

OCTOBER 23, 1844. Crops lay rotting in the fields. Why harvest them when Christ was returning October 22? But He had not returned. Hiram Edson had believed with all his heart that Christ would return October 22. In order to cope with the discouragement, he and several others met to pray. After the meeting, when he was on his way to encourage other Adventists, he received a vital insight. Instead of Christ leaving the heavenly sanctuary to come to this earth at the end of the 2300 days, He actually began a work in the second apartment of the sanctuary that must be done before He comes again.

Edson and other Adventists became convinced that the key to understanding what happened on October 22, 1844, is a correct understanding of the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation in relation to the earthly-sanctuary services of the ancient Israelites. This week, coinciding with October 22, 1994, we will study the judgment-hour message of the first angel—the message that ushered in a new era for Adventists, the message that Seventh-day Adventists are to proclaim to a dying world.

A VISUAL AID FOR SLAVES (Ex. 25:8).

As slaves in Egypt, the majority of Israelites were ignorant regarding God's plan of salvation. Thus, when He freed them, He found it necessary to construct a visual aid (the earthly sanctuary) that would teach them about this plan. He gave the blueprint to Moses at the same time He gave him the Ten Commandments. (See Exodus 25-30.) Everything about this visual aid taught the Israelites something about God and Christ.

The sanctuary consisted of the courtyard, the Holy Place, and the Most Holy Place. Leviticus 1-7 and 16 describe the services to be conducted in these areas.

What was one of the most important daily sanctuary ceremonies? What did the lamb and the sacrifice symbolize? Lev. 4:27-35; John 1:29; Rev. 5:1-9; 7:14.

In the cases of sin-offerings for the priest or for the entire congregation, the officiating priest sprinkled some of the blood before the veil in the holy place (Lev. 4:6, 17). In the cases of sin-offerings for a ruler or an ordinary person, the blood was sprinkled on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and the officiating priest ate a portion of the animal's flesh (Lev. 4:25, 30; 6:24-30). In all cases the work of the officiating priest symbolized the forgiveness and cleansing of the sinner and the retention of the record of the pardoned sin in the sanctuary.

Through the daily sacrifices, the sinner admitted the authority of the law, confessed guilt, and displayed faith in the Messiah who would take away sins. But while the blood freed the sinner from condemnation, in type, the record of forgiven sin remained. The sins of Israel, thus transferred to the sanctuary, defiled the holy places. The annual Day of Atonement cleansed the holy places from the record of pardoned sin and provided spiritual cleansing for the people. (See Lev. 16:16, 19, 30, 33.)

How does Leviticus 16:7-10, 15-22, describe the Day of Atonement, also known as the cleansing of the sanctuary?

The Day of Atonement cleansing of the sanctuary symbolized the pre-Advent judgment Daniel saw in vision (Dan. 7:9-14; 8:14), the judgment announced by the first angel of Revelation 14. The remainder of this week's lesson teaches us about the Day of Atonement and the event it typified.

CLEANSING TIME (Lev. 16:16, 19, 30, 33).

Cleansing the sanctuary required two goats:

1. *The Lord's goat.* The high priest sprinkled the blood of the Lord's goat on the mercy seat, the cover of the ark containing the Ten Commandments. This action represented the application in the heavenly judgment of the merits of the Messiah's sacrifice for sin. His blood enabled us to be reconciled to Him and to His Father (John 3:16; 1 John 1:7). Next the high priest sprinkled the blood on the altar of incense and the altar of burnt offering. Every day of the year the altar of burnt offering had been defiled with the blood that represented confessed sins. Thus atonement or cleansing was made for the entire sanctuary and the people. (See Lev. 16:33, 34.)

2. *The scapegoat.* A careful study of Leviticus 16 in relation to the rest of Scripture tells us that this goat represents Satan: (a) Because the scapegoat was not slain as a sacrifice, it could not be a means of bringing forgiveness (Heb. 9:22). (b) The sanctuary was cleansed by the blood of the Lord's goat *before* the scapegoat became a part of the actual ritual (Lev. 16:20). (c) Leviticus 16 treats the scapegoat as a personal being, God's opponent. The Lord's goat represents Christ, and the scapegoat represents Satan.—Adapted from Frank Holbrook, "Sanctuary of Salvation," *Ministry*, January 1983, p. 14. The actions of the high priest regarding the scapegoat symbolized the placing of the responsibility for all sin where it rightfully belongs—on Satan.

While the high priest was officiating, what were the people to do? Lev. 16:29-31.

Afflict your souls. This included "soul searching, a review of one's progress in holy living, a seeking of God, confession of sin, making amends for neglected duties, [and] squaring accounts with God and men."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, pp. 778, 779.

The Day of Atonement symbolized a day of judgment when Christ comes to the aid of His people. His judgment harmonizes with His faithfulness. Thus He champions the cause of His people, guides them, and protects them. His judgment is motivated by love, grace, mercy, and His desire to reconcile sinners with God and Himself. The outcome of His judgment, therefore, is salvation. (See Deut. 32:36; Isa. 30:18; Ps. 25:6-9; 103:6-22.)

HEAVEN'S COURT CONVENES (Dan. 7:9, 10; 8:14).

What was the significance of the earthly sanctuary? Ex. 25:9; Heb. 8:1-6; 9:23; Rev. 11:19. What did Daniel witness in vision? Dan. 7:9, 10, 13, 14; 8:14 (compare Dan. 12:1; Rev. 3:5; 19:7, 8).

There are many interesting linguistic connections that exist between Daniel 8:14 and Leviticus 16. Following are two examples: (1) The Hebrew word for "sanctuary" in Daniel 8:14 is the same as the word used in Leviticus 16 to specify the sanctuary as the object of cleansing. The sanctuary mentioned in Daniel 8:14 refers to the heavenly sanctuary because the vision reaches to "the time of the end" (Dan. 8:17). The earthly sanctuary ceased to have significance at the cross. (See Hebrews 8.) (2) In Daniel 8:14, the Hebrew word translated as "cleansed" is *nitsdaq*. It comes from the word *tsadaq*, which means "to justify, to be or make righteous, pure, or clean." In Leviticus 16:30 the verb "to cleanse" translates *taher*. In the Old Testament *tsadaq* and *taher* are used synonymously. For example, Job 4:17, "Can a mortal be more righteous [*tsadaq*] than God? Or can a man be more pure [*taher*]?" Thus, the idea of "cleansing" can be attributed to the word *nitsdaq*. This is why the Septuagint (the Greek OT) translates the Hebrew of Daniel 8:14: "and the sanctuary shall be cleansed." As both the sanctuary and the people were cleansed (or justified, put right) on the Day of Atonement, so they will be in the antitypical Day of Atonement referred to in Daniel 8:14.

Because the Hebrew verb *tsadaq* also means to justify, in the sense of restore, Daniel 8:14 may also refer to the restoration of the sanctuary truth in the last days.

Daniel 7 and 8 describe the heavenly sanctuary's day of atonement. "And as during the typical Day of Atonement the cleansing of the earthly sanctuary removed the sins accumulated there, so the heavenly sanctuary is cleansed by the final removal of the record of sins in the heavenly books. But before the records are finally cleared, they will be examined to determine who through repentance and faith in Christ is entitled to enter His eternal kingdom. The cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary, therefore, involves a work of investigation or judgment that fully reflects the nature of the Day of Atonement as a day of judgment."—*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 320.

How can we be sure that our names will be cleared in the judgment? 1 John 1:9; 4:16-18; Rev. 3:5.

THE HOUR OF HIS JUDGMENT (Rev. 14:7).

What does the first angel's message tell us about the time of the judgment? What light do Daniel 8:9-14 and 9:22-27 shed upon this time?

These verses in Daniel tell us when the "hour" of His judgment arrives. Daniel 8:14 calls the pre-Advent judgment of Daniel 7:9-14 the cleansing of the sanctuary. The cleansing of the sanctuary was to begin after 2300 days. The Hebrew phrase translated "days" means "evening-morning." It refers to a twenty-four-hour period. (Compare Gen. 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31; Ex. 27:20, 21.) The reference in Daniel 8:14 is not to the morning and evening sacrifices of the sanctuary, but to 2300 twenty-four-hour days, which are used as a prophetic symbol.

The 2300 literal days of Daniel 8:14 are symbolic of 2300 years. The prophet was told that the work of the little horn would continue till the end of time (Dan 8:17, 19, 25, 26). Twenty-three hundred literal days would not reach to the end of time. The "days" are intended to be symbolic of years.

The vision of Daniel 9 was given in 538 B.C., 13 years after the vision of Daniel 8 (551 B.C.). Gabriel told Daniel that "seventy weeks" (Hebrew: "seventy sevens") were to be "cut off" (Hebrew) from the 2300 days. These "seventy sevens" must refer to 490 years, because they were to reach to the time of the Messiah (Christ). The 490 years were to be cut off from the beginning of the 2300 days. You cannot have 490 years cut off from 2300 literal days. The 2300 days are a prophetic symbol of 2300 years.

The beginning date of the 490 years and the 2300 years is given in Daniel 9:25: "the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem." Ezra 6:14 indicates that God's command for the complete restoration of Jerusalem was put into effect by the decrees of three Persian monarchs: Cyrus' decree (537 B.C.); Darius I's decree (519 or 518 B.C.); Artaxerxes I's decree (457 B.C.).

Counting 2300 years from 457 B.C. brings us to 1844. Since the decree of Artaxerxes was put into effect in the autumn of 457 B.C., the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary, the pre-Advent judgment, began in the autumn of 1844.

457 B.C. _____ 2300 years _____ A.D. 1844

Command to
restore Jerusalem

Pre-Advent
judgment begins

THE STANDARD OF JUDGMENT (James 2:8-12; Eccl. 12:13, 14).

Valid judgment does not proceed along arbitrary lines. God has no secret teachings, no secret requirements, or unattainable demands. Through the proclamation of His judgment He makes plain what He expects of us and what provisions He has made for us to meet His requirements.

What is the standard—the measure of character and conduct—in the judgment? James 2:8-12; Eccl. 12:13, 14.

"While Christ is cleansing the sanctuary, the worshipers on earth should carefully review their life, and compare their character with the standard of righteousness."—*Evangelism*, p. 224. (See 2 Cor. 13:5; Ps. 119:27-32.)

In practical life, how do we exhibit obedience to God's law? Micah 6:8; Matt. 7:12; 25:32-46.

The three angels' messages are a call for the whole world to obey God's law through faith in Jesus. God urges us to sound this call so that people everywhere might enter into fellowship with Christ and be freed from sin. The proclamation of the judgment comes as a warning appeal to all who are caught in Satan's deceptions.

But God's judgment is not one last scare tactic to compel submission. It is an examination, a type of spiritual audit and exposition of what the saving power of Jesus has done in and for His believers. It also explains His dealings with sin. In this sense the judgment is heaven's ordained means of removing all doubts about God's government, how He deals with evil, and the effectiveness of His plan of salvation (Rom. 3:3, 4; Isa. 5:3, 4). The outcome is complete vindication of God's character. Not only does the universe conclude from the disclosures made in the judgment that God is free of all blame, but also that He is worthy of the highest praise and most fervent loyalty.

How can we follow the work of Christ's judgment today with interest, confidence, and an appropriate sense of security and assurance? Hosea 2:19, 20; Ps. 29:9-11.

FURTHER STUDY: Each of the following provides an in-depth look at the investigative judgment: *The Great Controversy*, chapters 18-24, 28; *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .*, chapters 12, 23; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, chapter 30. For an in-depth study on the connections between Leviticus 16 and Daniel 8, see *Symposium on Daniel*, Daniel & Revelation Committee Series, vol. 2 (Silver Spring, Md.: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1986), pp. 426-461; 527-549.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How would you explain the beauties of the sanctuary truth to a neighbor who asks, "Don't you live in fear of your name coming up in this investigative judgment you believe in?"
2. What significance is there in the fact that the work of judgment is done in a *sanctuary*? (What does the word *sanctuary* mean?) As you think about your answer, consider Exodus 25:8; Psalm 43:1-4; 63:2-5.

Tomorrow will be the 150th anniversary of the beginning of Christ's judgment in the Most Holy Place. As we allow the Lord to prepare our hearts for the Sabbath, let us remember that we do so to qualify as harbingers of the judgment-hour message. The first angel's message is our message. And it is a message of God's love and mercy—a love and mercy that provide both freedom from guilt and victory over sin.

"In the judgment the tables are turned. No longer do we stand accused as a defendant, for Christ has paid the full price for our acquittal. Now we become the plaintiff, calling for vindication against the false charges of Satan. Now with David we can long for and welcome the judgment. We can pray, 'Judge [vindicate, RSV] me, O Lord my God, according to thy righteousness' (Ps. 35:24)." —Richard M. Davidson, "Assurance in the Judgment," *Adventist Review*, Jan. 7, 1988, p. 18.

SUMMARY: The proclamation of the first angel concerning the hour of God's judgment summons all persons to recognize their individual moral accountability to God. This judgment results in the vindication of God, His truth, and His people. All false charges brought against His character, government, law, and followers are refuted in the judgment. And His right to save His people and to rule the universe are forever established beyond all doubt.



The Gospel on the Beach

Alejandro Bullón

If public beaches can be used for rock-music festivals and volleyball tournaments, why can't they be transformed into arenas to preach the gospel? The Espírito Santo Conference in Brazil asked this question as they sought a novel approach to evangelizing unchurched people in East Brazil. Only two Adventist families live in Camburí, the affluent area we were targeting for evangelism.

Each year the church sponsors a Harvesting Week revival series. We could expect about 8,000 people to attend the five-day event, usually held in a sports gymnasium.

We decided to hold the Harvesting Week revival program on the beach. For the evangelistic series to be workable, it was necessary to set up metal stadium-style benches and a stage with special lighting and a sound system powerful enough to reach one kilometer (2/3 mile). Advertising for the meetings was coordinated by Novo Tiempo, the Adventist-owned radio station in the area.

Early in the afternoon, crowds that eventually numbered up to 15,000 began arriving to get seats in the outdoor auditorium. Traffic was disrupted as cars and busses poured toward the beach. In addition, many families were listening to the gospel from the windows of their luxury apartments nearby and via 11 radio stations that had arranged to carry the live broadcasts to the states of Espírito Santo, Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, and southern Bahía, Brazil).

The results were extraordinary. One couple who were arguing heatedly in their apartment, heard the program through their window. They were so moved by the Holy Spirit that when the call was made to accept Jesus, they responded, leaving their apartment and crossing the street to reach the stage on the beach!

Among the hundreds who answered the call to unite themselves with the SDA Church were 53 persons who live in the exclusive Camburí district, where before the meetings only two Adventist families lived. These precious souls are studying and preparing for baptism.

About half the people who attended the meetings were non-Adventist friends, relatives, neighbors, or colleagues of our church members with whom they had shared the message. This confirms that public evangelism is much more productive when it accompanies individual efforts of church members.

Alejandro Bullón is the coordinator for Global Mission in the South American Division.

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Give Glory to Him



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Rev. 14:7; 5:11-14; Ps. 96:6-8; John 17:5, 20-24.

MEMORY TEXT: "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:20).

KEY THOUGHT: God's glory is revealed in His character. When we unite with God through Jesus we become like Him in character, and thus glorify Him.

TRUE GREATNESS. Mourners packed the cathedral for the funeral of Louis XIV of France, whom they considered to be a great ruler. All was dark except for one candle illuminating the king's body, put there to symbolize his greatness. When the court minister rose to speak, he snuffed out the candle. Then from the darkness the minister spoke just four words, "God only is great!"

The first angel's call to give glory to God reminds us that we are to honor and exalt Him only. Christ's willing death for our salvation is the summit of all glory. As we ourselves are saturated with His pardoning love, we will glorify Him. How? Read Colossians 1:27.

Christ dwelling in us results in an outpouring of heavenly love—a love that exhibits kindness, purity of life, and truth. Such love attracts others, enabling us to share Christ with them. This witness is the supreme way to glorify God. Surely, it is this witness that the first angel urges us to give.

THE ESSENCE OF HIS GLORY (Ex. 34:5-7).

The Hebrew word most commonly translated "glory" in the King James Version means "weightiness, splendor, majesty, abundance, riches, and honor." The New Testament Greek word for "glory" signifies "splendor, magnificence, fame, renown, honor." God's glory relates to His holy, righteous character and the praise and honor He deserves because of His character.

Moses longed for the deepest possible fellowship with the Lord (Ex. 33:13, 14) and for this purpose asked a special blessing of Him. What was his request? How did God reply? Ex. 33:18-23.

In revealing His glory to Moses, what did the Lord proclaim? How do His words explain what Moses saw? Ex. 34:5-7.

"The unveiled glory of God no man could look upon and live; but Moses is assured that he shall behold as much of the divine glory as he can bear in his present, mortal state. That Hand that made the world, that holds the mountains in their places, takes this man of dust—this man of mighty faith—and mercifully covers him in a cleft of the rock, while the glory of God and all His goodness pass before him. . . .

"No earthly power or skill or learning can supply the place of God's immediate presence. In the history of Moses we may see what intimate communion with God it is man's privilege to enjoy."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 533.

The glory that passed before Moses was accompanied by God's declaration of His own characteristics—holiness, mercy, justice, and love. This declaration is most important, because Satan attributes to God his own vile characteristics. Thus, many people mistakenly believe that God is either a pampering, indulgent benefactor, or a stern, unfeeling judge. God is our benefactor *and* judge. But He exercises this dual power as such with perfect righteousness and redemptive wisdom, rather than with permissiveness or despotism. We are to glorify Him for His perfect goodness, longsuffering mercy, and pure justice.

What lessons on glorifying God can we learn from Moses' encounter with Him on Sinai?

THE HOPE OF GLORY (Eph. 3:14-21).

The crowning act of God's Creation is persons made in His own image (Gen. 1:26, 27; Ps. 8:4-9). He not only created us for His glory (Isa. 43:7; *Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 264) but He ransomed us from sin by the blood of His only Son (Col. 1:12, 13). More than this, through His atoning grace, God provided for us to enter into an even closer relationship with Him than if we had never sinned (Heb. 2:6-11; Rev. 1:6).

What extraordinary benefit is included in the gospel? Does this benefit make those who receive it praiseworthy? Col. 1:27; Eph. 3:14-21.

The benefit of having Christ as our indwelling Lord and Saviour is beyond all wealth. What could we ever do to earn or deserve such fellowship? Let us not decline the honor that the King of the universe offers to us. He paid the highest price to ransom us from the power of the enemy. Therefore, we should not treat carelessly His offer to live in our hearts (Rev. 3:20).

"Our minds need expansion, that we may comprehend the significance of the provision of God. We are to reflect the highest attributes of the character of God."—*That I May Know Him*, p. 302.

On the evening before His crucifixion, for what did Christ pray on behalf of His followers? How were they to glorify Him? John 17:9-11, 17-24, 26.

Oneness with God is the essential means by which we may glorify Him. This union comes solely by the gospel of Jesus Christ. Because we are sinful by nature, only His ministry on our behalf can awaken in us the desire to have Him live in our hearts (Rom. 8:7; 3:10-12; Isa. 53:3-7). It is to His glory that God is willing and able to reclaim His enemies from a state of resistance to one of love and loyalty to Him (Rom. 5:6-11, 17-19). Any glory we bring to God derives its splendor from this gospel transaction.

What attracts you to Jesus Christ? Have you welcomed Him into your heart? Think of some ways His character could shine through you more brightly.

GLORIFYING GOD BY OUR LIVES (Gal. 5:22, 23).

Christ's entire life on earth was an exhibit of redeeming love. He came to save and elevate humanity. Through His dwelling in us, we become His hands, eyes, lips, and feet, filled with His love and abilities. Godly living means more than just morally blameless conduct. It means a life of unselfish, anointed service to humanity. (See James 1:27; Isa. 58:6-11.) Anything short of this experience is sterile and self-centered.

How did Jesus say His followers bring glory to God?
Matt. 5:16; John 15:8, 16, 17.

Note that bearing fruit to God's glory is twofold:

1. Christ's followers bring forth the fruit of the Spirit in their lives, thereby manifesting the character of Christ (Gal. 5:22, 23; Phil. 1:11).

"To give glory to God is to reveal His character in our own, and thus to make Him known. And in whatever way we make known the Father or the Son, we glorify God."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 979.

2. Christ's followers also, in partnership with Him, bring forth the fruit of new converts to the kingdom of heaven (John 4:35-39; Rom. 1:13; Ps. 126:5, 6).

"Christ is seeking to reproduce Himself in the hearts of men; and He does this through those who believe in Him. The object of the Christian life is fruit bearing—the reproduction of Christ's character in the believer, that it may be reproduced in others."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 67.

"The completeness of Christian character is attained when the impulse to help and bless others springs constantly from within—when the sunshine of heaven fills the heart and is revealed in the countenance."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 384.

How else may we glorify God? Ps. 50:23; Rom. 4:20-22; 15:5-7; 1 Cor. 10:31.

What influence does our union with Christ have upon our witness for Him? Why is it such a vital part of His will for us to be involved in the salvation of others?

Is it a joy or a burden to live for God's glory? Why?

GLORY NOT IN SELF (Jer. 9:23, 24).

The first angel's message interrupts a world preoccupied with self-glorification. Often the clothes we wear, the cars we drive, and the careers we pursue are for self-exaltation and self-gratification. The apostle Paul foretold that in the latter days people would "be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3:2-4). This is not only distasteful, it is debasing, destructive, and directly opposed to the reason God created and redeemed us (2 Thess. 1:11, 12; 1 Peter 5:10, 11).

In what are we to glory, and in what are we not to glory? Jer. 9:23, 24; Ps. 115:1.

Is it acceptable to take satisfaction in the abilities and successes God gives us? At what point may our satisfaction become inappropriate or excessive?

In theory it is perhaps quite easy for us to admit that we have no business seeking our own glory (Prov. 25:27). Yet we are all tempted to clamor for credit and recognition when we do something "good." Then the sobering counsel comes back to us, "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself" (Phil. 2:3, NKJV). What a different world (what a different church!) it would be if we really took this advice to heart.

We discover in the Word of God that we ourselves cannot erase human pride and perversity (Rom. 7:17-24). How only can this be done? Rom. 3:20-28; Eph. 2:8-10 (see also *The Desire of Ages*, p. 493).

"What is justification by faith? It is the work of God in laying the glory of man in the dust, and doing for man that which it is not in his power to do for himself."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 456.

Does the gospel of Jesus Christ banish self-respect? Or does it establish it on a proper basis? Explain your point of view.

HIS GLORY PROCLAIMED (Isa. 60:1-5).

God's greatest desire is that all should accept His salvation. Even though most people refuse this gift, His zeal in striving to save them from sin is undiminished. He has decreed that while spiritual probation remains open He will brighten the earth with His glory in order to prepare every willing soul for the second coming of Jesus (Rev. 18:1). He enlists His church to join with Him in this global mission.

What awakening call does Heaven issue to the church in the closing days of earth's history? What are the results of this call? Isa. 60:1-5.

"It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. His character is to be made known. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy, and truth."

"It is the privilege of every soul to be a living channel through which God can communicate to the world the treasures of His grace, the unsearchable riches of Christ. There is nothing that Christ desires so much as agents who will represent to the world His Spirit and character. There is nothing that the world needs so much as the manifestation through humanity of the Saviour's love. All heaven is waiting for channels through which can be poured the holy oil to be a joy and blessing to human hearts.

"Christ has made every provision that His church shall be a transformed body, illumined with the Light of the world, possessing the glory of Emmanuel. . . . The indwelling of the Spirit will be shown by the outflowing of heavenly love."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 415, 419. (Read the whole chapter "To Meet the Bridegroom," pp. 405-421.)

Have you heard in your heart the Lord's call to arise and shine as a witness for Him? Can you think of any habits, obstacles, or sins in your life that are hindering you from answering His call? Remember that His Spirit is present to give you eternal victory through Jesus Christ. Claim that victory today, with repentance, joy, and thanksgiving.

FURTHER STUDY: Compare Psalm 45:13-15; Ephesians 5:25-27; Hebrews 2:7-12; Jude 24, 25; and Revelation 21:24-26 with *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 328-330 (from "Idolatry at Sinai"); *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 42-44 (from "The Beatitudes"—"Ye are the light of the world").

"The message of Christ's righteousness is to sound from one end of the earth to the other to prepare the way of the Lord. This is the glory of God, which closes the work of the third angel."—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 19.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What connection exists between fearing God and giving glory to Him?
2. By what means can you resist the temptation to take credit or glorify yourself when God works through your life to bless others?
3. After communing on Mount Sinai with the Lord, Moses' face glowed with divine glory (Ex. 34:29). What relationship does this bear to the kind of experience God wants us to have as we commune with Him? (See 2 Cor. 3:7-18 in connection with "The Righteousness of Christ in the Law" in *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 236-241.)
4. What relationship is there between the "everlasting gospel" (Rev. 14:6) and the injunction to "Fear God, and give glory to him" (verse 7)? Are they the same thing, or are there differences? Explain your answer.

SUMMARY: The first angel's call to glorify God beckons us to open our hearts to God's presence. Thus we are enabled to appreciate His truth and to partake of His divine nature. Christ's redeeming love becomes the inspiration of our faith, the impulse of our praise, and the incentive of our service. Paul epitomizes such a life with this testimony, "For to me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21).



Give Me a Hard Place to Work

James H. Zachary

The evangelism team had just arrived in Ghana. As we entered the crowded motel, we thanked God for the air conditioner that helped to relieve the tropical heat. Suddenly the electricity failed and the water stopped flowing. The tiny motel rooms became sweat boxes. One volunteer, a wealthy woman, lamented, "Why did I ever come?"

The team faced a big challenge: The target community was mostly Muslim, where evangelism was difficult and discouraging. Earnestly the team prayed for the Lord's help. But even before they could pray, the Lord was answering their prayers.

A Muslim man in the city faced great problems in his business and his family. Five times a day he spread out his prayer mat and asked Allah for help, but he received no answers. Then one night he dreamed he saw Jesus kindly, lovingly beckoning him to come.

As he awakened he thought, *if Jesus is so kind, why not ask Him for help?* So he prayed. And his prayers were being answered. What joy!

Another night the man dreamed he watched a parade. Marchers held placards that discouraged smoking and drinking, and a sign that advertised a Health Expo evangelistic meeting. In his dream someone handed him a handbill.

Two days later he watched as a parade passed his business. He recognized it as the parade that he had seen in his dream! A person handed him a piece of paper—the same handbill he had seen in his dream! He decided Allah surely must want him at this meeting!

He attended the meetings regularly. When the evangelist gave the invitation to follow Jesus, this Muslim man was the first to stand. Others followed his example. This experience brought encouragement to the evangelistic team, especially the wealthy woman. She exclaimed, "I want to come back again! And please send me to a hard place!"



God would like to use each member of the world church as a witness to those searching for His help. As we submit our lives to His guidance, God will use us to help win others to Himself.

James H. Zachary is associate secretary in the Ministerial Association of the General Conference.

For Current Newsbreak, Call 1-800-648-5824.

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Worshiping Our Creator



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Rev. 14:7; Ps. 95:1-7; John 4:23, 24.

MEMORY TEXT: "Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness" (Psalm 29:2, NIV).

KEY THOUGHT: Life's meaning is found and expressed in true worship of our Creator. The first angel's call to worship "him who made" all things is intended to bring us back to perfect fellowship with our Creator.

"WHAT'S THE NEWS?" One of those who experienced the 1844 disappointment was Sea Captain Joseph Bates. But instead of losing faith, he applied himself to further study and prayer. In the year 1845, he read an article concerning the seventh-day Sabbath. After investigating the biblical evidence this article presented, he accepted the Sabbath as truth. One day on a bridge between two cities, he met his neighbor and fellow Adventist. When the neighbor asked, "What's the news, Captain Bates?" Bates replied, "The news is that the seventh day is the Sabbath."

The news of the seventh-day Sabbath is integral to the first angel's admonition to worship the Creator. God gave us the Sabbath to remind us of His creatorship and to give us sacred, periodic time for undistracted communion with Him. We worship God exclusively, because we owe our existence to Him.

God's Sabbath sets us apart from the world. It is this separateness that leads us to be more fully made in His image.

WORSHIPING IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH (Isa. 63:7; Rev. 7:11, 12).

What reply did Jesus give to the Samaritan woman's question about the correct way to worship God? John 4:20-26.

Jesus told the woman that the authentic knowledge of God was committed to the Jews so they could convey the truth to the world. He revealed that acceptable worship is performed in spirit and in truth. To worship Him in spirit is to worship Him with the whole heart and soul, filled with God's love through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. To worship Him in truth is to have our minds guided, sanctified, and energized by the Word of God.

How does true worship affect our character and conduct? Ps. 119:73, 74; James 1:18, 22.

"The religion that comes from God is the only religion that will lead to God. In order to serve Him aright, we must be born of the divine Spirit. . . . It will purify the heart and renew the mind, and give us a new capacity for knowing and loving God. It will give us willing obedience to all His requirements. This is true worship."—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 156.

What attitudes should characterize our worship of God? 2 Chron. 7:3; Rev. 7:11, 12; Isa 63:7.

The word for worship in Revelation 14:7 and in many other texts means "to prostrate oneself in reverent adoration." "Unless correct ideas of true worship and true reverence are impressed upon the people, there will be a growing tendency to place the sacred and eternal on a level with common things, and those professing the truth will be an offense to God and a disgrace to religion."—*My Life Today*, p. 285.

How can worship be joyful and serious at the same time? What is it about God that arouses your most worshipful thoughts and feelings? How can your worship life be richer?

Do you think any of the following may place the sacred and eternal on a level with common things? If so, how? (a) popular gospel music; (b) fixing a neighbor's sink on Sabbath; (c) talking during the worship service.

WORSHIPING GOD IN THE SANCTUARY (Ps. 63:1-5).

Where did the ancient Israelites worship? Ex. 25:8; Ps. 134:1-3.

God did not mean for the sanctuary to become the object of worship, as it was in the days of Judah's apostasy (Jer. 7:1-4). Instead, it was to be the center of religious education for the great teachings of the gospel (Hebrews 8-10.) Israel's sanctuary and temple were copies of the heavenly sanctuary, from which Jesus, since His return to heaven, ministers all the benefits of His atonement (Heb. 4:14-16; 8:1, 2; 9:11, 12, 22). Accordingly, we direct our worship to Christ and the Father in the heavenly sanctuary. The book of Revelation unveils the sanctuary to our spiritual view, giving us worship-inspiring glimpses of Christ's ministration in the Holy of Holies on our behalf. (See Rev. 1:10-20; chap. 4, 5; 11:19; 15:5-8.)

Describe two vital ways to worship. Luke 9:18 (compare Matt. 14:23); Luke 4:16 (compare Luke 24:52, 53).

For the soul to flourish, it needs a balanced life. Public worship is as important as private devotion and prayer (Matt. 6:6; Ps. 84:1-4; 1 John 1:7; *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 84-86, the comment on Matt. 6:5). Neither function can take the place of the other, but they enhance each other. God has provided Sabbath services, prayer meetings, camp meetings, and other gatherings to help us to grow spiritually through corporate worship. We cannot safely neglect these opportunities for group worship.

"To the humble, believing soul, the house of God on earth is the gate of heaven. The song of praise, the prayer, the words spoken by Christ's representatives, are God's appointed agencies to prepare a people for the church above, for that loftier worship into which there can enter nothing that defileth. . . .

"The house is the sanctuary for the family, and the closet or the grove the most retired place for individual worship; but the church is the sanctuary for the congregation."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 491.

How can you help make public worship meetings more valuable to yourself and others? How vital a bearing does your private devotional life have on the blessings you receive and share in corporate worship?

IMPLICATIONS OF HIS CREATORSHIP (Ps. 96:4, 5).

What distinguishes the true God from all false gods? Ps. 96:4, 5; 1 Cor. 8:4-6.

The fundamental reason for worshiping God is that He is our Creator. He made us in His own image (Gen. 1:1, 26, 27), a convincing indication of His sublime purposes for us. "Man was to bear God's image, both in outward resemblance and in character. . . . He was holy and happy in bearing the image of God and in perfect obedience to His will."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 45. God created us, not to be puppets or slaves, but His friends and children (John 15:14, 15; Rom. 8:15-17; 1 John 3:1). We were alienated from God by the nature we inherited through the Fall. Nonetheless, we may become partakers of the divine nature and receive the "adoption of sons" in Christ.

How should knowledge of our true origin affect our concept of life? Neh. 9:6; Ps. 95:4-8.

"There is no ground for the supposition that man was evolved . . . from the lower forms of . . . life. Such teaching lowers the great work of the Creator to the level of man's narrow, earthly conceptions. Men are so intent upon excluding God from the sovereignty of the universe that they degrade man and defraud him of the dignity of his origin."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 45.

What are the results of denying God's Creatorship? Rom. 1:18, 19, 29-32.

Sinful human beings in their moral derangement strut about like pagan gods, doing whatever their perverse natures dictate. Making their own imaginations and depraved wills the final arbiter of their choices, they have become brutish and self-centered, like the people of Noah's day (Gen. 6:5-13).

True worship elevates, ennobles, and refines our characters, enabling us to rise above the baser things of life. Worship calls us to be formed in God's image while always realizing we are but creatures He deeply loves.

How does the knowledge that God has created you in His own image affect your religious experience?

GROWING INTO THE LIKENESS OF OUR CREATOR

(1 Peter 1:14-25).

When sinners accept Christ on His terms, what changes take place in their lives? Rom. 8:29-31; 2 Cor. 5:17, 20, 21; Eph. 2:8-10.

Only the Creator can cause such a profound and extensive change. David understood this when He prayed, "Blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Ps. 51:9, 10). We cannot by ourselves generate the spirit of repentance embodied in this prayer. God's wooing mercies and guidance, along with His convicting appeals and chastening, lead us to repentance (Ps. 119:67, 71; Rom. 2:4; Rev. 3:20). We have but an incomplete idea of how ardently and affectionately God labors for our salvation. Let us faithfully cooperate with Him.

What are the practical results of being regenerated (re-created) by Christ? Rom. 12:1, 2; 1 Peter 1:14-25.

Every species of godly reform comes into the life of a truly born-again person. The genuinely converted heart now inclines toward the pure ways of heaven. True, morally sound reform is in harmony with heaven's laws.

How does Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14 define our moral duty?

"Without obedience to His commandments, no worship can be pleasing to God. 'This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.' 'He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.' 1 John 5:3; Proverbs 28:9. The duty to worship God is based upon the fact that He is the Creator and that to Him all other beings owe their existence."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 436. "God's law is the transcript of His character."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 305. (Compare Deut. 10:12, 13.) The call to worship God the Creator categorically challenges the idolatrous spirit of our age, which flouts His law as fictitious or obsolete.

How can you be delivered from the imperfections of your character that keep you from being like Jesus, your Creator?

GOD'S MEMORIAL OF CREATION (Ex. 20:8-11).

God's final warning and appeal centers on the question of worship, that is, worship of the beast versus worship of the Creator (Rev. 13:11-15; 14:7).

Which day alone is the Sabbath of God's Word? Gen. 2:1, 2; Ex. 20:10, 11 (compare Luke 23:52-24:1).

What express reason has God given for establishing this day of worship? Ex. 20:8-11; 31:13, 17.

"God saw that a Sabbath was essential for man, even in Paradise. He needed to lay aside his own interests and pursuits for one day of the seven, that he might more fully contemplate the works of God and meditate upon His power and goodness. He needed a Sabbath to remind him more vividly of God and to awaken gratitude because all that he enjoyed and possessed came from the beneficent hand of the Creator."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 48.

What connection exists between Sabbathkeeping and redemption? Eze. 20:12, 20; Isa. 56:1-8.

"The Sabbath is a sign of Christ's power to make us holy. . . . As a sign of His sanctifying power, the Sabbath is given to all who through Christ become part of the Israel of God. . . . The Sabbath points them to the works of creation as an evidence of His mighty power in redemption. While it calls to mind the lost peace of Eden, it tells of peace restored through the Saviour."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 288, 289.

In what way is the Sabbath an antidote to apostate worship, atheism, and false concepts regarding the origin of life? Gen. 2:2, 3; Heb. 4:4-9 (compare Mark 2:27, 28).

Holiness is not just moral purity. It is being set apart for God's purpose and use. The Sabbath is the epitome of true worship and holiness.

How can we prevent Sabbath observance from becoming a formal routine?

FURTHER STUDY: The apostles were keenly conscious that in presenting Christ as the Saviour, they were also exalting Him as the Creator. See Acts 4:24-29; 14:15-18; 17:22-31; Ephesians 3:8-15. Meditate on how this knowledge affected their ability to witness for Him amid enormous opposition, ignorance, and diverse forms of idolatry that were deeply embedded in all the cultures of the world. In what ways does our era resemble that of the apostles, and how does God's call to worship Him as Creator have special timeliness for the modern world?

Read *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 317, "A Higher Standard."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Modern civilization has strayed from worshipping God as Creator. How has this deviation affected people's relationship to humanity, religion, the environment, nature, government, science, the arts, and the future?
2. Match these texts on the characteristics of true worship, with the appropriate idea:

Phil. 2:10, 11; 3:3	a. reverence
Isa. 63:7	b. doctrinal purity
Ps. 89:7	c. repentance
Ps. 25:5	d. Christ-centeredness
1 John 1:3	e. thankful praise
Luke 18:13, 14	f. fellowship/relationships
3. How has this week's lesson contributed to your understanding of the relevance of the first angel's message, especially with regard to worshipping God as Creator?

SUMMARY: The first angel's call to "worship him that made heaven, and earth" directs us to our Creator and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Why? So He can restore our relationship with Him and His image in us. The Sabbath is an important part of this message. On this special day of worship we can set aside all our temporal cares in order to focus completely on Christ and His creative and redemptive work.



A Time to Serve

Gavin Anthony

I stared out of my window. Plaster hung off crumbling buildings. People trudged slowly along the streets. Everything looked so worn-out. My thoughts turned toward home.

In my dorm room overlooking the green fields of Newbold College, my telephone rang. "We need someone to go to Albania to pastor the new members." The minister's voice sounded urgent. "Can you go for four months?"

How could I go? I was in the middle of my studies. But I promised to pray about it.

The college administrator assured me, "We'll work it out." I could leave my job. I caught the next plane to Albania.

Seated in the airplane, I wondered what I could offer these people. They had suffered so much and had so little!

Soon after I arrived I went to the town of Elbasan. As we neared the city we saw a huge industrial complex that nearly filled the valley. Once employing 15,000 people, it now stood idle, a monument to the failed political system.

But in the middle of this economic graveyard I found people eager to learn about Christianity. Many had never seen a New Testament before. We sat around a small wooden table, Testaments open and eyes alert. I began talking about Jesus.

"Who is Jesus?" I asked. I received only quizzical looks. They didn't know! "God," I prayed, "speak through me." He did.

In that city filled with discouragement, seeds of hope began to sprout. The eager group began to grasp the biblical truths.

The weeks sped past. Students from Newbold arrived during Christmas vacation to help with Branch Sabbath Schools and evangelistic meetings. Hearts stirred, and faith awakened. A Christian community was forming.

Then suddenly my assignment was over. Back at Newbold, I sat in class. Faces I had learned to love and places in desperate need filled my thoughts. Now I knew what I had to do when I finished college. I must work to reach others for Christ. I am glad I was called to Albania. It changed my life.

Gavin Anthony completed his degree in religion in June 1993, and is now serving as a Pastor in England.

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Babylon the Pretender



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Rev. 14:8; 17:1-6; Jer. 51:5-11.

MEMORY TEXT: "And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication" (Revelation 14:8).

KEY THOUGHT: God proclaims the dangers and downfall of all false religious philosophies and practices, and calls upon people everywhere to receive true salvation through His gospel of redemption and reconciliation. (Review Lesson 2.)

GOD'S WARNINGS ARE DESIGNED TO SAVE. The second angel's message is an urgent appeal motivated by God's love and uncompromising truth. This message takes the form of denunciation and implied retribution because false systems of salvation in general and Christendom in particular have rejected the light of the first angel's message.

"The first angel's message of Revelation 14, announcing the hour of God's judgment and calling upon men to fear and worship Him, was designed to separate the professed people of God from the corrupting influences of the world and to arouse them to see their true condition of worldliness and backsliding. In this message, God had sent to the church a warning, which, had it been accepted, would have corrected the evils that were shutting them away from Him."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 379.

Historically, the clarion call of the second angel's message began in the summer of 1844 but now is being sounded worldwide.

BABYLON'S FEATURES (Rev. 17:1-6).

The second angel comes from heaven to unite with the first angel: "And there followed another angel" (Rev. 14:8). The word *follow* in the original means "to join as a companion with one who precedes." (See Rev. 14:4 and Luke 5:11.) We can readily conclude from the wording of the text that the second angel unites with the first to extend and amplify the original message. The second angel does not detract from or drown out the first angel's message, but gives it fresh impetus, urgency, and relevance.

What are the characteristics of Babylon that merit God's condemnation? Rev. 17:2-6; 18:2, 3, 9-14, 24.

The identity of criminals is sometimes more surely established by their description than by their name. Many people can bear the same name. And people may even change their names. But everyone's identity is unquestionably established by a thorough description of his or her locale, character, associates, and deeds. Babylon is a symbolic name signifying a power whose identity is determined by the record of its operations, sphere of action, and ideas.

"The term 'Babylon' is derived from 'Babel,' and signifies confusion. It is employed in Scripture to designate false or apostate religions. In Revelation 17, Babylon is represented as a woman—a figure which is used in the Bible as the symbol of a church, a virtuous woman representing a pure church, a vile woman an apostate church."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 381.

It is lamentable that human beings—God's creatures—should devise and enjoy false systems of religion, thus degenerating into a condition of spiritual whoredom. But so it is represented in Scripture. This representation is no jest or exaggerated metaphor, but a solemn indictment from the Divine Judge, who makes no mistakes or false accusations.

How can we avoid being ensnared by Babylon? 1 Peter 3:8-12 (compare 2 Thess. 1:11, 12; 2:13, 14).

What corruptions or weaknesses exist in my life that make me subject to the demoralizing influences of Babylon? What help has God provided to give me the victory?

BABYLON'S FORTRESS (Rev 14:8; 16:13, 14, 19; 17:1-5, 18).

Babylon signifies apostasy at its most ingenious, industrious, and deliberate level. It makes its first appearance in embryo form not many generations after the Flood. By gathering into one huge cluster, the mass of humanity acted contrary to God's instruction to disperse over the whole earth (Gen. 9:7). They resolved to build a city and a tower for their protection, fortification, and fame. Thus they saw Babel, their new city in the plain of Shinar, as the prospective capital of a universal empire, whose splendor would command the homage of the world. Because rebellion against God and exaltation of self were at the heart of this project, the Lord scattered the participants and divided the languages of the world to check the progress of evil. See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 118-124, "The Tower of Babel."

What is Babylon explicitly said to be? Rev. 14:8; 16:13, 14, 19; 17:1-5, 18.

While Babylon symbolizes any false religious system, in the last days it will specifically involve the worldwide union of the papacy, apostate Protestantism, and modern spiritism. At God's command, this union will lose its power, just as did the first city of Babel (Rev. 16:17; 17:17). See *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 847.

"It [Babylon] cannot be Pagan Rome, but Papal Rome, if a particular seat of error be meant, but . . . the judgment (ch. 18:2) and the spiritual fornication (ch. 18:3), though finding their culmination in Rome, are not restricted to it, but comprise the whole apostate Church, Roman, Greek, and even Protestant, so far as it has been seduced from its 'first love' (ch. 2:4) to Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom, and given its affections to worldly pomps and idols."—Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, eds., *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, n.d.), on Rev. 17:2.

"By her [Babylon's] daughters must be symbolized churches that cling to her doctrines and traditions, and follow her example of sacrificing the truth and the approval of God, in order to form an unlawful alliance with the world. The message of Revelation 14 announcing the fall of Babylon must apply to religious bodies that were once pure and have become corrupt."—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 382, 383.

BABYLON'S FALSITY (Rev. 18:2, 3).

Babylon's chief flaw can be summarized in one word—idolatry (Jer. 50:2, 38), a sin forbidden by the first and second commandments of God (Ex. 20:3-6).

What are the effects of idolatry that make it so abominable in the sight of God?

Rom. 1:21-32 _____

Eze. 14:1-4 _____

Ps. 106:36-40 _____

Human ideas, formed apart from the inspired instructions of God's Word, are thoroughly degrading to the human spirit, leading to misdeeds and false systems of salvation. Unrepentant sinners incline toward ever-lower forms of degeneracy. Lacking the Holy Spirit's guidance, their minds operate under the influence of Satan (Eph. 2:1-3), who uses false philosophy and religion to separate them from their Creator.

"No outward shrine may be visible; there may be no image for the eye to rest upon; yet thousands are following after the gods of this world—after riches, fame, pleasure, and the pleasing fables that permit man to follow the inclinations of the unregenerate heart. Multitudes have a wrong conception of God and His attributes, and are as truly serving a false god as were the worshipers of Baal. . . .

"Human theories are exalted and placed where God and His law should be. . . . There is seen a spirit of opposition to the plain word of God, of idolatrous exaltation of human wisdom above divine revelation."—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 177, 178.

Chief of the idolatrous offenses of our age are the false doctrines taught in professed Christian churches. These include salvation by works, life immediately after death, and a false day of worship. Christ calls His followers to be the light of the world. This they can be only as they follow the light of His Word (Ps. 119:105; John 14:23; Phil. 2:15, 16) and discard all traditions contrary to Scripture.

What idols, including those that none can see or touch, might there be in my life? How can I discover these idols and put them out of my life forever? When can a good thing become an idol, and how can this problem be remedied?

BABYLON'S WINE, WRATH, AND FORNICATION (Isa. 29:9-13).

What does wine signify in the spiritual sense? Isa. 29:9-13; Deut. 32:32-34.

Babylon's "wine" is the antithesis of the "living water" of eternal life and the anointing of the Spirit (John 4:10, 14; 7:37-39; Rev. 22:1). The wine signifies false teachings and the influence of demons.

"The great sin charged against Babylon is that she 'made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.' This cup of intoxication which she presents to the world represents the false doctrines that she has accepted as the result of her unlawful connection with the great ones of the earth."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 388.

How could false doctrine so potently deceive people that their spiritual condition is compared to drunkenness? Prov. 23:31-33.

Two of Babylon's chief fallacies are: (1) the doctrine of the natural immortality of the soul. This is an unscriptural belief. (See Ps. 146:3, 4; Eccl. 9:5, 6, 10; Isa. 38:18, 19; 1 Cor. 15:22, 23, 53, 54.) It paves the way for demons to impersonate the dead. Thus they can teach false ideas to normally rational minds. (2) Sunday sacredness (or any other day considered sacred) replacing the true Sabbath, which is a sign of God's ability to create and to make us holy (Ex. 20:8-11; Eze. 20:12). Belief in a false day of worship negates the authority of God's law and helps to obscure the record of humanity's origins and God's true means of salvation (Gen. 2:1-3; Eccl. 3:14).

Babylon's wine is called "the wine of . . . wrath" (Rev. 14:8). The cause of this wrath is explained by the texts below. Match each text with the appropriate idea.

Hatred of truth	Acts 19:25-28
Resentment of having sins rebuked	Eph. 2:3
Perversity and combativeness of heart	Acts 7:51-58
Spirit of persecution toward the godly	Luke 4:24-28
Addiction to idolatrous, luxurious living	Gal. 4:29

BABYLON'S FALL (Jer. 51:8, 9).

Why did God pronounce judgment upon the nations of old regarding their social and religious conduct?

Jer. 50:2, 14, 33, 34 _____

Dan. 9:9-11 _____

Isa. 24:1-6 _____

God is exceedingly slow to anger and long-suffering beyond compare. He follows every possible method of reconciliation and restoration before visiting any person or nation in wrath. But when His mercy and patience are treated with bold contempt and taken as a signal to transgress divine law without compunction or restraint, then the hand of judgment is stretched forth with a power that shatters the strength of the wicked and overturns all their devices. (See Prov. 1:24-33; Eccl. 8:11. Read *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 276, 277, "Nineveh, That Great City.")

What did God seek to do for ancient Babylon? What does this reveal about His thoughts toward spiritual Babylon? Jer. 51:8, 9 (compare Rev. 2:18-23; Eze. 33:11).

The fall of Babylon has been a progressive one. Humanism, spiritualism, commercialism, fraud, and false doctrines of every kind reveal Babylon's denial of the Scriptures' divine authority. Human opinions and false systems of salvation, formed under the inspiration of demons, have largely supplanted the teachings of the Bible. Few insist on a plain "thus saith the Lord" over the assertions of self-styled spiritual leaders. Few are like the Bereans, who received the word of God with all readiness of mind and tested all ideas by the supreme authority of Holy Writ. Meanwhile, those in Babylon who take the word of God seriously, resolving by divine grace to obey the whole counsel of God, shall heed Heaven's call: "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Rev. 18:4).

What can I do to influence others to separate from apostate ideas and churches and join God's true remnant?

FURTHER STUDY: As you read Isaiah 21:8-10; 47; Jeremiah 51 and 52; and Daniel 5, consider the spiritual parallels between the character of the ancient Babylonian Empire and modern mystic Babylon.

For an inspired exposition of the second angel's message and treatment of its historic background, read "A Warning Rejected," in *The Great Controversy*, pp. 381-390; "The Second Angel's Message," in *The Story of Redemption*, pp. 364-368; "The Second Angel's Message," *Early Writings*, pp. 237-240.

Some have advanced the idea that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is Babylon, or so much like it as to come under the same condemnation as Babylon. But consider this inspired counsel: "Beware of those who arise with a great burden to denounce the church. . . . How dare mortal man pass his judgment . . . and call the church a harlot, Babylon, a den of thieves. . . . Is this the message we have to bear to Seventh-day Adventists? I tell you, no! God has given no man any such message."—*This Day With God*, p. 172.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How can we give the second angel's message without being condemnatory while at the same time being faithful to its solemn warnings?
2. What are some of the popular errors of religious Babylon (besides the false sabbath and the doctrine of natural immortality of the soul)?
3. List as many evidences as possible to show why Protestantism is fallen.
4. A good question to ask ourselves: We have come out of Babylon, but has Babylon gone out of our hearts? Cite Bible examples of people leaving what God asked them to leave but not letting go in heart the old ways.

SUMMARY: In consequence of people's rejecting the first angel's message, God proclaims the fall of Babylon (false religions in general, apostate Christianity in particular) to warn us of the fatal outcome of clinging to error. He likens Babylon's false doctrine to maddening wine, because demons have crafted Babylon's deadly lies to destroy truth and its adherents. But Babylon will collapse, while truth will triumph.



From Drugs to God

Alejandro Bullón

Lúcio Mercado and Abel Cláudio were drug dealers from Bolivia who were arrested and imprisoned for their illegal drug activities. But one day the gospel reached them, and they accepted Jesus as their Saviour.

Released from prison, Lúcio and Abel wanted to share what Jesus had done for them. They decided to begin a special work to help rehabilitate drug users and reach them with the gospel. In this way they hoped to repair some of the damage they had done in the past while dealing with drugs.

The Adventist Church in South America had no organized work among people addicted to drugs. Today these two lay members have established the first SDA Drug Recovery Center, located in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, on property donated by the city! In addition, with the help of friends, Lucio and Abel are building a house to rehabilitate drug addicts. Already these two men have been instrumental in the rehabilitation of several former drug abusers.

One man who found help is Gabriel, a member of a wealthy and prominent family in Santa Cruz. Gabriel speaks four languages and used to work as a traffic controller in the city's international airport. But alcoholism and drugs destroyed everything he had. He lost his family, his job, his dignity, and his self-respect. During the day he walked the streets of Santa Cruz; at night he slept in the cemetery in empty tombs.

Then someone took him to the Recovery Center. Four months later, Gabriel is rehabilitated. All those who knew him are surprised at his new outlook. His own family is so impressed at the change in Gabriel, they now attend church and want to know better the God who was able to transform Gabriel.

God often calls us to work with those we know best, people with whom we live, work, or share common interests. Lucio and Abel responded to God's call to work among the people they knew best—drug dealers and addicts. And He is blessing their efforts with souls for eternity.

Alejandro Bullón is the Global Mission Coordinator for the South American Division. He has been called the "Billy Graham of South America." He believes in evangelism. Do you?

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Satan's Mark Versus God's Seal



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Rev. 7:1-14; 13:11-18; 14:1-5, 9-12; Eze. 20:12, 20.

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

KEY THOUGHT: God will place His end-time seal upon those whom He vindicates in the pre-Advent judgment—those who claim Christ's righteousness as their own and who conform to Him in character as a result of the indwelling Holy Spirit. They obey God's law, including the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. Those who will receive the mark of the beast are conformed in character to Satan. Their rebellion against God is evidenced by observance of an apostate day of worship.

RECEIVING GOD'S SEAL OR THE MARK OF THE BEAST REVEALS THE CHARACTER OF EACH INDIVIDUAL'S RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE. The essence of the third angel's message is the experience of justification by faith. (See *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 372.) We receive God's seal, not because of our works, but because we accept Christ's sacrifice on our behalf, and obey God's law by the power of His Holy Spirit.

The third angel amplifies the preceding messages and highlights the final issues in the great controversy between good and evil. How the seal of God and the mark of the beast relate to these issues is the subject of this week's lesson.

THE SEAL OF GOD, PART 1 (Rev. 14:1-5).

When is the seal of the Holy Spirit first given to an individual? Eph. 1:12-14; 4:30.

The Holy Spirit takes up residence in the heart of the individual who is born again. (See John 3:5, 6; Rom. 8:9, 10.) The Spirit brings the righteousness of Christ and the gift of eternal life (John 3:36), and He empowers the believer to obey God's law (Rom. 8:1-4). Thus the *first* seal of the Holy Spirit is the new-birth experience. According to Ephesians 1:14, the Spirit is the "earnest" (KJV), or the "guarantee" (RSV) that we will be given an eternal inheritance at the second coming of Jesus. The Greek word used here means "first installment, deposit, down payment, pledge." (Compare 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5.)

A seal places its image on the objects receiving its impress. It is God's purpose that we should be conformed to the image of His Son, and be sealed by being partakers of the divine nature (Rom. 8:29; 2 Peter 1:4).

Describe the character of those people who receive God's end-time seal. Compare Revelation 7:1-3 with 14:1-5.

The *second* seal of the Holy Spirit is the *end-time* seal given to those who, by daily commitment to Christ, are maintaining their born-again experience and, thus, are having victory over sin. Revelation 7:3 and 14:1 state that the 144,000 are sealed in their foreheads. They are established in the truth intellectually and spiritually. The name of Christ and the Father placed in their foreheads symbolizes that, through the Holy Spirit, they are partakers of God's character. They enjoy the new-covenant experience, and thus have the law of God inscribed in their hearts (Heb. 8:10-12). Freed while on this earth from the taint of both legalism and disobedience, in the heavenly kingdom they will follow the Lamb wherever He goes (Rev. 7:14, 15; 14:4).

God's faithful ones are sealed *before* the winds of strife are let loose toward the end of world history (Rev. 7:1-3). Filled with God's Spirit, they are entirely free from acts of sin, "for they are *spotless*" (Rev. 14:5, RSV). The Greek word means "unblemished, blameless." (It is also used in Eph. 1:4; 5:27; Col. 1:22; Jude 24.)

Is there something we can do to ensure that we receive the end-time seal of God?

THE SEAL OF GOD, PART 2 (Heb. 4:4-11; Matt. 11:28-30).

The religious experience of those who receive God's end-time seal before the close of probation (when the winds of strife are let loose) is pure, divested of all the unholy elements of Babylon. Furthermore, they are united to God's true church, and thus are spoken of in symbolic language as "virgins" (Rev. 14:4). They cooperate with Him in proclaiming the three angels' messages to the world. Their spiritual influence derives from the intimacy of their walk with Christ, who claims them to be without fault before His throne, the seat of His judgment and mercy.

What special sign symbolizes the sealing of God's people? Eze. 20:12, 20 (compare Ex. 31:12, 13).

God has chosen observance of His Sabbath to be the distinguishing seal or sign of a loyal, living connection with Himself! (Note that the words *sign* and *seal* are used synonymously in Rom. 4:11.) God's Sabbath is a seal or sign of the power and authority that are His by virtue of His role as Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer. In observing His Sabbath, we affirm the effects of His power and authority in our lives. (See Eph. 4:23, 24.)

When we engage in true Sabbath observance, the Sabbath is a sign that we are God's chosen people. It also becomes a pledge that He will fulfill His covenant promises to us. Our part is to obey under the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. (See *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 350.)

What is the connection between sanctification of character and Sabbath observance? Heb. 4:4-11 (compare Matt. 11:28-30; Deut. 10:12, 13; Eze. 36:26, 27).

"The seal of the living God is placed upon those who conscientiously keep the Sabbath of the Lord."—Ellen White *Comments*, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 980.

"Those who receive the seal of the living God and are protected in the time of trouble must reflect the image of Jesus fully."—*Early Writings*, p. 71.

"No one need say that his case is hopeless, that he cannot live the life of a Christian. Ample provision is made by the death of Christ for every soul. . . . It is now that we must wash our robes of character and make them white in the blood of the Lamb."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 215, 216.

HALLMARK OF APOSTASY (Rev. 13:16, 17).

The alternative to the seal of God is the mark of the beast—the hallmark of apostate Christian authority exercised without regard for individual choice or conscience.

What clues do we have concerning the identity of the mark of the beast? Dan. 7:25; 8:23-25.

Daniel was shown in vision that an apostate religious power, arising from the ruins of the Roman Empire, would have world-controlling influence. This power would make great pretensions to infallible divine authority; it would suppress God's Word and persecute His people while exercising a 1260-year period of dominion in Europe. (Compare Dan. 7:25; 12:7; Rev. 11:3; 12:6, 14; 13:5.) As the capstone of its apostasy, this power would "think to change times and laws." The Ten Commandments, the supreme moral law of the universe, have only one law that deals with time—the Sabbath—the very law that contains the seal of the Lawgiver's identity: the Creator of the universe.

In numerous official statements the Roman Catholic Church has taken full credit for changing the Sabbath of God's ten commandments to the first day of the week. The following is from the 1977 edition of *The Convert's Catechism of Catholic Doctrine*: "Q. **Which is the Sabbath day?** A. Saturday is the Sabbath day. Q. **Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?** A. We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday."—Peter Geiermann (Rockford, Ill.: Tan Books and Publishers, 1977), p. 50.

The Roman Catholic scholar John A. O'Brien says in his best-selling book *The Faith of Millions*: "Since Saturday, not Sunday, is specified in the Bible, isn't it curious that non-Catholics who profess to take their religion directly from the Bible, and not from the Church, observe Sunday instead of Saturday?" He continues by saying that the custom of Sunday keeping "rests upon the authority of the Catholic Church and not upon an explicit text in the Bible."—Revised edition (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1974), pp. 400, 401.

"What then is the change of the Sabbath, but the sign, or mark, of the authority of the Roman Church—the mark of the beast?"—*The Great Controversy*, p. 448.

THE CRUCIAL TEST (Rev. 14:9; 12:17).

In saying, "If any man worship the beast and his image" (Rev. 14:9), the Lord is showing us that all can resist the power of evil by the faith of Jesus. We need not consider ourselves so weak or hemmed in by circumstances that we have to capitulate to the power of the beast. Here God emphasizes freedom of choice, religious liberty, and justification by faith, rather than a system of imposed works and fruitless worship from a power claiming to be the channel of God's grace while acting in direct opposition to His word. He authorizes none to punish and persecute in the realm of personal conscience, but emphasizes our individual accountability to Him for our religious faith.

What teachings found in God's Word prohibit compulsory religion and religious persecution? Luke 9:49-56 (compare Rom. 14:10-13; 1 Cor. 10:29; 2 Cor. 3:17).

God created human beings with freedom of choice. Compulsion is the devil's domain. Through cruelty, fear, and force he attempts to govern our conscience and to secure our loyalty for himself. He does so by compelling religious and worldly governments to make and enforce laws that are contrary to God's law. (See *The Great Controversy*, p. 591.)

Why is opposition to the Sabbath so important in Satan's campaign of rebellion against the government of God? Ex. 20:8-11; Matt. 4:8-10; Isa. 51:12, 13.

Whoever attempts to alter any part of God's law presumes to be a higher authority than God. To change the Sabbath strikes from the Decalogue the name, title, and jurisdiction of the Lawgiver (LORD God, the Creator of the Universe). The one true God is uniquely identifiable by His Creatorship (Ps. 96:4, 5). In Romans 1:18-32, Paul describes the effects of forgetting the Creator and our accountability to Him. Knowing this, Satan has chosen to supplant the Sabbath, substituting a false day of worship to be enforced by earthly powers.

"The Sabbath will be the great test of loyalty, for it is the point of truth especially controverted."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 605.

Why is government-mandated religion unacceptable to God?

ENFORCERS OF THE MARK (Rev. 13:11-18).

Two beasts are brought to view in Revelation 13 that are symbolic of earthly powers (compare Dan. 7:3, 17, 23-25). The first beast represents the papacy, as can be determined by its blasphemous pretensions to holiness, its persecuting activity, the duration of its reign, its geographic headquarters, and the extensiveness of its influence. (See *The Great Controversy*, pp. 54, 55.)

Shortly after the 1260-year period of papal predominance (A.D. 538-1798), a new nation arose, destined to achieve unparalleled economic and social influence.

List the characteristics of this nation, represented by the second beast. Rev. 13:11-17.

Only one country fulfills all the specifications of this prophecy—the United States. The lamblike horns represent the two main features of the American system of government, civil and religious liberty, both of which are guaranteed in the Constitution. Civil liberty has been established by government of the people, in the interests of the people. Religious liberty has resulted from acceptance of the principles of tolerance taught in the New Testament. This civil and religious liberty provided a climate whereby the truth of one Mediator [Christ] between God and humanity could be freely taught.

The prophecy indicates that the United States eventually will become the chief ally of revived papal power and policies. "Laws enforcing the observance of Sunday as the Sabbath will bring about a national apostasy from the principles of republicanism upon which the government has been founded. The religion of the papacy will be accepted by the rulers, and the law of God will be made void."—*Last Day Events*, p. 132.

"As America . . . shall unite with the papacy in forcing the conscience and compelling men to honor the false sabbath, the people of every country on the globe will be led to follow her example."—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 18. (See Rev. 13:12; read *The Great Controversy*, pp. 439-446, "God's Law Immutable.")

The seal of God is symbolically spoken of as being placed only upon the forehead of believers. Why do you think the mark of the beast is symbolically spoken of as being placed on either the forehead or the hand of its recipients? (Compare Rev. 13:16; Isa. 33:14, 15; 59:3, 6.)

FURTHER STUDY: Review Revelation 13 and 14. Read the "Impending Conflict" in *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 711-718. Consider what you can do to be a sentinel for religious liberty and the proclamation of the third angel's message, which exalts the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

Just as the Sabbath is not experientially God's seal until we have entered by faith into Christ's spiritual rest, so people do not receive the mark of the beast until they knowingly choose this false day of worship over the true. The following quotation will help us to understand when people will receive the mark of the beast:

"When Sunday observance shall be enforced by law, and the world shall be enlightened concerning the obligation of the true Sabbath, then whoever shall transgress the command of God, to obey a precept that has no higher authority than that of Rome, will thereby honor popery above God. He is paying homage to Rome and to the power which enforces the institution ordained by Rome. He is worshiping the beast and his image. . . . And it is not until the issue is thus plainly set before the people, and they are brought to choose between the commandments of God and the commandments of men, that those who continue in transgression will receive 'the mark of the beast.'"—*The Great Controversy*, p. 449.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What are the religious causes of the present-day revival of papal power?
2. How can we experience the true revival that enables us to proclaim fully the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus?
3. What effect will the quality of our Sabbathkeeping have upon our facing the ultimate crisis over the Sabbath/Sunday conflict?

SUMMARY: The issues connected with the mark of the beast (Sunday worship) versus the seal of God (the scriptural Sabbath) are sharp and distinct. They highlight the distinction between Christ's covenant of truth, grace, and voluntary worship, and Satan's counterfeit covenant distinguished by error, human works, and compulsory worship. Christ's covenant is epitomized by His Sabbath. Satan's counterfeit is typified by a substitute sabbath (Sunday) bearing the signature of apostasy.



In Spite of Bombs

Maurice Bascom

"You'll have to evacuate the building. We have received word that there is a bomb in the building!" The Russian policeman's words interrupted my sermon. While our musicians played music for the 500 people waiting in the audience, the policeman continued. "Don't tell the people what is happening; it might scare them. Just ask them to evacuate the building."

Emil and Ruth Moldric and I were holding an evangelistic series in Kemerovo, Russia, a town in central Siberia. Before the meetings began, we met and prayed on Sabbath with our Adventist believers in a little wooden church that wouldn't hold 30 people. And now an average of 700 were attending nightly meetings in the Drama Theater. The auditorium held about 500 people, so we had two meetings a night. We were meeting with success, but now a bomb scare threatened to disrupt our meetings.

I walked back onto the stage with the translator and told the people, "The police are here; they say they have received word that a bomb has been planted in the building." The people began to shake their heads and say, "Niet, niet. We don't believe it." I told the congregation that if they wanted to leave they may do so, but that I would remain and continue my sermon. Not one person left, and the meeting continued with no further interruption.

During the meetings the Russian Orthodox Church held a parade and a rally. The Orthodox priest spoke against the foreign evangelists in town. He wanted to discourage people from attending the meetings. In spite of this, meetings continued with good attendance for 30 days. We gave interested people Bibles, and held a nightly Bible class and a stop smoking clinic, as well.

After the meetings ended, we rented a hall so church members can continue to meet three evenings a week and follow up the interests gleaned from the evangelistic meetings.



So far more than 165 have been baptized, and many more are studying for baptism, despite parades, speeches, and bomb threats.

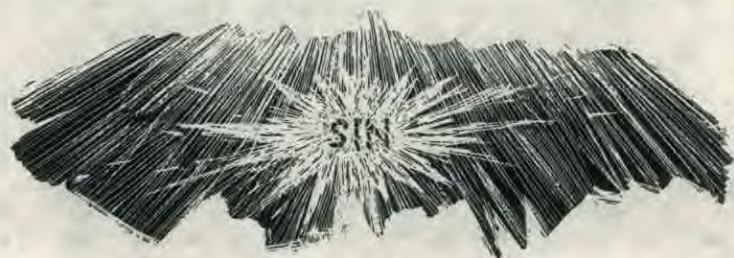
Elder Maurice Bascom is the director of International Teacher Service at the General Conference.

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The Wrath of God



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Rev. 14:9-11; Isa. 10:1-4; Zech. 7:12; 1 Thess 5:9.

MEMORY TEXT: "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness" (Romans 1:18, NIV).

KEY THOUGHT: Our God is a God of perfect justice as well as of perfect mercy. Through the gospel of grace, He has provided a way for all humankind to be saved. Those who cling to sin engage in such a course of rebellious living that for the welfare of the universe, God must end their existence. But Christ drank the cup of justice for us so that no one need be destroyed.

GOD'S WRATH REVEALS HIS UNCOMPROMISING RIGHTEOUSNESS AND LOVE. Some regard the subject of God's wrath as a challenge to the integrity of their religious experience. The third angel's message impels us to study the question of God's wrath because it is predicted to be poured out in full measure. What provokes the wrath of the most patient, kind, and merciful being in the universe? How is His wrath consistent with His love? What form does His wrath take, and why? What provision has He made that none should experience His wrath if they truly wish to escape it? These are the questions we shall explore this week.

DIVINE WRATH—ITS REASON (Ex. 34:5-7; James 2:12, 13).

How do the following verses describe God's character?
1 John 4:8, 16, 18; Ex. 34:5-7.

All that God does is consistent with His character of love. Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. He seeks to draw every sinner into a saving relationship with Himself. But He must destroy those who beat back His waves of mercy and cling to sin. Why? Because the righteousness of God requires that sin and sinners be eradicated for their own sake and the sake of the loyal universe. Willfully unrepentant sinners are filled with unyielding hostility toward God and His people. (See Rom. 1:28-32; 8:7.)

Read Mark 3:1-5 and Matthew 23:25-38. Why did Christ express anger toward the Pharisees? How can we tell that there was no malice or animosity in His anger?

"Christ's indignation was directed against the hypocrisy, the gross sins, by which men were destroying their own souls, deceiving the people and dishonoring God. In the specious deceptive reasoning of the priests and rulers He discerned the working of satanic agencies. Keen and searching had been His denunciation of sin; but He spoke no words of retaliation. He had a holy wrath against the prince of darkness; but He manifested no irritated temper. So the Christian who lives in harmony with God, possessing the sweet attributes of love and mercy, will feel a righteous indignation against sin; but he will not be roused by passion to revile those who revile him."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 619, 620.

Explain James 1:19, 20; 2:12, 13 in relation to policies and penalties connected with the enforcement of the mark of the beast.

Those who accept and enforce the mark of the beast show no mercy or justice to those whose sole offense is refusal to submit to a rebellious edict that defies the law of God, which they love and peaceably obey.

Why would it not be consistent with God's character of love to permanently allow sin, rebellion, and persecution?

DIVINE WRATH—ITS RELUCTANCE (Eze. 33:10, 11; 2 Peter 3:9).

What do the following texts teach about God's attitude regarding the punishment of sinners? Eze. 33:10, 11; 2 Peter 3:9; 2 Chron. 36:14-16.

God's justice involves His sometimes abandoning us to the dire results of our own choices. But God never ceases to *love* us, even as we march off to certain destruction. God does not change from love to wrath or vice versa. Notice how Jesus responded to the rich young ruler (Luke 18:15-23). God is not vindictive, as we might be.

"Our Creator and our Commander, infinite in power, terrible in justice, seeks by every means to bring men to see and repent of their sins. . . . [But] He cannot uphold and guard a people who reject His counsel and despise His reproofs." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 426 (compare *The Great Controversy*, p. 627). "The very fact of His reluctance to execute justice testifies to the enormity of the sins that call forth His judgments and to the severity of the retribution awaiting the transgressor." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 628.

The third angel's message presents the horrors of the second death, an ordeal that Christ alone has thus far experienced. Hence this message is a graphic final appeal for this morally degraded world to receive Christ, to be neither intimidated by the beast nor enchanted by his mystic arts.

This message lifts up the Lamb of God against the backdrop of hell-fire, for He stands between us and it, ready to pardon our sins and take them away. He pleads with us, "Behold My Calvary love. Do not suffer the agonies of the second death, which I have already endured for you."

The severity of the punishment is designed to make us ask, "What is sin that it should so provoke the wrath of God?" The answer comes back from the holy Word, "Sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). This realization, impressed upon the conscience by the power of the Holy Spirit, will lead multitudes to recognize that the Decalogue, including the Sabbath commandment, was not abrogated at Calvary, but is still in full, eternal effect.

How does the fact that "the law reveals the attributes of God's character" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 762; Ps. 19:7, 8; 119:172; Rom. 7:12) shed light upon the definition and results of sin in 1 John 3:4 and Isaiah 59:2?

DIVINE WRATH—ITS RELEASE (Rev. 6:14-17; 15:1).

God's numerous warnings to sinners attest to His desire to save rather than destroy. If our cases were hopeless, God would not warn us. If He had no concern about our destiny, He would not plead for us to turn from sin and live. The warnings that thankless sinners look upon as harassment and intimidating threats are really the appeals of divine mercy pressing to the limits of its forbearance and long-suffering. The final outpouring of God's Spirit, coupled with the proclamation of His gospel, exalting both law and grace, will bring everyone to a point of decision by which their destiny will be fixed.

At the end of time, the wicked will decide not to tolerate the existence of God's commandment-keeping people, who have the faith of Jesus. The beliefs and example of those who are sealed will become a vexation to the perverted consciences of the lost. Their universal cry will be, "Away with such people from the earth: for it is not fit that they should live." (Compare Acts 22:22.)

When this state of affairs is reached, what action does God take? Rev. 14:10; 15:1; 16:1 (compare Lev. 26:23-25; 2 Thess. 1:6).

God will punish the incorrigible transgressors of His law. The persecuting hatred visited upon His faithful, obedient people will provoke His wrath.

"When Christ ceases His intercession in the sanctuary, the unmingled wrath threatened against those who worship the beast and his image and receive his mark will be poured out. . . . By condemning the people of God to death, they have as truly incurred the guilt of their blood as if it had been shed by their hands."—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 627, 628.

How is Christ's wrath manifested at the second coming of Jesus? Rev. 6:14-17.

"The death of Christ brings to the rejecter of His mercy the wrath and judgments of God, unmixed with mercy. This is the wrath of the Lamb."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 139.

What is your view of God's wrath as it relates to His saving grace and love?

DIVINE WRATH—ITS RESULTS (Mal. 4:1-3; Rev. 14:11).

The fate of the wicked is conclusively dealt with in the subject of God's wrath. The common view among Christians is that the torments of the wicked are eternal. But the third angel's message compels us to examine this question. It is not human traditions, but the Word of God, to which we must turn for an authoritative answer.

How did God destroy Sodom and Gomorrah? Gen. 19:24. How long did this process take? Lam. 4:6. What kind of fire destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, and of what does it serve as an example? Jude 7.

What remained of Sodom and Gomorrah? What remains of the wicked after they are destroyed? Ps. 37:10, 20; Isa. 13:19, 20; Mal. 4:1, 3; 2 Peter 2:6.

Truly the fire that destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah was eternal, but only in effect, not in duration. The wicked will receive their final punishment on this earth, just as did the Sodomites. (See Prov. 11:31; Rev. 20:12-15; 21:1-5.) Following the destruction of the impenitent, God will create "a new heaven and a new earth" "and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind" (Rev. 21:1; Isa. 65:17).

In light of the biblical teaching that the wicked are not eternally tortured, how can we understand the phrase "and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever" (Rev. 14:11)?

The phrase in the original means "to ages of ages" signifying "for as long as something endures under the conditions in which it is placed." (See Ex. 21:5, 6; Jonah 2:6.) The wicked will be burned with unquenchable fire until they are fully consumed. Nothing can stop the fire or hinder its work of utter destruction, and nothing will remain when it has finished its work. Even Satan and his angels will be annihilated. (See Isa. 34:9, 10; Eze. 28:14-19; Obadiah 16; Matt. 10:28.)

Why are the worshipers of the beast and those who receive his mark said to have no rest day or night? Rev. 14:11; 16:11; Heb. 4:1-5; Matt. 11:28-30.

What does today's lesson teach about God's character?

DIVINE WRATH—ITS RESOLUTION (Rev. 16:1-21; Nahum 1:9).

"The theory of eternal torment is one of the false doctrines that constitute the wine of the abominations of Babylon, of which she makes all nations drink."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 536. The very thought of destroying the wicked is abhorrent to God. Even the relatively brief period of anguish to be suffered by the lost grieves Him unutterably (Jer. 13:15-17). He calls the administration of punitive wrath "His strange act" because destruction is so foreign to His nature (Isa. 28:21, 22; Luke 9:56). His preference is to "have all men to be saved" (1 Tim. 2:4).

In spite of the heartbreaking persistence of God's love, most people persistently reject His offer of salvation as if it were a nuisance or an affront. The time will come when God's merciful appeals will simply call forth louder scoffing, ever more adamant rejection, and homicidal rage against God's messengers of peace (Isa. 26:10; Eccl. 8:11).

How conclusive will be the eradication of evil from the universe? Nahum 1:9; Heb. 10:14-17.

"The whole universe will have become witnesses to the nature and results of sin. And its utter extermination, which in the beginning would have brought fear to angels and dishonor to God, will now vindicate His love and establish His honor before the universe of beings who delight to do His will. . . . Never will evil again be manifest."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 504.

Because the wicked have no peace and are constantly at work to lead others into rebellion, "it is in mercy to the universe that God will finally destroy the rejecters of His grace."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 543. (See Ps. 37:12.)

How does God's wrath manifest itself? Rev. 16:1-21.

God does not cherish wrath, but with perfect justice metes it out on unbelievers. When the seventh angel empties his vial, he proclaims, "It is done" (Rev. 16:17). The plagues and the fire of God destroy the rebellious; they do not immortalize them in perpetual agony.

Why is it merciful of God to relieve the wicked of their existence?

FURTHER STUDY: Contrast the wrath of God with that of Satan. Jeremiah 30:20-23; Daniel 9:26, 27; Romans 2:2-6; 11:22; Ephesians 5:5-10; Revelation 12:17; 14:8.

"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that . . . we should live together with him" (1 Thess. 5:9, 10).

"God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him" (Rom. 5:8, 9).

"The wrath of God will not fall upon one soul that seeks refuge in Him."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 157.

"The sufferings of every man are the sufferings of God's child, and those who reach out no helping hand to their perishing fellow beings provoke His righteous anger. This is the wrath of the Lamb."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 825.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Consider the relationship between the five following cups:
 - a. Matt. 26:27, 28. The communion cup presented by Christ.
 - b. Matt. 26:39-42. The "cup" that Christ drank in Gethsemane.
 - c. Ps. 116:13; 23:5. The cup of salvation.
 - d. Rev. 14:10. The cup of God's indignation.
 - e. Rev. 14:8; 17:4; 18:3. The cup of Babylon's wine of wrathful immorality.

2. Which is the most popular cup today? Which cup does Christ want us to drink from, and with what effect?

SUMMARY: God's wrath is provoked, not by human ignorance or weakness, but by perverse, open-eyed rebellion manifesting itself in cruel, hateful conduct, especially toward those who love God and seek to obey Him. His wrath is the final anguished expression of unrequited love for sinners who refuse to be reconciled to Him, even in the face of Calvary love as it is impressed upon their consciences by the Holy Spirit.



Hold Up the Banner

Ken Flemmer

A prominent Adventist school relocated its campus when the neighboring city grew up around it. School officials purchased land to build a new campus, but found squatters had settled on the land. The school offered the squatters a piece of property and money to build new homes. A village grew up on the new land.

The villagers were farmers, and seasonal work did not pay well. When they saw new buildings on their former farmland, they decided the new owners were rich, and they began stealing from the school. Theft got so bad that the school hired guards to patrol the campus. Tensions between the school and the villagers grew. How could the school hold up the banner of God's love and protect its valuables at the same time?

Then ADRA sent some trainees into the village. They talked about problems, cleaned the village, built latrines, and provided immunizations for the children. But the village's biggest problem was hunger. Students asked the school if the villagers could plow an unused corner of the campus to grow vegetables. The administration, seeing the chance to improve relations with the villagers, agreed.

Later, ADRA wanted to teach trainees gardening and water development. The project leader suggested drilling a well in the villagers' garden to help increase their growing season. Villagers watched as the team started drilling. By late Thursday they hit water. However, they couldn't finish drilling until Sunday. Did they dare leave the portable well-driller unguarded in the villagers' garden—the same villagers who had stolen supplies from the school?

The project leader begged the school to leave the well driller in the garden. "Think of the negative message you will send if you guard it," he said. When he returned Sunday, the machine was sitting in the garden plot, guarded by the villagers through the Sabbath hours.



A few months later, when a hurricane severely damaged the school's water supply and pumping station, the villagers invited the faculty and students to use their water.

This school can hold up the banner of God's love to the people in this village.

Ken Flemmer is assistant vice president of ADRA.

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The Latter Rain



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Hosea 6:3; Joel 2:15-32; Zech. 10:1; Luke 11:13; James 5:7-10.

MEMORY TEXT: "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth" (Hosea 6:3).

KEY THOUGHT: An unlimited outpouring of the Holy Spirit will attend the final proclamation of the three angels' messages. The result will be an abundant harvest of souls ready for translation into the kingdom of heaven.

THE GREATEST UNUSED POWER. Two people were observing Niagara Falls when one said to the other, "This is the greatest unused power in the world!"

"Not so, my brother," came the reply. "The greatest unused power in the world is the Holy Spirit of the living God." (A. J. Gordon, adapted.)

The Holy Spirit will usher in the latter rain—God's enabling power for the church to give its final proclamation of the everlasting gospel. The latter rain will illuminate the church with the glory of God's character and will empower His people to illuminate the world by bestowing upon it the necessary spiritual gifts and spiritual power. The latter rain ripens both the church and the world for the final harvest in which Christ will "reap" for His kingdom the souls seasoned in righteousness.

THE HOLY SPIRIT (John 16:7-15; Gal. 5:22-25).

Upon what subject did Christ principally speak to His disciples the night before His crucifixion? John 14:15-18, 26; 15:26; 16:7-15.

The Holy Spirit is God's most powerful gift for keeping us in contact with Christ's living presence. The Holy Spirit dwells in us to educate, reprove, convict, regenerate, comfort, sanctify, and impart spiritual gifts. He empowers us to live godly lives and participate in the work of saving others. Christ did not refer to the Holy Spirit as "it," but as "He." Christ taught His disciples to baptize converts in the "name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost [Spirit]" (Matt. 28:19). Thus, the Holy Spirit is a divine Person of the Godhead, and not merely a celestial influence. (See also Acts 5:3, 4; 13:2.)

How willing is God for us to receive the Holy Spirit? Luke 11:13. How essential is it that we have the Holy Spirit in our lives? Rom. 8:1, 8-16, 26, 27.

The book of Acts largely portrays the Spirit's work in the early church. Consecrated believers were living vessels receiving the outpouring of the Spirit. The result was a multitude of conversions and the defeat of evil powers. "If the fulfillment of the promise is not seen as it might be, it is because the promise is not appreciated as it should be. If all were willing, all would be filled with the Spirit."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 50. "The Holy Spirit will come to all who are begging for the bread of life to give to their neighbors."—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 90.

What indispensable blessings does the Spirit bring to all who humbly wait upon the Lord? 2 Cor. 3:17, 18; Gal. 5:17, 22-25; 1 Peter 1:22.

"The impartation of the Spirit is the impartation of the life of Christ. It imbues the receiver with the attributes of Christ."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 805.

Pray daily for the baptism of the Holy Spirit and for willingness to serve as He directs.

**SHOWERS OF BLESSING AND RIPENING IN
RIGHTEOUSNESS (Acts 1:12-14; 2:1).**

"The latter rain, ripening earth's harvest, represents the spiritual grace that prepares the church for the coming of the Son of man."

"The ripening of the grain represents the completion of the work of God's grace in the soul. By the power of the Holy Spirit the moral image of God is to be perfected in the character. We are to be wholly transformed into the likeness of Christ."
—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 506.

What is essential to receiving the latter rain?

Deut. 11:13, 14 _____

Joel 2:13, 15-18, 23 _____

Zech. 10:1 _____

James 5:7-9 _____

How did the apostles prepare for the Holy Spirit? Acts 1:1-8, 12-14; 2:1.

1. They praised and blessed God.
2. They met with one another to make their needs and desires known to God in the name of Christ.
3. They humbled their hearts, repented, and confessed their doubt.
4. They meditated upon the life of their Saviour. As they did so, they felt that no sacrifice they would be called upon to make on His behalf would be too great. Their chief goal was for their lives to bear witness to Christ.
5. They prayed for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit so they would be able to lead sinners to Christ.
6. They put away all differences from among themselves, including the desire for supremacy. In drawing away from their own selfish desires, they drew nearer to God. (See *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 35-37.)

"So it may be now. Let Christians put away all dissension and give themselves to God for the saving of the lost. Let them ask in faith for the promised blessing, and it will come."
—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 21.

SAINTS ALIVE (Acts 1:8; Isa 58:6-14).

When we become animated by the Spirit, what activity will take priority in our lives? Acts 1:8; 1 Thess. 1:5-8.

Deep is the personal enrichment we receive from communion with the Holy Spirit. But that does not make us religious hermits. Rather, we are stimulated by Christ's love, mediated through His Spirit, to labor fervently for the salvation of others. Filled with the Spirit, we have a compelling hunger for the salvation of others. The life of the Spirit-filled person, though energetic and enthusiastic, will not have a stressful, keyed-up quality that makes others nervous or uneasy.

"Those who are under the influence of the Spirit of God will not be fanatical, but calm and steadfast, free from extravagance in thought, word, or deed. Amid the confusion of delusive doctrines, the Spirit of God will be a guide and a shield to those who have not resisted the evidences of truth, silencing every other voice but that which comes from Him who is the truth."
—*Gospel Workers*, p. 289.

How do we communicate true, vital religion? 1 John 3:16-18; Isa. 58:6-14.

Our chief mission is more than warning people against the mark of the beast and instructing them to attend church on Sabbath. We should not teach these truths apart from Christ's righteousness. The importance of receiving His righteousness gives relevance and validity to every biblical message we present.

In conjunction with teaching the three angels' messages, we are to demonstrate God's love. This is why the Lord has instructed His church to engage in medical missionary evangelism and in Christian help work. We are not only to teach, but also to demonstrate the righteousness of Christ. There is healing virtue in the three angels' messages. For a better understanding of these vital phases of our ministry to others, read the chapters "Medical Missionary Work" and "Christian Help Work" in the book *Christian Service*, pp. 132-140, 186-193.

Theological teaching is ineffective unless our actions are saturated with the love of Jesus Christ.

Ask the Lord to show you for what services your talents qualify you. Then ask Him to help you utilize these talents in spreading the gospel message of the three angels.

THE RIPENING OF THE HARVEST (2 Cor. 9:8-13).

What is God's purpose in sowing the gospel seed? 1 Peter 1:23-25 (compare James 1:18; Isa. 60:21).

The same word by which the Lord created the heavens and the earth is able to regenerate us with new life from above (Isa. 55:9-13; 2 Cor. 4:6, 7).

What kind of fruit will the regenerated life bear? Eph. 5:9; Gal. 5:22, 23.

Those who are united to Christ, the Living Vine, will bring forth fruit like that of the parent stock. They have assimilated His character by feeding on His Word and fellowshiping with Him. Their souls are watered by His atoning mercies, flowing from His sacrifice. They are partakers of the divine nature, and their fruit is unto holiness. They welcome the Holy Spirit's work in their hearts. The Spirit fulfills God's promises for them. He makes them spiritually healthy, productive people (Jer. 17:7, 8).

In the physical realm, mature fruit is not brought forth instantaneously. In what way does this same principle apply in the spiritual realm? John 15:1-8; Mark 4:26-29.

"As the plant takes root in the soil, so we are to take deep root in Christ. As the plant receives the sunshine, the dew, and the rain, we are to open our hearts to the Holy Spirit. . . . By constantly relying upon Christ as our personal Saviour, we shall grow up into Him in all things who is our head."
—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 67.

As we mature in grace and godliness, what does the Lord increasingly supply? 2 Cor. 9:8-13; Ps. 126:5, 6.

"The object of the Christian life is fruit bearing—the reproduction of Christ's character in the believer, that it may be reproduced in others."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 67.

What can you do to hasten your growth and Christ's return?

INTERNATIONAL HARVESTERS (Isa. 61:10, 11).

How does Jesus describe our part in spreading the gospel? Mark 4:1-8, 14-20. What are we to do about the great harvest that awaits us? Luke 10:2-11.

"With the great truth we have been privileged to receive, we should, and under the Holy Spirit's power we could become living channels of light. We could then approach the mercy seat; and seeing the bow of promise, kneel with contrite hearts, and seek the kingdom of heaven with a spiritual violence that would bring its own reward. . . . When this experience is ours, . . . we shall empty our hearts of the corroding power of selfishness, and shall be filled with praise and gratitude to God. We shall magnify the Lord, the God of all grace, who has magnified Christ. And He will reveal His power through us, making us as sharp sickles in the harvest field."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1089.

As we return to primitive godliness, and are visited with the latter rain, what will be the results? Isa. 61:10, 11; 62:10-12; Joel 2:23, 24.

The third angel's message "is represented as being given with a loud voice; that is, with power of the Holy Spirit."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 980.

"They will declare the truth with the might of the Spirit's power. Multitudes will receive the faith and join the armies of the Lord."—*Evangelism*, p. 700.

How will Satan try to counterfeit the latter rain? Rev. 13:11-14 (compare 13:3; 12:9); Matt. 24:24; 2 Thess. 2:3, 8-12. What will be the main difference between this false revival and the true? Deut. 32:1-5.

The most cunningly devised miracles will not deceive those who receive the truth that they might be saved. Whatever does not conform with God's law and the testimony they will recognize as false and reject accordingly.

What evidence is there that Satan has begun to counterfeit the outpouring of the Holy Spirit?

FURTHER STUDY: The latter rain is vital to true revival. Satan seeks to thwart revival largely by redirecting it along his counterfeit lines. Read the chapter "Modern Revivals" in *The Great Controversy*, pp. 461-478, and carefully distinguish between the characteristics of true and false revival. Compare Romans 8:1-17 and 2 Peter 2.

"When we have entire, wholehearted consecration to the service of Christ, God will recognize the fact by an outpouring of His Spirit without measure; but this will not be while the largest portion of the church are not laborers together with God."—*Evangelism*, p. 699.

"The outpouring of the Spirit in the days of the apostles was the former rain, and glorious was the result. But the latter rain will be much more abundant."—*Evangelism*, p. 701.

"The Spirit is poured out upon all who will yield to its promptings, and, casting off all man's machinery, his binding rules and cautious methods, they will declare the truth with the Spirit's power. Multitudes will receive the faith and join the armies of the Lord."—*Evangelism*, p. 700.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What effect will our heeding the counsel of the true Witness to the Laodicean church have upon our lives and witness? Read Rev. 3:14-21.
2. What criteria did Christ give us by which to evaluate our religious experience before the end of the harvest, when it will be too late to change character? Matt. 7:15-27.
3. Is it safe to wait passively for the Lord to stir us into action? Do we have any responsibility in preparing for the latter rain? If so, what is that responsibility?

SUMMARY: Through His Holy Spirit, God empowers His church to proclaim the gospel message of the three angels to a spiritually starved world. The truth, spoken with unprecedented power by those who honor it in their lives, will ripen the harvest of believers. Then Christ will return and reap into His kingdom all who have chosen Him. Scripture refers to the final outpouring of the Holy Spirit as the latter rain. All will receive the latter rain who continually consecrate themselves entirely to God and His service.



Showers of Blessing in Romania

James H. Zachary

God works wonders with very little. With only six active Adventists attending the house church in Caracal, Romania, evangelism seemed hopeless. But God specializes in tough situations.

The district pastor conducted a Revelation Seminar that drew 70 persons. A local religious leader, determined to disrupt the seminar, attended the meeting and tried to embarrass the pastor. Then one day two clerics arrived in their official robes and censors, to "exorcise" the Adventist "devils" from the city. Still the people came.

In preparation for the evangelistic meetings that followed the Revelation Seminar, members of the baptismal class joined the six church members to pass out handbills, visit interests, and help remodel the house church.

Adrienne was one of the new believers. Her parents resisted her interest in the Bible. Often she came to the meetings with wounds inflicted by her angry father. Once she escaped the beating. When her father tried to drag her into the wood shed, Adrienne grabbed onto a water pipe. Her father pulled her so hard that the pipe broke. In the shower that followed, he forgot the beating.

Adrienne was determined to be baptized. The night before the baptism she stayed in the pastor's home so her father could not prevent her from being baptized.

With a joyful smile on her face Adrienne was baptized in the new baptismal tank in the living room of the house church. She started for home knowing what awaited her there. But her grandmother was visiting, and when she saw Adrienne, she asked, "Where have you been so long?"

"Oh grandmother, something wonderful happened tonight. I was baptized just the way Jesus was baptized." She prepared herself for a violent reaction.

"Why didn't you tell me? I would like to be baptized that way too," Grandmother replied. Adrienne's parents listened in surprised silence. There was no beating that night.

Now the little house church is full of new members who are helping to plant churches in surrounding areas. God is doing great things in Romania. In 15 months more than 13,470 persons joined the church, as laypersons and pastors work together in evangelism.



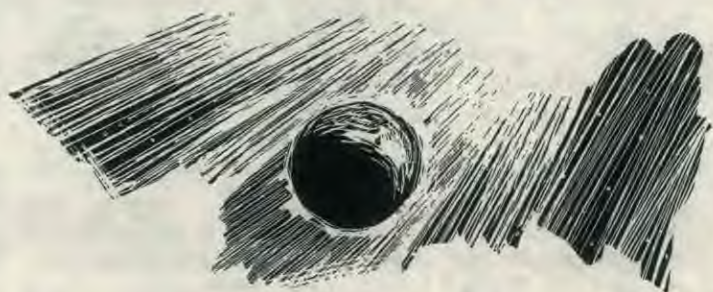
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The Loud Cry



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Rev. 18:1-5; John 10:16; Isa. 60:1-5.

MEMORY TEXT: "And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory" (Revelation 18:1).

KEY THOUGHT: The loud cry of the third angel's message illuminates the earth with the revelation of God's glorious character. Its purpose is twofold: (1) to liberate all who are willing from the deceptions of Satan; (2) to gather those liberated into God's remnant church.

THE LOUD CRY IS GOD'S LAST WARNING AND APPEAL to a world locked in the fierce grip of sin. As a result of the final outpouring of the Holy Spirit, God's remnant people will utter the loud cry of the third angel with majesty, purity, and penetrating power. Though given by a despised remnant, this message will recommend itself clearly to the honest-hearted as being holy in origin and purpose. Indeed, it is Heaven's last appeal to a world wrapped in the chill, poisonous fog of Babylonish dogmas and lying wonders.

"The work of this angel [Rev. 18:1] comes in at the right time to join in the last great work of the third angel's message as it swells to a loud cry. And the people of God are thus prepared to stand in the hour of temptation, which they are soon to meet. I saw a great light resting upon them, and they united to fearlessly proclaim the third angel's message."—*Early Writings*, p. 277.

COME OUT OF BABYLON (Isa. 48:20; 60:1-5).

During World War II, many women worked in a German munitions factory. They slept together in a barracks on the factory compound. One night the munitions plant was sabotaged. Huge, concussive explosions filled the air and shook the ground. The workers took refuge in a shallow underground shelter, where they huddled in terror. As the work of destruction progressed, the shelter began to crack and crumble. Suddenly a military officer burst in and thundered, "Get out! Get out!" The women escaped the shelter just before it collapsed, by running to safety through a scene of fiery destruction.

In the last days, while people take vain refuge in the bosom of Babylon, God cries out through the message of the three angels, "Come out of her, my people" (Rev. 18:4). "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction" (Micah 2:10). The loud cry is His *last* appeal and warning. (Read *The Great Controversy*, pp. 604, 605.) How important that all who love the Lord join with Him in giving the loud cry to a doomed world!

To whom in Babylon does God address this appeal? How should they come out of Babylon? Rev. 18:1, 4; 2 Cor. 6:16-18 (compare Isa. 48:20; 52:11).

"Almost till the very close of time, apparently, some—perhaps many—of God's people have not heard the call to come out of mystical Babylon. Compare God's call to His people in ancient times to flee from literal Babylon. . . . Presumably, all who are truly His people will hear His voice and heed His call."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 861.

What connection exists between the angel's lighting the earth with glory and his solemn message of denunciation and warning? Rev. 18:1-5; Hab. 2:12-15; Isa. 60:1-5.

It is a glorious mission to turn people from false religion to the genuine religion of Christ. While at first glance the emphasis of the message seems to be Babylon's corruption and doom, the essential theme is this: Flee Babylon, and find shelter in Christ and His fold.

What can you do to help someone find shelter in Christ?

INTO CHRIST'S FOLD (Rev. 12:17; 19:10).

What will be the character of God's true church at the end of time? Eph. 5:25-27.

What has God resolved to do for and through His church? Eph. 3:10, 14-21; Rev. 12:1.

Human wisdom may console itself in unbelief. But God will have a visible body of faithful, purified believers. They will breast the raging waves of apostasy and prove an impregnable bulwark against Satan's onslaughts and seductions.

God established the Christian church at Pentecost through the work of His Holy Spirit in the lives of Christ's followers. So has He kept the church alive through the ages. And so will He bring it to victory in the end. No human or satanic agency will be able to destroy it.

The call to become part of God's remnant church is not the theological aberration of a boastful sect. It is an integral component of the three angels' messages, issued by God Himself. (Read Joel 2:32; Zech. 8:6, 7; John 10:16.)

What are the definitive characteristics of God's remnant? Rev. 12:17; 14:12.

An examination of the remnant's features discloses their identifying characteristics: (1) patience; (2) obedience to God's commandments; (3) faith; (4) possession of the testimony of Jesus. Their patient endurance and obedience to God's will result from their faith in Christ.

How many denominations or churches adhere to all ten of God's commandments, including the seventh-day Sabbath? How many honor the testimony of Jesus, which is the Spirit of Prophecy? (Rev. 19:10; Isa. 8:20). In its largest sense, the Spirit of Prophecy represents a clear grasp of God's prophetic word (Dan. 12:1-10; Rev. 1:3). More specifically, it means a revival of the gift of prophecy. Seventh-day Adventists believe God especially bestowed this gift upon Ellen White for the spiritual guidance of the remnant church. Her rich body of writings on practical Christian living harmonizes throughout with Scripture.

THE ULTIMATE FALL OF BABYLON (Rev. 18:5-8).

What is the spiritual condition of Babylon at the time of the loud cry of the third angel? Rev. 18:5-8.

In the King James Version, we read that Babylon's sins "reached" to heaven. The Greek word translated "reach" means "to glue together," "to fasten firmly together." Babylon's transgressions are, therefore, depicted "as a mountainous mass reaching upward, compact and glued together."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 861.

Because of Babylon's spiritual condition, we read that its destruction will come "in one day" (Rev. 18:8) or "one hour" (verse 10). The Greek suggests a point of time as opposed to a specific time period. Thus the phrases "one day" or "one hour" seem to stress suddenness and surprise rather than duration.

"In the eighteenth chapter of Revelation the people of God are called upon to come out of Babylon. According to this scripture, many of God's people must still be in Babylon. And in what religious bodies are the greater part of the followers of Christ now to be found? Without doubt, in the various churches professing the Protestant faith."

"Notwithstanding the spiritual darkness and alienation from God that exist in the churches which constitute Babylon, the great body of Christ's true followers are still to be found in their communion."—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 383, 390.

We must remember that among Muslims, Shintoists, Buddhists, Hindus, humanists, animists, Christians of various denominations, and people of every other sort of religion and ideology, many have been faithfully responding to the influences of the Holy Spirit. These honest seekers for truth will come out of their systems of error and join God's remnant church (Rom. 8:14; John 1:9; Isa. 60:5-11). The three angels' messages are to go to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. Multitudes will come out of Babylon to join the remnant church. They will make Christ their reliance and receive total cleansing from sin. (See *Early Writings*, p. 271.)

What can you do in your life and witness to help people come out of Babylon? Have you come out fully yourself?

BABYLON'S PERSECUTION OF THE REMNANT (Rev. 17:4-6).

Scripture clearly states that "he that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love" (1 John 4:8). For all its wealth, wonders, pomp, miracles, and glittering pretensions, Babylon exhibits a spirit of intolerance toward those who live the truth as it is in Jesus (Rev. 17:4-6; 18:24). The real irony is that Babylon exhibits this spirit in God's name. But whatever their former beliefs, God's true people in Babylon will recognize that the persecuting spirit is wrong. This will alert them to the necessity of leaving Babylon. At the same time, God's true servants who are proclaiming the three angels' messages will receive the latter rain, giving credibility to their message. (See *The Great Controversy*, p. 611.)

How do the prophets describe the spirit and work of the remnant? Rev. 14:1-5 (compare Dan. 12:3; 2 Cor. 6:1-10).

God's people will not be absorbed in saving themselves from persecution. They will conduct their work judiciously but courageously, as Christ has taught His servants to do (Matt. 10:16-28; Acts 8:1-4; 11:19-21).

"When the storm of persecution really breaks upon us, the true sheep will hear the true Shepherd's voice. Self-denying efforts will be put forth to save the lost, and many who have strayed from the fold will come back to follow the great Shepherd. The people of God will draw together and present to the enemy a united front. In view of the common peril, strife for supremacy will cease; there will be no disputing as to who shall be accounted the greatest. . . .

"Thus will the truth be brought into practical life, and thus will be answered the prayer of Christ. . . . 'That they may all be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.' John 17:21. The love of Christ, the love of our brethren, will testify to the world that we have been with Jesus and have learned of Him. Then will the message of the third angel swell to a loud cry, and the whole earth will be lightened with the glory of the Lord."—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 401.

Before intense persecution breaks forth, what can you or your class do to lighten the earth with God's glory? Is there danger that intolerance or unkindness in your heart will drive the Holy Spirit away from you?

ZION'S TRIUMPH IN CHRIST (Rom. 3:20-24, 31).

The loud cry of the third angel's message comprises more than the proclamation of Babylon's fall. It heralds the glad tidings of Christ's pure gospel high above the whirlpool of human tradition and the doctrines of demons. At the same time, it brings the truth within soul-saving reach of all who desire freedom from bondage to Satan.

"The loud cry of the third angel has already begun in the revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the sin-pardoning Redeemer. This is the beginning of the light of the angel whose glory shall fill the whole earth."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 363.

What does the Scripture teach concerning the believers' relationship to the righteousness of Christ? Rom. 3:20-24, 31 (compare 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:7-10; 1 Peter 2:24).

Through His gospel of grace, Christ has made ample provision for us to become filled with His righteousness and partakers of His divine nature. This is the mystery of God: "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27-29). On the other hand, the mystery of iniquity is the presence of Satan in the human heart, making it impenetrable to the love of God.

Tragically, most people in the world and many in the church will rise up against this message because they have alienated themselves from their Saviour. The proclamation of pure truth, exalting Christ and His righteousness, will cause a shaking in the world and in the church. Satan will stir up the combined powers of apostasy to eradicate God's commandment-keeping people from the earth. The result will be that "a great proportion of those who are supposed to be genuine will give heed to seducing spirits, and will . . . betray sacred trusts. They will prove our very worst persecutors."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1065.

While the shaking of God blows away multitudes like dry leaves, "the ranks will not be diminished. Those who are firm and true will close up the vacancies that are made by those who become offended and apostatize."—*Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 422; see also *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 81.

Read Luke 21:34-36 and pray for God's grace to make you a steadfast witness for Him during the shaking time.

FURTHER STUDY: Read Acts 20:18-36. Look for the elements in Paul's character that would help you remain strong in the Lord during the church's hour of supreme trial. Read the chapter entitled "The Final Warning" in *The Great Controversy*, pp. 603-612.

The devil seeks to persuade us that the best way to maintain loyalty to God is to conform to worldly standards of belief and behavior. But consider the following statements:

"The church may appear as about to fall, but it does not fall. It remains, while the sinners in Zion will be sifted out—the chaff separated from the precious wheat. This is a terrible ordeal, but nevertheless it must take place."—*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 380.

"I know that the Lord loves His church. It is not to be disorganized or broken up into independent atoms. . . . Those who shall heed this false message and try to leaven others will be deceived and prepared to receive advanced delusions, and they will come to nought."—*Selected Messages*, book 2, pp. 68, 69.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Read the statement below. Then answer the question following:

"During the loud cry, the church, aided by the providential interpositions of her exalted Lord, will diffuse the knowledge of salvation so abundantly that light will be communicated to every city and town. The earth will be filled with the knowledge of salvation. So abundantly will the renewing Spirit of God have crowned with success the intensely active agencies, that the light of present truth will be seen flashing every-where. . . .

"Men will be called [from their earthly occupations] . . . and will be educated in connection with men of experience. As they learn to labor effectively, they will proclaim the truth with power. . . . Onward, and still onward the work will advance, until the whole earth shall have been warned. And then shall the end come."—*Maranatha*, p. 218.

What do you think will be some of the "providential interpositions" that will give impetus to the three angels' messages? Are we seeing any of these interpositions today?

SUMMARY: Through the loud cry of the third angel's message, God will bind off the harvest of the earth, gathering the honest-hearted out of every nation and tribe to become eternal citizens of His kingdom.



My Testimony

Mary Abraham*

I am a young Muslim woman in Turkey where I work as a tour guide. Three years ago I met one tour group that changed my life forever.

The group leader requested that we change their scheduled tour for Saturday; they wanted to go to church instead! *They must be Jewish*, I thought. The leader gave me the church address, and on Saturday morning I showed them to the church.

Curious, I asked whether I could stay and watch. The group leader preached, and I translated his sermon for the Turkish people there.

The next day while touring, another tour member read from the big Book he carried about prophecies concerning the seven churches of Asia Minor. I began to understand that God had sent this group from South Africa to help me understand the truth of Christianity.

I asked many questions, and they were so patient with me. But their five-day tour was too short. I cried when they left. I had been reared Muslim, and had been told stories of the cruelty of Christians, but now I saw a faith full of the love of God.

I began to read the Bible, the Quran (Koran), and books my new friends left me. I was confused and lonely. When my friends invited me to visit them I was so happy! I wanted to learn more about their faith. For 23 days we talked, prayed, went to church, and studied the Bible. Everything began to fall into place. I had finally found the truth!

The day before my departure, a voice inside me asked, "What are you waiting for?" I had found the truth I was searching for. With great joy I was baptized and became a part of the Seventh-day Adventist people!

Now I study and learn more about God. I translate into Turkish the books my friends gave me, and I share what I know with my countrymen. It is not an easy life, but God holds my hand, shows me the way, and puts the right words in my mouth.

Mary Abraham (not her real name), is currently studying at an Adventist college under sponsorship of Middle East Union. One-to-one evangelism changed Mary's life. It can change someone else's if you will be the evangelist.

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Faith Triumphant



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Rev. 14:12; 1 John 5:2-5; Heb. 11:32-40; Luke 18:1-8.

MEMORY TEXT: "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12).

KEY THOUGHT: The true faith of Jesus is the power by which we can triumph over all evil and reveal His character in all places at all times, including the world's last desperate days of ultimate apostasy. Faith is the faculty with which God endows us so we can live joyously and valiantly by every word that proceeds from His mouth.

THE CLIMAX OF THE THREE ANGELS' MESSAGES. Revelation 14:12 summarizes the experience that the three angels' messages are intended to produce in the life of every hearer. In our study of these messages we have considered the age-old struggle between the forces of good and evil. Satan's constant goal is to lead us away from God by inducing us to abandon our faith in Jesus and our commitment to His law. As we have seen, the everlasting gospel is designed to restore in us the image of our Creator and Redeemer. This experience is available through the faith that Christ Himself supplies to every willing heart, a faith that opens the channel of grace by which we receive the ability to obey.

THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD AND THE FAITH OF JESUS (Heb. 11:31-38).

The order of ideas in Revelation 14:12 is revealing. This verse points to the experience and character of God's true people who are prepared to enter His kingdom.

1. *"Here is the patience of the saints."* The word for patience in the original connotes "cheerful endurance," "fortitude," "patient perseverance." The Lord is pointing to the steadfast, active, tenacious connection His people have with Him, particularly in the midst of earth's supreme crisis. Their religious experience is not the stuff of myths and dreams. It is rooted in eternal truths and supported by the power of God's love for them and in them.

2. *"Here are they that keep the commandments of God."* Human logic would suggest that the saints' possession of the faith of Jesus should be mentioned first, because without that faith they could not obey His commandments. But the Lord is here presenting His people as an exhibit of the *power* of His salvation. In the manner of a legal testimony He presents first the evidence and then the cause for its being. The saints' possession of the true faith of Jesus is indisputably demonstrated by their obedience to God's law.

3. *"And the faith of Jesus."* The saints have faith *in* Jesus and the faith *of* Jesus; that is, the faith that He exercised in His earthly life to overcome the power of Satan. Christ supplies this faith to every willing believer (Heb. 12:1-3).

What does the faith of Jesus enable God's people to do and endure? Heb. 11:33-38.

True faith is an enduring fabric that time cannot unravel nor trials rend nor temptations stain. "A living faith means an increase of vigor, a confiding trust, by which the soul becomes a conquering power. He who drinks of the water of life which Jesus gives, possesses within himself a well of water springing up into everlasting life. Though it shall be cut off from all created springs, it is fed from the hidden fountain. It is a perpetual spring, in immediate communication with the inexhaustible fountain of life."—*That I May Know Him*, p. 227 (read also p. 226).

Read Christ's parable of the persistent widow in Luke 18:1-8, and contemplate His concluding question. What does this question imply? What warning do you take from it?

THIS IS THE VICTORY (1 John 5:2-5; 2 Cor. 9:8-11).

What is the divinely ordained means of obtaining victory over sin? 1 John 5:2-5; Rev. 12:11.

Faith is not a magic charm. It is the divinely supplied power that enables people to believe and appropriate every promise and provision that God offers them. This is why people of faith overcome Satan by the blood of the Lamb. That blood has cleansed them of their sins to the inmost depths of their being (Rev. 7:14). They also overcome by the word of their testimony, because their testimony expresses their abiding faith in Him and His Word (1 Peter 4:11). They love not their lives unto the death, because Jesus died on their behalf that they might live eternally. They praise Him, even in affliction.

A Christian stood trial before Diocletian, a cruel emperor of Rome. The emperor demanded that he renounce his faith. The Christian refused. In a rage, the emperor thundered, "Abjure your faith, or I will banish you from my realm."

The Christian replied, "That, sire, you may do, but you can never banish me from Christ; for He will never leave me nor forsake me."

"Then I will confiscate your property," Diocletian shot back.

"Oh, sire, that you may not do, for my property is laid up in heaven, beyond the reach of mortal hand."

The emperor furiously retorted, "Then I will kill you!"

With perfect serenity the Christian replied, "This body you may kill; but I am already dead to this world, and my life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is my life, shall appear, then shall I also appear with Him in glory."

How can our faith be increased? Luke 17:5, 6; 2 Cor. 9:8-11.

"The more our faith fastens to Christ in perfect trust, the more peace we shall have. Faith will grow by exercise."—*That I May Know Him*, p. 231.

"In order to strengthen faith, we must often bring it in contact with the word."—*Education*, p. 254.

Think of five Bible heroes and heroines of faith. List how they obtained their strength and faith.

FAITH VERSUS LEGALISM (Rom. 3:20-22).

What great error did Paul strive to refute? Rom. 3:20-22 (compare Gal. 2:15, 16, 21; 5:4-6; Titus 3:4-7).

Paul was as emphatic as human language enabled him to be: We are not saved by the law. We are not saved by praiseworthy deeds. We are saved by the merits of Christ alone. His sacrifice provides pardon and reconciling grace. "There is not a point that needs to be dwelt upon more earnestly, repeated more frequently, or established more firmly in the minds of all than the impossibility of fallen man meriting anything by his own best good works. Salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ alone."—*Faith and Works*, p. 19. (Read also Rom. 3:28; 4:3, 4, 11-14.)

What is the great landmark truth that gave rise to the Reformation and has been at the heart of every true revival in all ages? Hab. 2:4 (compare Rom. 1:16, 17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38).

This truth shatters the Babylonish tower of self-generated works that have no capacity to bring us near to God, no justifying value, and no sanctifying properties. Instead, they are only a deadly obstacle to salvation (John 6:27-29, 37, 40).

How does Paul describe the life of those justified in Christ? 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Gal. 2:17, 20.

"The forgiveness of sins is not the sole result of the death of Jesus. He made the infinite sacrifice, not only that sin might be removed, but that human nature might be restored, rebeautified, reconstructed from its ruins, and made fit for the presence of God."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 537. (Compare *The Desire of Ages*, p. 172.)

Plan to study the book of Romans, which gives the most systematic presentation in all Scripture on the subject of justification and sanctification. Resolve by God's grace to master this subject and to know the joy of full pardon and regeneration in Christ. What relationship do you see between Paul's presentation of salvation and Christ's message to Nicodemus? (John 3).

FAITH VERSUS PRESUMPTION (Matt. 7:21-23).

What are some of the characteristics and results of true faith?

Gal. 5:6 _____

Rom. 3:31 _____

Rom. 5:1 _____

Phil. 3:8-14 _____

"There is nothing in faith that makes it our saviour. Faith cannot remove our guilt. Christ is the power of God unto salvation to all them that believe. . . . He has paid the price for the sinner's redemption. Yet it is only through faith in His blood that Jesus can justify the believer."—*The Faith I Live By*, p. 107.

In the day of final accounts, what class of professed believers will find themselves ineligible for entrance into the kingdom of God? Matt. 7:21-23, 26, 27.

The word translated "iniquity" (Matt. 7:23, KJV) is *lawlessness* in the original. The measure of true faith and love in the sight of God is obedience to the Ten Commandments. The religious faith that falls short of this is false, delusionary, and bankrupt.

"Faith is in no sense allied to presumption. Only he who has true faith is secure against presumption. For presumption is Satan's counterfeit of faith. Faith claims God's promises, and brings forth fruit in obedience. Presumption also claims the promises, but uses them as Satan did, to excuse transgression."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 126.

How can we tell when faith is not genuine? James 2:14-20.

What good is a faith that does not express itself in loving deeds? Faith is our response to God's desire to live in us through the atoning merits of Christ. God is active (John 5:17). And He arouses His children to similar activity (Titus 3:7, 8).

How can I safeguard my soul against presumption?

FAITH THAT WORKS (2 Thess. 1:11, 12).

What is the practical result of all true faith? Gal. 5:6; Phil. 2:12, 13.

We may be lured into thinking that we must add works in order for faith to produce results. But this is not how Scripture presents the subject. True faith, which Christ supplies, is an animating principle that energizes us to live in harmony with His will. Genuine faith works. It is not propped up by works.

"He who is trying to reach heaven by his own works in keeping the law, is attempting an impossibility. Man cannot be saved without obedience, but his works should not be of himself; Christ should work in him to will and to do of His good pleasure."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 364.

"Many in the Christian world . . . claim that all that is necessary to salvation is to have faith; works are nothing, faith is the only essential. But God's Word tells us that faith without works is dead, being alone. . . . Faith and works go hand in hand. . . . Works will never save us; it is the merit of Christ that will avail in our behalf."—*That I May Know Him*, p. 229.

What is the ultimate purpose of faith? 2 Thess. 1:11, 12.

The first angel's message calls upon us to "give glory" to God. We do this by giving Him full dominion of our lives. He comes into our hearts, not as a cruel dictator, but as a benevolent Lord, doing for us nothing but good on the highest plane. He dwells in our hearts through faith, filling us with love and grace for loving and gracious purposes. He wishes us to display the power and availability of His salvation to the ends of the earth (Eph. 3:17-21; Matt. 24:14).

How may everyone receive saving faith? Eph. 2:8. What is the result? Eph. 2:9, 10.

God withholds nothing from us that would secure our salvation. Let us joyfully accept the gift of His saving faith and let it be the stimulus to holy living.

FURTHER STUDY: As you read Colossians 1:21-23; 1 Timothy 6:7-15; Revelation 2:10, 13; 17:14, consider the vital connection between having faith in God and weathering the storms, tests, temptations, and trials of life. Then consider anew the relationship between God's faithfulness and our possession of faith. See Revelation 1:5; 19:11; 21:5; 22:6.

Also read "Living Faith," in *Messages to Young People*, pp. 111-116.

At Sinai, just before the declaration of the commandments, the trumpet of God blew and "waxed louder and louder" (Ex. 19:19). So it is with the three angels' messages. Their content and appeal become increasingly urgent and intense, accompanied by the strains of entreating love.

In effect, the third angel's message is God's plea to all humanity, "How can I give you up? How can I let you go? Come out of Babylon, which wars against My covenant of peace and truth. Come into My fold, which keeps My commandments and the faith of Jesus. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin. My grace reigns through righteousness and is sufficient for you to be more than conqueror over all your sin and the power of the enemy. This victory is possible through My Son, who beckons you now in these final hours of probation." God's trumpet call ends on a joyous, triumphant note: "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (Rev. 14:12). Thus in one summary statement, God vindicates His system of truth and His people.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. By what means can you experience a steady and constant growth in faith?
2. Why are faith and obedience so closely linked?
3. Why are we justified by faith (Rom. 3:28; 5:1; Gal. 3:24) and judged by our works? (Matt. 16:27; 1 Peter 1:17; Rev. 22:11, 12). Do we as a people need to experience more faith or more obedience?

SUMMARY: The fruit of the three angels' messages is to bring forth a people from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. This faith enables them to appropriate every blessing of the gospel and thereby have victory over sin.



Touched by a Song

Adly Campos

The telephone rang. "Hello," I answered. On the other end was a pastor. He wanted me to help minister to more than 3,000 Cuban refugees.

After a brief conversation I agreed to assist in a short series of evangelistic meetings to reach those who, for more than 20 years, had not been able to learn about Jesus.

During the week of meetings I counseled privately with men and women who hungered for the Word of God. I listened to stories that touched my life and helped me to understand the oppression under which these people had lived. They had been deprived of liberty of conscience and freedom to worship God.

When I left Florida at the end of the week's meetings, more than 200 persons had found the Lord. During the ensuing months, the Cuban refugees left Fort Chaffey, and settled in homes in different areas of the country.

Some time later on a warm summer night I sang in a church in Miami for a series of evangelistic meetings. Outside a car stopped right in front of the church. A young man climbed out, stepped into the church, walked down the aisle, and stared straight at me. I felt uncomfortable. Then, as I continued to sing, he made his way to the first row and sat down.

At the end of the meeting, the young man approached me and said, "Adly, as I drove by the front of the church, I heard singing and recognized your voice. I am so glad to find you again! Your message in song has touched my heart. I first heard you sing at meetings in Fort Chaffey when I first came from Cuba! I have been looking in the music stores for your cassette, but I could not find it. Where can I buy it?"

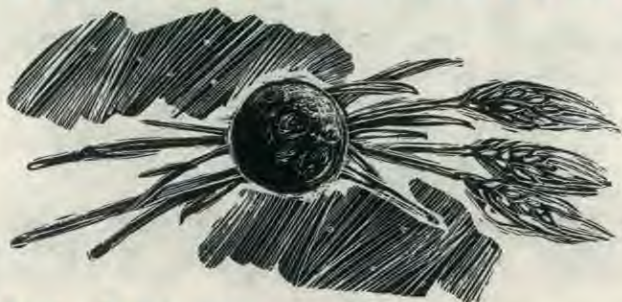
From that day on, he attended all the meetings. Today, he is a baptized member in the church. I give all the glory to God, who led this young man to Christ because of a song!



Adly Campos is an administrative assistant in the Ministerial Association of the General Conference, and an evangelist who has allowed God to use her musical talent to bring hundreds to a knowledge of His truth.

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Earth's Final Harvest



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Matt. 13:36-43; Rev. 14:12-20; 15:2-4; 17:14-18; 19:1-21.

MEMORY TEXT: "And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle" (Revelation 14:14).

KEY THOUGHT: When God, through the three angels' messages, has done His work, Christ will return in glory to vindicate His truth and deliver His people.

CHRIST'S RETURN WILL CONSUMMATE THE GOSPEL, fulfill the hope of the saints, and end forever Satan's evil reign. Prior to this, the earth will undergo a time of trouble during which Babylon's system of apostasy and rebellion will collapse. Closing events will expose the character of the wicked and manifest the sincerity and sustaining power of the saints' faith. God will protect from the final plagues those who love Him, and He will translate them to heaven.

Since its beginning, the church has looked to Christ's return as the glorious hope. This promise has been a mainstay of the church's mission, a support in all its trials, and a guarantee of the resolution of the great controversy between good and evil. In the near future the three angels' messages, under the Spirit's blessing, shall accomplish their purpose of ripening the earth's harvest for our Lord's return. For the strength and guidance of the church, Christ has outlined closing events in His prophetic word so that we may stand fast in the faith through the power of His love.

THE KING IS COMING (John 14:1-3).

For centuries, philosophers have contemplated life's purpose—its final goal, its ultimate conclusions. Scripture is clear—history is not heading toward endless cycles of suffering, struggle, short triumphs, and lasting defeats, but toward a universal reign of everlasting righteousness, eternal life, and boundless joy.

How will that seemingly unimaginable hope be accomplished? John 14:1-3 (compare Rom. 8:18-25; Heb. 10:34-39).

"An understanding of the hope of Christ's second coming is the key that unlocks all the history that follows, and explains all the future lessons. . . . We are pilgrims and strangers who are waiting, hoping, and praying for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. If we believe this and bring it into our practical life, what vigorous action would this faith and hope inspire; what fervent love for one another; what careful holy living for the glory of God; and in our respect for the recompense of the reward, what distinct lines of demarcation would be evidenced between us and the world."—*Evangelism*, p. 220.

Before Jesus comes, what will earth be like as the powers of evil conspire? Dan. 12:1 (compare Matt. 24:9-22; 2 Thess. 2:1-7).

We have seen escalating turmoil and rapid changes in world events, all of which are rushing us toward the final scenes of prophecy. Truly we are on the verge of a stupendous crisis, "which, more than any previous time since the world began, will demand the entire consecration of every one who has named the name of Christ."—*Gospel Workers*, p. 323. "A storm is arising that will wrench and test the spiritual foundation of every one to the utmost." "Instead of becoming weak and irresolute, the people of God should be gathering strength and courage for the time of trouble."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 129; vol. 4, p. 251.

Ponder and heed the counsel in Malachi 3:1-7. Why is it not in our best interests to prepare for the end of the world by stockpiling food and other physical necessities?

BABYLON'S LAST STAND (2 Thess. 2:3, 4; Rev. 13:8).

What will be the final delusion that will bring all the world to its ultimate test of loyalty? 2 Thess. 2:3, 4. How can we guard against surrendering to the wrong spiritual authority? 2 John 6-11; Rev. 3:10, 11.

"Antichrist is to perform his marvelous works in our sight. So closely will the counterfeit resemble the true that it will be impossible to distinguish between them except by the Holy Scriptures."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 593.

"As the crowning act in the great drama of deception, Satan himself will personate Christ. . . . In different parts of the earth, Satan will manifest himself among men as a majestic being of dazzling brightness, resembling the description of the Son of God given by John in the Revelation. Revelation 1:13-15. The glory that surrounds him is unsurpassed by anything that mortal eyes have yet beheld. The shout of triumph rings out . . . 'Christ has come! Christ has come!' The people prostrate themselves in adoration before him, while he lifts up his hands and pronounces a blessing upon them. . . . His voice is . . . full of melody. In gentle, compassionate tones he presents some of the same gracious, heavenly truths which the Saviour uttered; he heals the diseases of the people, and then, in his assumed character of Christ, he claims to have changed the Sabbath to Sunday, and commands all to hallow the day which he has blessed. He declares that those who persist in keeping holy the seventh day are blaspheming his name by refusing to listen to his angels sent to them with light and truth. This is the strong, almost overmastering delusion."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 624.

How widespread will be the acceptance of this event? Rev. 13:8; Matt. 24:24-26.

What will interrupt the progress of Satan's program to gain control of the whole world through his agent, Babylon? Rev. 16:1-21 (compare 18:8-24; Dan. 12:1).

These plagues will occur suddenly and unexpectedly in various parts of the earth. Evidently they will last for a short period of time prior to Jesus' coming.

THE CHURCH'S FINAL TRAVAIL (Rev. 13:14-17; 1 Peter 1:7-9).

The last plagues will serve the fourfold function of (1) revealing the false claims of Babylon and the antichrist by demonstrating that they do not represent God (Ps. 9:15-20); (2) interrupting the attempts of the wicked to destroy the righteous (Rev. 16:4-6); (3) exposing the godless hearts and malice of those who worship the beast (Rev. 16:9-11, 21); (4) revealing whom God approves by virtue of their immunity to the plagues (Ps. 27:1-6).

What will the time of the plagues be like for God's people? Rev. 13:14-17.

"Though God's people are surrounded by enemies who are bent upon their destruction, yet the anguish which they suffer is not a dread of persecution for the truth's sake; they fear that every sin has not been repented of. . . . If they could have the assurance of pardon they would not shrink from torture or death; but should they prove unworthy, and lose their lives because of their own defects of character, then God's holy name would be reproached."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 619. (Compare *Early Writings*, pp. 282-285.)

Shortly before the final time of trouble, God's people are sealed, and probation is closed for the wicked. Everyone will have made a conclusive decision for or against Christ. Of what spiritual value then is this time of trouble? Job 23:10; Zech. 13:9; 1 Peter 1:7-9.

"The Lord's eye is upon His people, and His ear listens to their cries. Their affliction is great, the flames of the furnace seem about to consume them; but the Refiner will bring them forth as gold tried in the fire. God's love for His children during the period of their severest trial is as strong and tender as in the days of their sunniest prosperity; but it is needful for them to be placed in the furnace of fire; their earthliness must be consumed, that the image of Christ may be perfectly reflected."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 621. (Compare pp. 630, 631.)

What preparation can you make today to face the time of trouble? If you are presently going through a time of trouble, how may you have endurance?

THE CHURCH'S FINEST HOUR (1 Cor. 15:51-55).

What distinguishes Christ's loyal remnant from the hosts who campaign against them? Rev. 12:17.

Through his various agents, Satan has advanced the idea that a new and more exalted system of truth has supplanted the Holy Scriptures. His deluded followers accept his lie that those who cling to Bible teachings are narrow-minded bigots who block the progress of universal peace and brotherhood. They feel that these Bible zealots must give up their antiquated notions or die. But Christ, the Word of God (Rev. 19:13), appears to vindicate His faithful people.

As Christ descends, what happens to the antichrist and his followers? What happens to the saints? Rev. 14:14-20; 19:5-21 (compare 2 Thess. 1:4-10; 1 Cor. 15:51-55).

Shortly after the death decree is issued against those who refuse to comply with the Sunday law, it will be determined to strike in one night a decisive blow against Sabbathkeepers.

"With shouts of triumph, jeering, and imprecation, throngs of evil men are about to rush upon their prey, when, lo, a dense blackness, deeper than the darkness of the night, falls upon the earth. Then a rainbow, shining with the glory from the throne of God, spans the heavens and seems to encircle each praying company. The angry multitudes are suddenly arrested. Their mocking cries die away. The objects of their murderous rage are forgotten. With fearful forebodings they gaze upon the symbol of God's covenant and long to be shielded from its overpowering brightness.

"By the people of God a voice, clear and melodious, is heard, saying, 'Look up,' and lifting their eyes to the heavens, they behold the bow of promise. . . . [They] see . . . the Son of man seated upon His throne. . . . Again a voice, musical and triumphant, is heard, saying, 'They come! they come! holy, harmless, and undefiled. They have kept the word of My patience; they shall walk among the angels'; and . . . those who have held fast their faith, utter a shout of victory."—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 635, 636.

Read "God's People Delivered" in *The Great Controversy*, pp. 635-652. Contemplate the marvels of this chapter.

HOMEWARD BOUND (Rev. 15:2-4).

Earthly language is powerless to describe the infinite glory that will attend the redeemed on their day of deliverance. But Scripture conveys, as well as words can, a sense of the jubilation they will experience as the Lord transports them to His kingdom as honored victors in the great controversy.

As you read Isaiah 25:8, 9; 51:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17 project your mind into the scenes and record your impressions.

Do you long to hear Jesus' words addressed personally to you and those whom you have led to Christ, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34)?

After coursing through the vast cosmos, what declaration will the myriads of redeemed hear at the gates of the New Jerusalem? Isa. 26:2. What experience awaits them there and again in the new earth? Eph. 2:4-7; Isa. 64:4.

"Then I saw Jesus lead the redeemed company to the gate of the city. He laid hold of the gate and swung it back on its glittering hinges and bade the nations that had kept the truth enter in. . . . Rich glory they beheld everywhere. Then Jesus looked upon His redeemed saints . . . and as He fixed His loving eyes upon them, He said, with His rich, musical voice, 'I behold the travail of My soul, and am satisfied. This rich glory is yours to enjoy eternally. Your sorrows are ended. There shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.' I saw the redeemed host bow . . . at the feet of Jesus. . . .

"Language is altogether too feeble to attempt a description of heaven. As the scene rises before me, I am lost in amazement. Carried away with the surpassing splendor and excellent glory, I lay down the pen, and exclaim, 'Oh, what love! what wondrous love!' "—*Early Writings*, pp. 288, 289.

What song will the redeemed sing that reveals the blessings of having received the everlasting gospel of the three angels' messages? Rev. 15:2-4.

FURTHER STUDY: Read John 14:1-4; Revelation 21, 22. The consummation of the Christian's hope is entrance into the kingdom of God. There will be joy, not only because of the rapturous delights that will engulf our senses, but also because of the matchless excitement of face-to-face communion with God, and the holy pleasure of living in eternal fellowship with the redeemed. These blessings will never be jeopardized by sin, for sin will be forever abolished by virtue of Christ's atonement and the choice of His people to live in harmony with God's eternal law of love.

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

"Motives stronger, and agencies more powerful, could never be brought into operation; the exceeding rewards for right-doing, the enjoyment of heaven, the society of the angels, the communion and love of God and His Son, the elevation and extension of all our powers throughout eternal ages—are these not mighty incentives and encouragements to urge us to give the heart's loving service to our Creator and Redeemer?"—*Steps to Christ*, p. 21.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What can you do today to ensure that you will triumph with Christ in the day of His return?
2. What changes do you need to make in your life that will enable you to relate to Christ's return as "the blessed hope" rather than as "a day of distress . . . and desolation" (Titus 2:13; Zeph. 1:14, 15)?

SUMMARY: Glorious beyond words will be the Second Coming for all who love and obey Christ. Horrible beyond all description will that day be for those who have denied Him in their behavior and beliefs. The three angels' messages have as their central intention and aim the purpose of calling all people to salvation by exalting Christ and His gospel. Those who remain faithful to Jesus will find themselves condemned by earth's highest authorities controlled by Satan. But God will deliver and vindicate His people and elevate them to positions of honor and glory in His kingdom. Let us choose by His unfailing grace to be there. "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it" (1 Thess. 5:24).



Through Prison Walls

Andrea Steele

God can reach us anywhere—inside our apartment, inside our car, inside our unhappiness, inside our fear—or inside prison.

Ghetkon, in his letter to Adventist World Radio-Africa (AWR), said, "I write from the bottom of my cell" in Cameroon, West Africa. There he had spent many moments considering his prison sentence because of the mistake he had made.

Yet Ghetkon's letter was full of joy and praise. He had discovered AWR. "One day, tuning my short-wave radio, I found your broadcast. I was amazed. The Bible study of the day touched my heart."

Ghetkon continued to listen, and heard a health program about cigarette smoking. "That program convinced me, and since then I haven't smoked anymore."

Ghetkon became a steady listener to the programs of AWR, and came to know the saving power of Jesus' love. And he made his decision public. "An evangelist came to prison to talk about Jesus, and I accepted Jesus as my personal Saviour."

But better health and joy in salvation were not to be the only blessings that Ghetkon experienced because of the faith he found in jail. Here's the good news he shared:

"I was to be sentenced to life in prison, but thank God I was sentenced for only 10 years and got the benefit of presidential grace. I believe the change in my life because of Jesus made a difference."

No matter what kind of "prison" we are in, God has the key—the love of Jesus—and he can open the door and set us free. Pray today for listeners to the broadcasts of AWR, that their experience will reflect that of Ghetkon. Here's how he ended his letter:

"I thank God because it was in prison that I came to accept Jesus as my Saviour. I am praying earnestly that this flame may never extinguish in my heart until the end of my life. I praise Him for all he has done for me."



Andrea Steele, public relations director of the Adventist World Radio system, heard about Ghetkon's story from Gallein Thiombiano, associate program director for AWR-Africa.

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The Three Angels' Messages and Your Life



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Rom. 16:25-27; 1 Thess. 2:13; Rev. 19:6-10.

MEMORY TEXT: "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:13, 14).

KEY THOUGHT: The three angels' messages are designed to produce in our lives the fruit of godly character and godly deeds. Thus our witness will be empowered with an influence that will win every honest-hearted person to Christ and His eternal truth.

THE THREE ANGELS' MESSAGES REVEAL JESUS. These messages clarify and emphasize the true gospel as distinct from the false theories of salvation promoted by the devil and his followers. In our lessons this quarter we have seen how the three angels encompass the whole scope of humanity's need in this age of suffering, sin, and spiritual confusion. This final week of the quarter we will review the key elements of these messages with special emphasis on the experience they bring forth in the lives of those who receive and proclaim them.

ROOTED IN THE GOSPEL (Ps. 51:10-13).

How does God describe the character of His people who have been sealed and commissioned to give the three angels' messages? Rev. 14:4, 5 (Jude 24, 25; 1 Thess. 5:23, 24).

What do the following statements mean?

They "have not defiled themselves with women" (RSV).

They "follow the Lamb wherever he goes" (RSV).

"These have been redeemed from mankind" (RSV).

"And in their mouth no lie was found" (RSV).

"They are without fault."

"As we partake of the divine nature, hereditary and cultivated tendencies to wrong are cut away from the character, and we are made a living power for good. . . . God works, and man works, that man may be one with Christ as Christ is one with God."—*That I May Know Him*, p. 95. (See also Phil. 2:13; 3:12-15.)

"The spotless robe of Christ's righteousness is placed upon the tried, tempted, yet faithful children of God."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 475.

As our union with Christ matures, what kind of experience are we given? With what result? Ps. 51:10-13; 2 Cor. 2:14-16.

God's people do not exult over their moral development. They do not regard themselves as perfect or superior to others (Job 9:20, 21). But they are motivated by God's love to share the gospel from which they have received soul-saving benefit. They cannot bottle up the blessing or speak of it in hushed, apologetic tones. With both zeal and tact they proclaim a crucified and risen Saviour to the world. And because their lives demonstrate what they preach, their message has credibility and appeal. (See John 7:37-39.)

What special counsel do God's people observe? Col. 2:6-10. How does this counsel relate to the three angels' messages? Rev. 14:8-12; 22:14.

WHAT MANNER OF PERSONS? (Rev. 15:2-4).

What kind of spiritual experience are the three angels' messages designed to produce? Rev. 15:2-4 (compare 1 Thess. 1:9, 10).

In these messages, the Lord brings forth judgment unto truth—truth that engenders the victory for those who receive the Word of God as it is written. For to receive the truth is to receive Christ and all His word (John 14:6, 23). And that word, abiding in us, gives us power to overcome evil (1 John 2:14).

Why does Satan fail to destroy God's obedient people despite the intensity of his attack? Rev. 12:10-11, 17; 14:1.

Although Satan raises a storm of persecution against God's people in the last days, they remain faithful because of the mercies of the Lamb. Because they are more concerned about pleasing God and living in fellowship with Him than with escaping privation and persecution, He protects them and grants them an especially rich spiritual experience.

"The Lord Jesus is making experiments on human hearts through the exhibition of His mercy and abundant grace. He is effecting transformations so amazing that Satan, with all his triumphant boasting, with all his confederacy of evil united against God and the laws of His government, stands viewing them as a fortress impregnable to his sophistries and delusions. They are to him an incomprehensible mystery."—*The Faith I Live By*, p. 142. (See the mystery explained in Col. 1:26-28.)

Why do God's people, although clad in the invincible righteousness of Christ and possessing His approval, not have a proud, self-assured opinion of their spirituality? Hab. 2:4; Eph. 3:8; 1 Tim. 1:15.

"We must behold Christ. . . . When we contemplate His purity and excellence, we shall see our own weakness and poverty and defects as they really are. . . . We shall see that if we are ever saved, it will not be through our own goodness, but through God's infinite grace."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 159.

A MINISTRY-MINDED PEOPLE (Matt. 28:18-20).

The three angels' messages quicken evangelistic zeal in all who receive them and begin to comprehend their worth. They arouse the soul to a life of devotion to God and service to humankind.

Reread the three angels' messages (Rev. 14:6-12) in connection with Matthew 28:18-20. Be prepared to share with your class what these messages mean to you personally. What elements do you discover in these messages that motivate you to witness to others of Jesus' love?

Christ "would have His servants bear testimony to the fact that through His grace men may possess Christlikeness of character, and may rejoice in the assurance of His great love. He would have us bear testimony to the fact that He cannot be satisfied until the human race are reclaimed and reinstated in their holy privileges as His sons and daughters."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 826.

Note how this contrasts with the emissaries of Babylon, who not only propagate confusion and corruption but who strive to kill those who refuse their cup of apostasy!

What fact about the times in which we live should give urgency to our soul-winning efforts? Luke 21:7-11, 28-33; 2 Tim. 3:1-9.

"We should now feel the responsibility of laboring with intense earnestness to impart to others the truths that God has given for this time. . . .

"Now is the time for the last warning to be given. There is a special power in the presentation of the truth at the present time; but how long will it continue? Only a little while. . . .

"Men need to be aroused to realize the solemnity of the time, the nearness of the day when human probation shall be ended. Decided efforts should be made to bring the message for this time prominently before the people. The third angel is to go forth with great power."—*Evangelism*, pp. 16, 17.

Are you willing to bear fruit for Christ's kingdom? Do you believe in His ability to prosper your efforts in soul-winning? Seek fresh ways to witness for Him today.

A SPIRIT-FILLED PEOPLE (Isa. 60:1-5).

When God's people proclaim the third angel's message in its fullness, what power will attend their labors, and with what effect? Rev. 18:1; Isa. 60:1-3.

The Holy Spirit will attend the final proclamation of the third angel's message with unprecedented power and urgency for humanity's salvation.

"All who consecrate soul, body, and spirit to God will be constantly receiving a new endowment of physical and mental power. The inexhaustible supplies of heaven are at their command. Christ gives them the breath of His own spirit, the life of His own life. The Holy Spirit puts forth its highest energies to work in heart and mind. The grace of God enlarges and multiplies their faculties, and every perfection of the divine nature comes to their assistance in the work of saving souls. Through co-operation with Christ they are complete in Him, and in their human weakness they are enabled to do the deeds of Omnipotence."—*The Desire of the Ages*, p. 827. (Read *This Day With God*, p. 314.)

As we give the three angels' messages, what are we really proclaiming? Rev. 14:6; 19:5-9; 22:16, 17.

"The message of Christ's righteousness is to sound from one end of the earth to the other to prepare the way of the Lord. This is the glory of God, which closes the work of the third angel. . . . This message [Rev. 14:9-12] . . . is represented as being given with a loud voice; that is, with the power of the Holy Spirit."—*Last Day Events*, pp. 200, 201.

With purity, joy, and vitality God's people will make this last true gospel appeal to a frightened and frantic world. Many will hear the echo of the true Shepherd's voice in this proclamation, and with thankful haste will come out of Babylon to join the remnant church, which keeps the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

What are our greatest needs as we prepare to give the third angel's message in its fullest significance and power? Jer. 23:5, 6; Luke 11:9-13; Zech. 10:1, 12. Without being self-righteous or judgmental of others, in what tactful ways can we encourage our fellow church members to join us in giving the three angels' messages?

A PATIENT, PERSEVERING PEOPLE (Heb. 11:33-40).

What is the patience of the saints referred to in the book of Revelation? Rev. 1:9; 13:10; 14:12.

Those who love and proclaim the three angels' messages will have an experience with God that fortifies them to withstand the rage and hostility of the apostate. The saints will be keenly tried, especially by former brethren who have apostatized from the truth and enslaved themselves to Babylon. (Read *The Great Controversy*, p. 608.)

"Let there be a revival of the faith and power of the early church, and the spirit of persecution will be revived, and the fires of persecution will be rekindled.—*The Great Controversy*, p. 48.

How will this persecution affect God's people? Heb. 11:33-40; Rev. 12:11.

"When the storm of persecution really breaks upon us, the true sheep will hear the true Shepherd's voice. Self-denying efforts will be put forth to save the lost, and many who have strayed from the fold will come back to follow the great Shepherd. The people of God will draw together and present to the enemy a united front. . . .

"The love of Christ, the love of our brethren, will testify to the world that we have been with Jesus and learned of Him. Then will the message of the third angel swell to a loud cry, and the whole earth will be lightened with the glory of the Lord."—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 401. (See John 15:13-21.)

What strengthened the heroes and heroines of the cross in past ages not only to bear persecution but also to persevere with intensified energy in their mission as God's witnesses? 2 Tim. 4:16-18; 1 Peter 4:12-14.

Persecution will elevate and purify the experience of God's people (Rom. 5:3). As partakers of Christ's sufferings, we shall also be partakers of His kingdom and glory. Only true, unselfish love could motivate us to suffer for the sake of the gospel.

In what way can you obtain the patience (endurance) of the saints?

FURTHER STUDY: In light of the three angels' messages, contemplate Hosea 14:9; Malachi 4:5, 6; John 15:10-27. For an inspiring overview of these messages read the chapter "The Work for This Time" in *Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 14-22.

Out of trial and tribulation God's people will arise victorious. They will not only vanquish the hosts of darkness, but they will be instrumental in the redemption of former rebels against God's kingdom. The greatest triumph over one's enemies is to make friends of them. This is God's way. The three angels' messages are the harbingers of reconciliation and hope. Their appeal assures that the everlasting gospel will have a final hearing before the world, so that all may choose whom they will serve.

The way we live these messages as we proclaim them will greatly influence those whom we seek to reach. May we experience these messages in our own lives so that we portray Christ in the beauty of His holiness.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Prepare to discuss the significance of the three angels' messages in connection with the following statement: "When the books of Daniel and Revelation are better understood, believers will have an entirely different religious experience. They will be given such glimpses of the open gates of heaven that heart and mind will be impressed with the character that all must develop in order to realize the blessedness which is to be the reward of the pure in heart."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 114.
2. Prepare to discuss how the experience and character of the redeemed relate to the content and aim of the message they bear (Rev. 14:6-12).

SUMMARY: Spiritual power of the highest order energizes the lives of those who walk in the light of the three angels. These people receive grace, inspiration, and endurance through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to be His witnesses to all parts of the world. They live out and proclaim the true gospel of Jesus Christ for the sake of all who wish to be saved in God's appointed way.



The Peace Feast

James H. Zachary

In Papua New Guinea the old chief told the story with a mixture of joy and sorrow in his voice. Four years earlier his son got drunk and had an automobile accident that killed a woman and two children from a neighboring tribe.

The law of the jungle is the payback system—an eye for an eye. Soon relatives of the dead woman had killed three of the chief's men.

Four years of fighting and killing followed. The police tried to stop the fighting. They burned houses in the hope that families would turn to rebuilding their villages instead of fighting. Still the war raged. In less than four years 40 persons had died.

Each tribe had a small Adventist church. Members gathered to pray for peace, then they devised a plan. They formed a choir. During one of the skirmishes the choir marched onto the battlefield, singing. The music disarmed the warriors, who stopped fighting. A church elder stepped forward. "Brothers, it is time to stop the bloodshed," he said. Looking to one of the leaders he pleaded, "Will you lay down your weapons and join in a peace feast?"

A hush spread over the crowd as they waited to see what would happen. Slowly the leader of one tribe stepped forward. Then the leader of the other tribe did the same. The two men laid aside their weapons and shook hands.

Moments later the Adventist women from the two churches arrived with food; together the two clans ate a peace feast.

A few weeks later the two Adventist churches held a joint camp meeting for both tribes on the location where the woman and children died. Three thousand people attended, and evangelism followed.

The membership in one of those tiny churches has grown from 19 to more than 300. I witnessed a wonderful testimony to the power of the gospel: a Communion service. Tall, strong men, once warriors, once enemies, now washed one another's feet.

As they rose from their knees, they embraced. I understood their pigeon English, "Brudder you bolong me."

Praise God for the power of the gospel that can make enemies brothers in Christ!



James H. Zachary is associate secretary in the Ministerial Association of the General Conference.

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Lessons for First Quarter, 1995

Sabbath School members who have not received a copy of the adult Sabbath School lessons for the first quarter of 1995 will be helped by the following outline in studying the first two lessons. The title of the series is *Great Chapters of the Bible*.

First Lesson: The Great Love Lyric

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 1 Cor. 12:4-11, 27-31; 13:1-13, 14:1.

MEMORY TEXT: 1 Corinthians 13:13.

KEY THOUGHT: In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul accents the exquisitely beautiful element in Christian life—love, the precious and indispensable love of God pervading human lives and portrayed in behavior.

Second Lesson: The Suffering Son of God

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Isa. 52:13-15; 53:1-12.

MEMORY TEXT: Isaiah 53:6.

KEY THOUGHT: The sacrificial death of the Servant-Messiah has atoned for the sins of all human beings, rendering it possible for God to make them right with Him.

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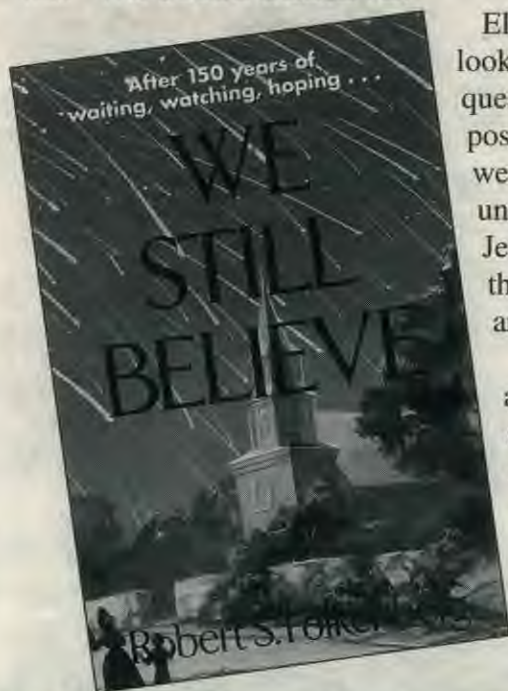
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