

Revelation's Promise. God's Power.
Our Choice.

DIVIDED WE STAND



Tim Rumsey

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Chapter 1

Revelation's Atomic Explosion

“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

On July 16, 1945, the world's first atomic bomb exploded at the Alamogordo Bombing Range 210 miles south of Los Alamos, New Mexico. The bomb, sitting on top of a 150-foot tower and encased in a steel device nicknamed “the Gadget,” detonated at 5:30 a.m. The resulting explosion released 18.6 kilotons of power, instantly vaporized the tower, and transformed the surrounding asphalt and sand into a sheet of green glass. Kilometers away, observers were knocked to the ground by the enormous blast. The successful test opened the way for the U.S. military to use atomic weapons in warfare, and not long after, two atomic bombs destroyed the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, quickly ending World War II in the Pacific Ocean.

An atomic bomb explodes when a single neutron of radioactive material divides from its nucleus and strikes the nucleus of a neighboring atom, knocking several more neutrons free. Those neutrons then slam into other nuclei, separating still more neutrons and releasing high amounts of energy. The chain reaction of dividing atoms spreads instantaneously and results in an explosion of incredible power and brightness. Interestingly, the United States military code-named that first experimental atomic bomb “Trinity.” Perhaps those involved realized that if their “gadget” worked correctly, the division of the atom would release an explosion that was super-human, seemingly divine in power. And they were correct.

But atomic bombs bring only destruction and death. The Bible, on the other hand, predicts an end-time explosion of spiritual power and light that brings eter-

nal life to all those who participate in it. In the book of Revelation, John wrote, “I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory” (Revelation 18:1). This angel brings a message of warning that concerns the entire world:

And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies (Revelation 18:2,3).

The angel’s warning concludes with a message of division that reverberates with the power of a spiritual atomic bomb. “And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, *Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues*” (Revelation 18:2-4, emphasis added). This heaven-sent message of division produces an end-time spiritual revival of power and light as people allow God to separate them from Babylon and its sins. When this happens, the earth will be flooded with “great power,” and it will be “lightened with his glory.”

Seventh-day Adventists have historically identified themselves as the “Advent Movement,” a prophetic movement called into existence to share this angel’s message with the world and to help prepare people for Christ’s second coming. Yet today, Seventh-day Adventism faces numerous challenges, many of them centered in its understanding of its history, purpose, and mission. Frequently accompanying these basic questions of self-identity are numerous assertions:

- that the Seventh-day Adventist movement is not the remnant church of Revelation;
- that the unique prophetic identity that has shaped and guided the Adventist message and mission for over 150 years is a mistake;
- that the sanctuary message revealing a contemporary judgment in heaven is merely a cover-up for an embarrassing prophetic miscalculation early in its history;
- that Ellen White is a false prophet;
- that its understanding of the mark of the beast is more funny than fearsome;
- that its claim to be a part, or even the conclusion, of the Protestant Reformation is not only laughable, but also ignorant and conceited;

- that the Three Angels' Messages are outdated, irrelevant, or too controversial;
- that the destiny of Seventh-day Adventism lies not in division from the world, but in unity with the rest of Christianity; and
- that the Bible's promises of division from sin are not really possible, at least this side of eternity.

If accepted, any one of these assertions would fundamentally alter and change the message and mission that formed Seventh-day Adventism. While some may rejoice at this kind of change, and others strongly resist it, many members, friends, and observers of Seventh-day Adventism remain undecided. Perhaps this church simply emerged, like many others, from a mid-nineteenth century religious fervor that temporarily swept through many denominations. Perhaps it is now outdated and in desperate need of doctrinal, ecclesiological, and social overhaul. Perhaps it will eventually succumb to the pressures of contemporary culture and simply melt into the ever-enlarging alphabet soup of churches that once claimed to follow the Bible.

Or, perhaps the foundations of the Advent Movement go far deeper than many of us realize. I invite you on a journey through Creation week to see how Earth's first seven days parallel the history, mission, message, and destiny of Revelation's remnant church. It's a journey that every Seventh-day Adventist, and every person in this world, needs to experience. It's a journey that follows God's divine principle of division. This principle was first demonstrated at Creation, and God is using it again today as He divides people from a world trapped in sin, so that they might be united with Him.

Chapter 2

Back to the Beginning

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”

Genesis 1:1

Although I enjoyed most subjects in school, math sometimes proved to be a challenge for me. Frequently, my high school math teacher would have to explain proofs more than once, each time returning to the beginning of the process to help me understand. She was a good teacher, and I eventually comprehended the principles and the specifics of mathematical proofs. Sometimes the best way to understand something is to go back to the beginning.

The same principle often holds true in spiritual things. The apostle Paul wrote to the church in Rome, “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4). The Bible records God’s past activity in this world so that we can learn more about Him, understand how He works, and, most importantly, grow in faith. In another letter to the believers in Corinth, Paul wrote, “Now all these things happened unto [Israel in the wilderness] for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come” (1 Corinthians 10:11). If this was true for the early Christians, how much more does it apply to us today! Since our goal is to understand how God is working now, at the end of time, let’s begin by reviewing how God created this world in the beginning.

The Bible records how God created this world. According to Genesis 1, this miraculous process took just six days:

- on Day 1, God created light;

- on Day 2, God created the atmosphere;
- on Day 3, God created dry land and vegetation;
- on Day 4, God created lights in the sky;
- on Day 5, God created sea creatures and birds; and
- on Day 6, God created land animals and human beings.

By sunset at the end of the sixth day, God’s creation was complete. “And God saw every thing that he had made, and behold, it was very good. . . .And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made” (Genesis 1:31; 2:2). That’s it—end of story. It’s something that every church-attending child is taught before they can talk, or walk, or stop to wonder why or how God’s “very good” creation turned into the very bad world we see today.

The Division Principle

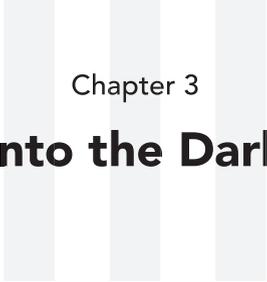
But that’s *not* it—there’s more to the story. The Bible’s account of Creation reveals the divine principle of division. Look again, carefully, at those first seven days. On each day, God used division to transform a dark, lifeless planet into a beautiful cosmic oasis bursting with life.

- On Day 1, God “*divided* the light from the darkness” (Genesis 1:4, emphasis added).
- On Day 2, God “*divide[d]* the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament” (verse 7, emphasis added), creating the atmosphere in between these layers of water.
- On Day 3, God divided the water and created dry land in between. “And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear” (verse 9). Later that day, God created an abundance of plant life that was divided and multiplied “according to its kind” (verse 11).
- On Day 4, God created the sun, moon, and stars to “*divide* the day from the night” (verse 14, emphasis added) and to “*divide* the light from the darkness” (verse 18, emphasis added).
- On Day 5, God created sea life and birds that fly in the sky—animals divided by their habitat and method of transportation. Like the trees and the shrubs and the grass and flowers, the various species of fish and the birds were divided “after their kind” (verse 21).
- On Day 6, God created the land animals and divided them, too, by species, “the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind” (verse 25). Next, God knelt down and “formed man of the dust of the ground” (Genesis

2:7), and then separated Adam from that dust by breathing into him the breath of life. When Adam realized that he had no mate, God “caused a deep sleep to fall on [him], and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place” (Genesis 2:21). Eve, too, was created through division.¹

On Day 7, God rested and “blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it” (Genesis 2:2,3). Significantly, God concluded His work of creation by dividing time itself. The Creator separated this 24-hour unit of time from the preceding six days as a memorial and reminder of His creative work.

So what does God’s use of division in Genesis 1 and 2 mean for us today? Could Earth’s first seven days hold powerful lessons about how God is working in the world today? Could it be that Creation week reveals the principles by which God has promised to divide people from sin and re-create His character in them? Perhaps it shouldn’t surprise us if this is the case, for God said through the prophet Isaiah, “Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done” (Isaiah 46:9,10). We are about to discover powerful parallels between God’s work of physical division at Creation and His work of spiritual division at the end of time. You don’t want to miss this!



Chapter 3
Into the Dark

*“And the earth was without form, and void;
and darkness was upon the face of the deep.”*

Genesis 1:2

Once, many years ago, I toured a large cave with some friends. We followed a well-lit path that slowly wound its way lower and lower into the earth, and finally stopped in a large room with numerous stalagmites, beautiful rock formations, and several pools of water. Suddenly our tour guide flipped a switch and all the lights turned off. A hush fell over our previously loud and rowdy group of teenagers. It was pitch dark—so dark that I could almost feel it. I waved my hand just inches in front of my face. Nothing. A cold fear began to invade my thoughts. *What if the lights never came back on? What would happen to me? Could I get out?* The sound of dripping water echoed from a distant corner of the room as the frightening questions bounced around in my head.

Perhaps you’ve been somewhere like that cave, in a place surrounded by absolute, complete darkness. It’s a place where people, and most forms of life, cannot live. The Bible says, “in the beginning...the earth was without form, and void; *and darkness was upon the face of the deep*” (Genesis 1:1,2). Creation week began in the midst of absolute physical darkness, in a world “without form, and void.” In the same way, God’s end-time revival began in the Dark Ages, a time period when most of Christianity had fallen under the spell of a great spiritual darkness that prevented many Christians from experiencing the personal relationship with God that He originally intended for humanity. As one writer put it,

The scriptures foretell a great apostasy, ...[and] it is a matter of historical record that following the death of the last of the

apostles of Jesus, some members of the Christian church began to depart from the simplicity of the truth as taught by Christ; *and gradually these church members were led to unite with the world in heathen practices.* As the years passed by, and the church increased in numbers and in popularity, there were many who became less and still less strict in their obedience to Bible teaching, until finally, in the fifth and sixth centuries after Christ, the greater number of those who claimed to be Christians were in reality not living in harmony with the teachings of Christ. For many centuries thereafter an apostate form of Christianity held sway. The truth was suppressed and lost sight of, and ignorance prevailed. *These centuries of apostasy are correctly designated in history the "Dark Ages."* During this time attempts were made to alter or to set aside many of the fundamental teachings of the Bible.²

Daniel's Vision

The Bible predicted this low point in Christian history nearly one thousand years before it began. About 500 years before Christ, the prophet Daniel received several visions in which he saw the world's future empires. One of these visions is recorded in Daniel 8, where Daniel first saw a ram with two horns, then a goat with one big horn, and finally a "little horn" that causes far more devastation than either of the first two powers. At the end of the vision, an angel explained, "the ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia" (Daniel 8:20). As predicted by the vision, the combined Medo-Persian kingdom, represented by the two-horned ram, rose to power when it conquered Babylon in BC 538. The angel then said that the "goat is the king of Grecia" (Daniel 8:21), and this part of the prophecy was likewise fulfilled when Alexander the Great and his Macedonian troops defeated the Persian army at the battle of Arbela in BC 331.

Rome, of course, followed Greece as the world's next superpower, and it is represented in Daniel's vision by the "little horn." The "little horn...waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land" (Daniel 8:9). In other words, it expanded its territory geographically, as all earthly empires seek to do. However, the little horn differed from other kingdoms in an important way. Daniel explained, "it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them" (Daniel 8:10). According to the prophecy, Rome would eventually seek to extend its power upward, toward heaven. Shockingly, this earthly political pow-

er would take on a spiritual dimension, and this is exactly what occurred when Constantine became emperor of the Roman Empire in the early fourth century.

During Christianity's first several centuries, discrimination and persecution by the Roman government often kept believers separated from the rest of society. This all stopped, however, when Constantine rose to power and professed to accept Christianity. He legalized the religion, favored the local Roman bishop by giving him the Lateran Palace, and set himself up as the *de facto* head of the church by handing down rulings on a number of doctrinal and ecclesial disputes. In AD 321 Constantine issued a civil law regarding Sunday observance, a political move that effectively united under the Roman throne an already-compromised Christianity with the empire's numerous sun worshipping cults. Rome—Daniel's "little horn" power—had assumed an overtly religious agenda, and was now reaching upward "even to the host of heaven." According to the prophecy, darkness followed, for the little horn "cast down...the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them" (Daniel 8:10).

The Cause of Darkness

What made the Dark Ages so dark? The book of Daniel identifies two things that Christianity as a whole forgot and lost sight of during these centuries of compromise. First, the little horn "cast down the truth to the ground" (Daniel 8:12). Jesus said in John 17:17, "Thy word is truth," and the book *The Great Controversy* explains well the attacks against the Bible during much of the Dark Ages:

Satan well knew that the Holy Scriptures would enable men to discern his deceptions and withstand his power. It was by the word that even the Saviour of the world had resisted his attacks. At every assault, Christ presented the shield of eternal truth, saying, "It is written." To every suggestion of the adversary, He opposed the wisdom and power of the word. In order for Satan to maintain his sway over men, and establish the authority of the papal usurper, he must keep them in ignorance of the Scriptures. The Bible would exalt God and place finite men in their true position; therefore its sacred truths must be concealed and suppressed. This logic was adopted by the Roman Church. *For hundreds of years the circulation of the Bible was prohibited. The people were forbidden to read it or to have it in their houses, and unprincipled priests and prelates interpreted its teachings to sustain their pretensions.* Thus the pope came to be almost universally acknowledged as the vicegerent of God on earth, endowed with authority over church and state.³

Second, the little horn “magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and *the place of his sanctuary* was cast down” (Daniel 8:11, emphasis added). The “prince of the host” in Daniel refers to Jesus Christ, and “the place of his sanctuary” points to the heavenly sanctuary where Jesus began serving as humanity’s High Priest after His ascension to heaven. Hebrews 4:14 assures us that “we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God,” and Hebrews 8:2 explains that Christ is “a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.” As humanity’s High Priest, Jesus Christ makes possible a direct connection between each believer and God Himself, for we can “come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16). However, the personal nature of Christ’s heavenly ministry was largely lost sight of during the Dark Ages as most Christians were taught that they could approach God only through the mediation of human priests, saints, angels, and the Virgin Mary.

As Christianity forgot these two great lights of truth—the Bible and Christ’s work as High Priest in heaven’s sanctuary—spiritual darkness settled over the world. Eventually, Christianity barely resembled the Spirit-empowered movement that God intended. In its place stood a religious shell “having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof” (2 Timothy 3:5). But, just as “the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters” (Genesis 1:2) during Creation week, by the fourteenth century that same Spirit was about to lead Christianity out of this spiritual darkness. A mighty work of revival within Christianity was about to begin, a work that will culminate in great power and light just before the second coming of Jesus Christ. As we are about to see, Day 1 of Creation week contains a powerful lesson about how God would pull His church out of spiritual darkness.

Chapter 4

Let There Be Light

“And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.”

Genesis 1:3

On Day 1, God created light. Likewise, the first step leading up to Revelation’s end-time revival movement was to shine light on the blackness of the Dark Ages. As we have seen, that darkness resulted when the Bible and Christ’s ministry in the heavenly sanctuary were “cast down” to the ground. Restoring access to the Bible for all people, then, was an imperative first step to drive back that darkness.

The world today remembers the Protestant Reformation as beginning in 1517 when Martin Luther nailed his *95 Theses* to the church door in Wittenberg, Germany. However, the Reformation actually began over 150 years earlier with a man often referred to today as the “morning star of the Reformation.” John Wycliffe, born around 1330, was an English theologian and professor at the University of Oxford. His great life work was to translate the Bible into English. When Wycliffe’s project, undertaken at great risk to him and his associates, was completed in the early 1380s, the people of England could finally read the Bible in their own language. As a “reward” for his work, Wycliffe’s body was exhumed 43 years after his death, his bones burned, and his ashes sprinkled into a river. Nevertheless, light had dawned on the darkness of medieval Christianity.

God’s Divine Flashlight

God could have given no greater gift to the church of the Dark Ages, for the Word of God contains incredible power. In Genesis 1, the account of each day of

Creation begins with, “And God said...”²⁴ At Creation, God’s divine power flowed through His spoken word as it divided the physical elements and then created life. God’s written Word performs a similar function in the creation of new spiritual life: “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12). When we read the Bible—*really* read it, not just glance over it—the Holy Spirit convicts us of things in our life that need to change. Perhaps it’s an unhealthy habit, a destructive thought pattern, or a persistent grudge against someone else that won’t go away. Or, maybe it’s pride, or fear, or a secret sin that has woven its vines around the pillars of your heart. Whatever the issue may be, the Bible reveals the secret “thoughts and intents” of our hearts that we often are not even aware of ourselves.

Discovering these hidden parts of our character can be uncomfortable. Much like flipping on a bright light at night can hurt your eyes, the penetrating beams of truth from God’s word can be painful. Perhaps this is the real reason why so many people don’t read their Bible more often. If you are accustomed to living in the darkness, it can be more comfortable to stay there than walk into bright light. But the light is good, for the Bible tells us, “And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness” (Genesis 1:4). Just as light dispels darkness, the Bible divides truth from error. And according to Jesus, every sincere Christian will choose to live in the light, and in truth. “I am the light of the world,” Jesus said, and “he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12).

Here is where the first true test of discipleship occurs. I may claim to be a Christian and profess to love Jesus, but do I also love the truths in God’s word? Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). Millions of Christians are taught that the Ten Commandments were nailed to the cross and no longer apply today. Others are led to believe that the Ten Commandments are still valid, but that it is impossible to keep them, at least while we live on this side of eternity, so why worry about them?

But the Bible promises that through God’s power it is possible to keep God’s law, not only externally in our actions, but also internally in our thoughts and in our motives. “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body,” wrote the apostle Paul, “that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God” (Romans 6:12,13). The apostle John adds a powerful promise about what God will do for those that follow Jesus: “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

God promises that He can provide victory over sin, and this victory is given in response to faith in His promises. “Thy word have I hid in mine heart,” wrote King David, “that I might not sin against thee” (Psalm 119:11). The devil has waged a long battle against God’s Word, because he wants to keep people bound in the chains of sin. During the Dark Ages, he managed to outlaw possession and reading of the Bible. Today, in an age when everyone has access to the Bible, the devil convinces us to doubt, disregard, and ignore it. The result is that far too many Christians still live in spiritual darkness, not really trusting in God or in His promises. Tragically, this lack of faith has persisted for so long that most Christians consider it normal.

Revelation, however, predicts that at the end of time, heaven will send a great revival. “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). The light from this angel’s message comes in part from the Bible—the same place that God brought light from during the Dark Ages, for “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:105). The revival will come as people allow God to separate them from spiritual darkness and place them in the light of Bible truth.

Division is a Good Thing

Sometimes division is a good thing. God has always called His people out of places where the love of this world has supplanted love for God and His Word. No, we should not be separatists just for the sake of being divisive. After all, the Bible commands Christians to do all they can to live at peace with those around them. And of course, Jesus, on the night of His arrest, prayed for the unity of Christians until the end of time:

I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one (John 17:20-23).

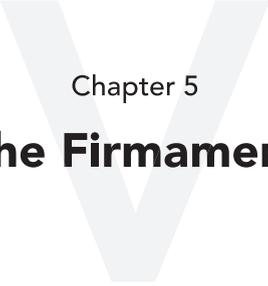
Today there is a strong push for visible unity among all Christians and among all the various Christian churches. This desire for visible unity, however, cannot become more important than God’s command to follow Bible truth and to divide from spiritual error and sin. Look at what Christ prayed for just before His prayer for unity:

I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. *They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.* Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth (John 17:14-17, emphasis added).

Jesus realized that if His disciples followed the Word of God, they would inevitably experience separation from family and friends, and even from many of the religious leaders that claimed to serve God. In other words, they would be divided from the world. Today, the Christian world is looking for a badly needed revival, and it is looking for unity. But if it sets aside God's Word and ignores truths that sometimes do bring division, then it is casting down the only thing that can create true revival and bring new spiritual life.

God is looking for people that desire to know Him better, and who will choose to live in the light of truth. He is calling for people to *really* read the Bible and allow Him to search their heart and reveal to them their hidden sins, so that nothing may separate Him from them. God promises to bring all those that do this out of spiritual darkness and into a life-changing relationship with the Light of World, Jesus Christ. The Bible promises that the light of truth uncovered by John Wycliffe and the other early Reformers will burn more and more brightly until the end of time, for "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Proverbs 4:18). Will you be among those that walk in this path?



Chapter 5

The Firmament

“And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.”

Genesis 1:6

Anyone who has flown in an airplane knows how amazing it is to look down on the earth from miles up in the sky. Once when I was flying home, the plane’s approach path passed almost directly over the small town I lived in. Looking down, I easily identified buildings, mountains, and other landmarks that I drove by and jogged past every day. From so far up, however, they looked different, and so did the many stresses and problems that often occupied so much of my time and energy. From high in the sky, life took on a broader and more balanced perspective.

In a similar way, Christianity needed a perspective shift as it emerged from the Dark Ages. We have already seen how the Bible was “cast down” to the ground during this time period. That was bad enough, but at this time many Christians also lost sight of Jesus Christ as humanity’s High Priest in heaven’s sanctuary. As a result, people were led to trust in their own efforts, rather than Christ’s power, for salvation. That needed to change, and God was about to give Christianity a “birds-eye” view of reality once again. Just like my ride on the airplane, that perspective shift came from high up in the sky.

On Day 2 of Creation, God said, “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters” (Genesis 1:6). It is interesting to note that four millennia later, Bible prophecy saw “waters” as representing people. Is it possible that, just as God did at Creation, He will divide again at the end of time—not by dividing literal waters with the physical “firmament” of old, but

by dividing people with something infinitely more powerful? Let's keep searching the Bible for answers.

The Sanctuary of His Power

What might the firmament represent in God's end-time work of division? Psalm 150 provides an intriguing answer: "Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in his *sanctuary*: praise him in the *firmament* of his power" (Psalm 150:1, emphasis added). The Hebrew word translated as "firmament" here is the same one used throughout Genesis 1 when speaking about the firmament at Creation. Furthermore, Psalm 150 isn't the only passage that uses the word *firmament* to point to God's dwelling place in heaven. When the prophet Ezekiel saw God's throne in heaven, he described it this way: "Then I looked, and, behold, in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubims there appeared over them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne" (Ezekiel 10:1). The "firmament," then, can point to heaven's sanctuary where God's throne is, and where Jesus Christ serves as humanity's High Priest.

The wilderness sanctuary built by Moses, and to a large extent the two temples in Jerusalem built later in Israel's history, were merely copies of God's temple in heaven. When God commanded Moses to build the wilderness sanctuary, He said, "And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell amongst them" (Exodus 25:8). In this sanctuary, we see God's heart desire to dwell with humanity and to have a personal relationship with His creation. In His instructions to Moses, God continued, "According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it" (Exodus 25:9). The "pattern" given to Moses was none other than heaven's temple, where Jesus Christ is a "minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Hebrews 8:2).

The sanctuary, therefore, formed the center of Hebrew worship. It served as a central meeting point for the nation of Israel, contained precious treasures of great value, and in many ways provided the Jews with their self-identity as God's chosen people. But its significance went deeper than mere national significance. The sacrificial system and annual feast days associated with the sanctuary were actually types—prophecies wrapped in symbols—designed by God to reveal the divine process of human redemption and salvation. As the book *Acts of the Apostles* explains,

Through the teachings of the sacrificial service, Christ was to be uplifted before all nations, and all who would look to Him should live. Christ was the foundation of the Jewish economy. *The whole system of types and symbols was a compacted prophecy*

of the gospel, a presentation in which were bound up the promises of redemption.⁵

The gospel significance of the sanctuary was also revealed in the articles of furniture associated with the various sacrifices and services. The altar of burnt offering pointed to Jesus Christ as the “lamb of God” (John 1:29) and His death on the cross. The washbasin that stood between the altar of burnt offering and the door into the tabernacle represented the waters of baptism, where believers are “buried with [Christ] by baptism into death” (Romans 6:4). Inside the tabernacle, in the Holy Place, the table of showbread contained two stacks of unleavened bread. These symbolized Jesus as the “bread of life” (John 6:35) and the word of God (see Matthew 4:4). The candlestick, also in the Holy Place, represented Jesus as the “light of the world” (John 8:12). It also reflected Christ’s command to every Christian to “let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). The last piece of furniture in the Holy Place was the altar of incense, from which the priest offered prayers for the people. The incense represented the intercession of Jesus Christ, Who intercedes for humanity in the heavenly temple “with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which [is] before the throne” (Revelation 8:3). Finally, the Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place contained the Ten Commandment law of God, which in the New Covenant is to be written on believers’ minds and hearts (Hebrews 10:16).

These sanctuary truths point to Jesus Christ and His work of salvation. They show that salvation depends on confession of sin and acceptance of Christ’s atoning sacrifice. They reveal the work of the Holy Spirit and the importance of a personal relationship with Christ. They demonstrate the binding claims of God’s eternal law, and lift the gaze of the believer above the darkness of this earth to the courts of heaven. The book of Hebrews encourages every Christian with the promise,

Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:14-16).

As Christianity compromised with its surrounding culture, these distinctive, life-giving truths were lost sight of, and by the middle of the Dark Ages they were almost completely forgotten. Obscuring the atoning sacrifice made by Jesus Christ stood a complex system of penance, merit, and good works required for the for-

givenness of sins. The beautiful significance of baptism by immersion was washed away by numerous, more “simple” forms of baptism such as pouring, sprinkling, and infant baptism. The bread of God’s Word was locked away from the common people in the “dead” Latin language, and it was taught that prayers could only reach Jesus by passing through a hierarchy of priests, saints, angels, and Mary. As a result, for centuries Christianity stagnated with very little real missionary effort.

Sanctuary Truth Restored

On Day 2 of Creation week, God separated the waters by placing a “firmament” in their midst. This work of physical division paralleled in powerful ways the return of sanctuary truth to Christianity during the Protestant Reformation. As we saw in the previous chapter, this process began in the fourteenth century as John Wycliffe translated the Bible from Latin into English, and the bread of God’s Word soon led people to realize that they could have a personal relationship with the Bread of Life, Jesus Christ. In the sixteenth century, Martin Luther wrote and taught about justification by faith. Through his work and that of other reformers, the truth of the altar of burnt offering and its fulfillment in Christ’s atoning sacrifice was restored. John Calvin, a contemporary of Martin Luther, reminded people that they could pray directly to their Mediator Jesus Christ, and the truth of the altar of incense was revived. In the seventeenth century, John Smyth and others began baptizing again by immersion, recovering the significance of the washbasin.

In England, John Wesley preached about justification through faith in the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, and the result of such a faith—renewing power from the Holy Spirit to live a life conformed to the example of Christ. Wesley met with strong opposition, much of which was generated by the prevailing antinomianism of the day. Antinomianism teaches that Christ abolished the moral law and that “faith frees the Christian from the obligations of the moral law.”⁶ This unbiblical view runs counter to Christ’s words, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Matthew 5:17,18). This view also ignores a focal point of the sanctuary—the law of God contained inside the Ark of the Covenant.

The yearly climax of Hebrew worship occurred when the high priest sprinkled sacrificial blood on the ark’s mercy seat that covered the Ten Commandments. The solemn ritual symbolized the effect that true faith in Christ has in bringing the life into conformity with God’s law, to “purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God” (Hebrews 9:14). As John Wesley wrote,

There is, therefore, the closest connection that can be conceived, between the law and the gospel. On the one hand, the law continually makes way for, and points us to, the gospel; on the other, *the gospel continually leads us to a more exact fulfilling of the law*. The law, for instance, requires us to love God, to love our neighbor, to be meek, humble, or holy. We feel that we are not sufficient for these things; yea, that ‘with man this is impossible;’ but we see a promise of God to give us that love, and to make us humble, meek, and holy: we lay hold of this gospel, of these glad tidings; it is done unto us according to our faith; and ‘the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us,’ through faith which is in Christ Jesus.⁷

People generally respond to truth in one of two ways—by positioning themselves above the clear teachings of the Bible, or by humbling themselves and placing themselves under the authority and direction of God’s Word. The message that highlighted the precious truths of the sanctuary divided Christianity, much as the firmament divided the waters on Day 2 of Creation week. While many people welcomed and embraced the long-forgotten truths, others resisted the light streaming from the Bible. Long and bitter battles followed—fought with the pen, in the pulpit, and on the battlefield.

As the Reformation progressed into decades and then into centuries, many of those who joyfully accepted the truths of the sanctuary were pushed to the margins of society, much like their spiritual ancestors in the Dark Ages. Eventually, even in many “Protestant” countries, biblical worship became difficult and dangerous. Yet countless thousands did not give up their faith in Bible truth, nor did they surrender their hope that God would provide a place of safety that offered freedom of conscience and of religion. We will look at that part of the story next, and compare it to Day 3 of Creation.

Chapter 6

Dry Land

“And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.”

Genesis 1:9

It was a warm afternoon, and my new bride and I stood on the beautiful Hawaiian beach with body boards in hand. What more perfect honeymoon experience could we enjoy than a little playtime in the surf? Breaking into a run, we happily plunged into the warm water and dove under the first wave. I don't remember much of what happened next, except for the very clear impression that I had just swallowed at least half of the Pacific Ocean. Gasping for air, I stood on my feet, only to be pounded by the next incoming wave. My wife, who is a very good swimmer, wasn't faring much better. Somehow we both finally managed to extract ourselves from the water. Our short-lived water sports adventure over, we thankfully stood together on dry land, more than content to spend the rest of the afternoon walking on the beach.

My experience with the power of water reminded me that water isn't always a good thing. In fact, it can be very dangerous. In Bible prophecy, “water” often represents people, especially people that have set themselves against God and His church. For instance, Isaiah wrote, “But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt” (Isaiah 57:20). Similarly, Revelation compares the sea to vast multitudes of people: “And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are people, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues” (Revelation 17:15). Given this prophetic context, it could be very difficult and dangerous for Bible-believing Christians to live near or in the “water.” Historically, this proved to be the case for many Christians during

the Dark Ages and even during the centuries following the start of the Protestant Reformation. For most Christians living during these centuries, escaping religious persecution was little more than a dream. Like my wife and me caught in the pounding surf, they were trapped in the “water.”

The Bible actually predicts that faithful Christians would one day have to flee “into the wilderness,” to a place without much “water.” The fascinating prophecy is found in Revelation 12. In vision, John sees a woman dressed with the sun, standing on the moon, with a crown of twelve stars around her head. The woman is pregnant with a male baby, and standing in front of the woman is a red dragon, waiting “to devour her child as soon as it was born” (Revelation 12:4). The woman gives birth to the baby boy, who escapes the dragon and is “caught up unto God, and to his throne” (Revelation 12:5). Furious at having failed to destroy the baby, the dragon turns on the woman, who flees into the wilderness. In hot pursuit, the dragon, also called the “serpent,” spews “water as a flood” out of its mouth to “cause her to be carried away of the flood” (Revelation 12:15).

Fortunately, we don’t have to guess about the interpretation of the strange symbols in this vision. The same chapter identifies the dragon as “that old serpent, called the devil, and Satan” (Revelation 12:9). The male child clearly points to Jesus Christ, Who after being resurrected from the dead, ascended to heaven. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, saw the ascended Lord in vision moments before his death. “I see the heavens opened,” he said, “and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God” (Acts 7:56).

That leaves the woman. Whom does she represent? In both the Old and New Testaments, the Bible uses the symbol of a woman to represent God’s people—His church. “I have likened the daughter of Zion to a comely and delicate woman,” wrote Jeremiah (Jeremiah 6:2). Paul, writing to the church at Corinth, employed the same symbolism: “For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:2). This pure woman in Revelation 12, then, represents God’s church—those who claim Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, place themselves under the authority of His Word, and accept the sanctuary’s truths. According to Revelation 12, it is this group of believers that is attacked by the dragon and then flees into the wilderness. It is this church that was threatened with extinction by the “water,” or, in this case, hostile armies, that followed it so often into the wilderness outposts of Europe. Clearly, God’s people desperately needed a place of safety.

A Wilderness of Safety

On Day 3 of Creation week, God said, “Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so” (Gen-

esis 1:9). God's work at Creation continued as He divided the waters with dry land. Similarly, the next step leading to heaven's end-time revival took place as God provided a "wilderness" of safety, far from the hostile and persecuting armies in Europe. The book *The Great Controversy* recounts the story this way:

It was the desire for liberty of conscience that inspired the Pilgrims to brave the perils of the long journey across the sea, to endure the hardships and dangers of the wilderness, and with God's blessing to lay, on the shores of America, the foundation of a mighty nation.⁸

America developed as a new nation—new not only in age, but new also in character. The United States declared its independence in 1776 and won its freedom in 1783. The Constitution and the Bill of Rights, ratified in 1787 and 1791, respectively, guaranteed civil and religious freedom. A wilderness offering safety for God's people had emerged, just as dry land had emerged from the water on Day 3. "And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good" (Genesis 1:10).

However, God's work on Day 3 of Creation did not end with the emergence of dry land. A vast variety of life soon sprang out of that dry ground. "And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so" (Genesis 1:11). Similarly, God's providence for His people did not conclude with land free from religious persecution. Revived by the light of the Bible, refreshed by the remembrance of sanctuary truths, and empowered by its position in a new land of freedom, Christianity began growing, reproducing, and bearing fruit once again.

For the fifty years preceding 1792, little attention was given to the work of foreign missions. No new societies were formed, and there were but few churches that made any effort for the spread of Christianity in heathen lands. But toward the close of the eighteenth century a great change took place...From this time the work of foreign missions attained an unprecedented growth.⁹

John Wesley, co-founder of Methodism, once famously said, "I look upon all the world as my parish; thus far I mean, that, in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty to declare unto all that are willing to hear, the glad tidings of salvation."¹⁰ It's a good motto, and it was one shared by many Christians at this time in history: the Baptist Missionary Society formed in 1792, and the London Missionary Society organized in 1792. A few years later, the Wesleyan Missionary Society and the Church Missionary Society appeared, and in the United States, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions

formed in 1812, followed by the American Baptist Missionary Union in 1814. The new spiritual life permeating western Christianity spread rapidly:

The nineteenth century spread of Christianity was due primarily to a new burst of religious life emanating from the Christian impulse...Never in any corresponding length of time had the Christian impulse given rise to so many new movements. Never had it had quite so great an effect upon Western European peoples. It was from this abounding vigor that there issued the missionary enterprise which during the nineteenth century so augmented the numerical strength and the influence of Christianity.¹¹

It was from the “dry lands” of Protestantism, therefore—especially the United States and England—that Christianity began bearing fruit once again. The impact of Bible truth and renewed faith in Jesus Christ upon Christianity was dramatic: For the first time in centuries, Christ’s purpose for His church to go “into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15) appeared as if it might just be accomplished.

Just before His death, Christ had explained to His disciples, “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5). The disciples probably nodded their heads in agreement, but only minutes later, when Jesus was arrested, “they all forsook him, and fled” (Mark 14:50). No fruit there. Hours later, Peter, one of Christ’s closest companions, denied his Lord three times with cursing and oaths. No fruit there, either. Three days later, the disciples still huddled together in fear, petrified that someone might discover their hideout, recognize them as followers of the slain Messiah, and arrest them too. Still, no fruit.

It was not until the disciples saw the resurrected Savior for themselves, and then watched Jesus Christ ascend to heaven until “a cloud received him out of their sight” (Acts 1:9), that faith sprang into action. Obediently they stayed in Jerusalem “with one accord in prayer and supplication” (Acts 1:14), waiting for the promised Holy Spirit, confident that their Friend and Lord, now High Priest in heaven’s sanctuary, would fulfill His promises to them. Just a few days later, on the day of Pentecost, He did, and “they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4). By the end of the day, about three thousand people had been added to the church.

There’s the fruit. As it was for the disciples, the fruit comes in our Christian experience when we see our risen Savior in heaven, not hanging dead upon a cross, for “if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain” (1 Corinthians 15:14). While Christ’s death upon the cross is absolutely es-

sential to our salvation, it's not the end of the story. And it's not where God wants us to fix our eyes. After all, for centuries during the Dark Ages, Christians had been taught to look at the bent and twisted body of Jesus on a crucifix as the symbol of their faith. The result? True faith in Jesus Christ also died.

So where, then, should we look? The book of Hebrews says this:

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:1,2).

The power within Christianity comes when we recognize and accept Jesus Christ as a living Savior, as our personal High Priest in heaven's sanctuary. What happened for the disciples when they saw Jesus rise to heaven, what happened for thousands of other Christians following the Dark Ages when they once again caught a glimpse of Christ as their living High Priest, can happen for us today when we "look unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." That's when the fruit begins multiplying!

On Day 3 of Creation week, the "earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good" (Genesis 1:12). Indeed, it was good. Like the green grass and delicate flowers that emerge after a long winter, the sudden growth of Christianity in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century signaled that Revelation's long-awaited end-time revival was not far off. In fact, it had already begun.

Chapter 7

Lights in the Sky

“And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so.”

Genesis 1:14,15

Not long ago, as I was driving at night, I glanced up to see a bright green light streak over the trees and then vanish into the darkness. It was the brightest shooting star I had ever seen. The experience left me in awe of the natural world, and especially of the God that created it. It reminded me of the bright moon that we frequently see from our home in the country. It's not unusual on a clear night for the moonlight to be so bright that I could read a book outside—or work in the garden, if I wanted to!

The Bible says that these lights in the sky were set in place on Day 4 of Creation week. “And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so” (Genesis 1:14,15). Just as these lights divide the day and the night, as the Protestant Reformation progressed the light of Bible truth slowly awoke Christianity from its long slumber during the Dark Ages. By the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, missionaries and Bibles were streaming into long-forgotten corners of the world, and more people than ever before in history were reading the Bible, particularly the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. As they did so, Christians around the world became convinced that Jesus Christ was coming back again, and soon:

Like the great Reformation of the sixteenth century, the advent movement appeared in different countries of Christendom

at the same time. In both Europe and America men of faith and prayer were led to the study of the prophecies, and, tracing down the inspired record, they saw convincing evidence that the end of all things was at hand. In different lands there were isolated bodies of Christians who, solely by the study of the Scriptures, arrived at the belief that the Saviour's advent was near.¹²

The global movement, known as the Great Awakening or the Advent Movement, ignored denominational boundaries. In the late eighteenth century, Manuel Lacunza, an exiled Jesuit priest living in Chile, became convinced from his study of the Bible that Jesus was coming back soon. In 1790 he published his conclusions under the pseudonym of Juan Josafat Ben-Ezra in a three-volume work titled *The Coming of the Messiah in Glory and Majesty*. Lacunza's book caused a significant stir in Europe, and Edward Irving, a Presbyterian minister in England, eventually read a Latin translation of the book. Already an avid student of prophecy, Irving immediately began learning Spanish so that he could read the treatise in its original language. In 1827, he published an English translation of the work.

Irving, like many others caught up in the Advent Movement, believed that Christ's second coming would occur sometime in the 1840s. That hope was shared by Joseph Wolff, a German Jewish convert to Christianity, who literally travelled the world and faced death multiple times for preaching about Christ's soon return. In France, Francois Gausson preached a similar message using children's meetings and children's literature to reach the parents. Johann Bengel, a Lutheran minister in Germany, children preachers in Scandinavia, and, by some estimates, at least 700 ministers of the Church of England, all preached essentially the same thing—the second coming was going to occur soon, probably in the 1840s. Missionaries even found the expectation of Christ's soon return to be held among the Arabs in Yemen and Tatar (northern and central Asia).

Signs of the Second Coming

What led so many Christians, from so many denominations, in so many parts of the world, to conclude that Christ was coming back in the 1840s? The answer is found in one of Daniel's prophecies: "Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed" (Daniel 8:14). Many Bible scholars and students understood that a prophetic day equals a year in literal time—this is often referred to as the day-for-a-year principle.¹³ The 2,300 "days" in Daniel 8:14, then, actually refer to 2,300 years—a very long time prophecy, indeed. Many of these Christians also understood that the 2,300 years began at the same time as the 70-week (or 490-year) prophecy found in Daniel 9:24. The angel talking to Daniel explained that the prophetic time clock contained in both of these prophecies

began ticking with the decree to “restore and to build Jerusalem” (Daniel 9:25). According to the book of Ezra, the Persian king Artaxerxes issued this decree in BC 457, “the seventh year of the king” (Ezra 7:8).¹⁴ With this date as a starting point for the “two thousand and three hundred days,” or years, of Daniel 8:14, simple arithmetic revealed that the “sanctuary” would be cleansed in AD 1844.¹⁵

The expectation of Christ’s soon return ran especially high in New England among a group of Christians that came to be known as Millerites. In 1818, William Miller, a veteran of the War of 1812 and by that time a farmer, became convinced that Christ would return in the early 1840s. In 1833 Miller received a preaching license from the Baptist Church and began sharing the good news of Christ’s soon return based on this prophecy of Daniel 8:14. The Millerites eventually concluded that Christ would return on October 22, 1844.¹⁶

But it wasn’t just the prophecy in Daniel 8:14 that convinced many people that Christ’s second coming was near. Revelation predicts that tremendous signs in nature and the heavens will occur before Christ appears: “And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth” (Revelation 6:12,13). Many Christians believed that these signs had occurred during the decades of the Advent Awakening. The great Lisbon earthquake in 1755 was felt in Europe, Africa, and North America, and on that day tens of thousands of people died in the city of Lisbon alone. On May 19, 1780, the sun darkened in the middle of the day, plunging much of New England into what many believed was a supernatural darkness. That night, the moon arose blood red. Finally, on the night of November 13, 1833, also in New England, the stars appeared to fall for hours. One eyewitness wrote,

It seemed as if the whole starry heavens had congregated at one point near the zenith, and were simultaneously shooting forth, with the velocity of lightning, to every part of the horizon; and yet they were not exhausted—thousands swiftly followed in the tracks of thousands, as if created for the occasion.¹⁷

Time prophecies. A sanctuary. Signs in the heavens. Thousands upon thousands of Christians expecting Christ’s second coming. What does all this have to do with Creation week?

On Day 4, God said, “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years” (Genesis 1:14). “Light,” as we have already seen, can represent the Bible. But there is also a more specific application of this symbol. The apostle Peter wrote, “We have also a more sure word of *prophecy*; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto *a light that shineth in a dark place*” (2 Peter 1:19, emphasis

added). Prophecy, then, can also be a “light.” Just as God created lights to shine in the firmament on Day 4, thousands of years later He gave prophetic lights that predicted important events that would occur near the time of Christ’s second coming.

Genesis 1:14 continues, “...and let them [the lights] be for signs, and for seasons...” The Hebrew word translated here as “seasons,” *mow’ed*, literally means, “an appointment” or “fixed time” for “an assembly (as convened for a definite purpose).”¹⁸ In the Greek version of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, ancient Hebrew scholars selected the Greek word *kairos* to translate the Hebrew word *mow’ed*. It’s the same word that both Paul and Jesus chose to refer to the general time of the second coming. Paul wrote, “But of the times and the seasons [*kairos*], brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night” (1 Thessalonians 5:1,2). Jesus employed the same word when speaking about His second coming: “Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as you think not the Son of man cometh. Who then is a wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season [*kairos*]?” (Matthew 24:44,45). Significantly, in the years leading up to 1844, many Christians understood the unusual natural signs—earthquakes, dark days, red moons, and falling stars—as prophetic signals of the second coming. Combined with the time prophecy of the 2,300 years in Daniel 8:14, these signs provided strong evidence that the season of Christ’s return was indeed at hand.

Look one last time at Genesis 1:14. That verse ends by saying, “...and let them [the lights] be for signs, and for seasons, *and for days, and for years.*” It was the day-for-a-year principle of prophetic interpretation that led so many thousands of Christians around the world to expect Christ’s second coming in the 1840s. In Genesis 1:14, then, the heavenly lights mark the passage of days and years, just as the prophetic light of Daniel 8:14 marked the passage of prophetic days and years leading up to the year 1844.

Dividing Truth from Error

You have noticed, no doubt, that the second coming did not occur in 1844. So did the thousands of Christians living at that time. The day Jesus didn’t come back became known as the Great Disappointment, and the prophetic misunderstanding quickly became the source of many jokes and jibes. How could a theological “mistake” like that be part of God’s plan?

Obviously, some error or misunderstanding needed to be cleared up among those people waiting for the second coming. What truth, then, needed to be understood more clearly? The answer is found in the very source of confusion surrounding what would happen at the end of the 2,300 years—when the “sanctuary”

would be “cleansed.” Nearly all Christians at this time believed that the “sanctuary” referred to the earth. In a logical, though inaccurate, conclusion, the advent believers held that the cleansing of the “sanctuary” at the end of the 2,300 years in 1844 pointed to the destruction of the earth with fire at Christ’s second coming, when “the heavens and the earth” are “reserved unto fire against the day of judgment” (2 Peter 3:7). They had forgotten what the early Christians knew, and what many in the Protestant Reformation had rediscovered—that Jesus Christ serves as humanity’s High Priest in heaven’s sanctuary. It was this sanctuary that, in some way, must be “cleansed” at the conclusion of the time prophecy.

When Jesus didn’t return on the day expected in 1844, the next morning a small group of disappointed and discouraged believers met together to pray for understanding. Afterwards, one of them, Hiram Edson, decided to visit nearby neighbors. Walking through a cornfield, he suddenly stopped as a wave of understanding broke like a light upon his mind. Edson later wrote of the experience,

I saw distinctly, and clearly, that instead of our High Priest coming out of the most Holy of the heavenly Sanctuary to come to this earth...at the end of the 2,300 days that he for the first time entered on that day the second apartment of that sanctuary and that he had a work to perform in the Most Holy before coming to this earth.¹⁹

Continued Bible study soon confirmed the forgotten truth of Christ’s work in the heavenly sanctuary, and revealed the significance of Christ’s present work in heaven’s sanctuary. Ephesians 5:25-27 provides this incredible picture of Christ’s present-day cleansing work as High Priest in heaven: “Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” The cleansing of heaven’s sanctuary is to be mirrored in the cleansing of Christians’ lives here on earth! What more important light, or truth, could God make to shine upon the earth, than to reveal this work in heaven and in human hearts prior to Christ’s second coming?

The Lesser Light

The Bible’s account of Day 4 continues, “And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night... (Genesis 1:16).” The “greater light,” of course, refers to the sun, and the “lesser light” that rules the night is the moon. So what might these two lights parallel at the end of time?

Jesus stated, “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12), and the Old Testament prophet Malachi even referred to the coming Messiah as the “Sun of righteous-

ness” (Malachi 4:2). Clearly, then, the “greater light” points to Jesus Christ. But what about the “lesser light?” We have already seen how prophecy is also a “light,” and the Bible predicts that at the end of time God will give the gift of prophecy to His people. Revelation 12:17 says, “And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” That last phrase—“the testimony of Jesus Christ”—is explained more fully in Revelation 19:10, where a heavenly messenger speaks with John. He says, “I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus Christ: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” The “lesser light,” then, can represent the prophetic gift.

In the fall of 1844, several weeks after the Great Disappointment when Jesus did not come back, God gave the prophetic gift to the Advent Movement through an eighteen-year-old girl named Ellen Harmon. Ellen, who later married James White, became an influential leader in the formation and establishment of the Seventh-day Adventist church. Near the end of her life, Ellen White wrote about the relationship between the Bible and her writings. Her choice of wording was astonishing. “Little heed is given to the Bible,” she wrote, “and the Lord has given a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light.”²⁰

Ellen’s first vision, received in December 1844, just weeks after the Great Disappointment, was of—you guessed it, two lights! In vision, she saw the “Advent people” on a narrow path leading from earth to heaven. Behind them shone a “bright light,” and in front of them stood Jesus with an even brighter light radiating from His arms. Here is her description of the vision:

While I was praying at the family altar, the Holy Ghost fell upon me, and I seemed to be rising higher and higher, far above the dark world. I turned to look for the Advent people in the world, but could not find them, when a voice said to me, “Look again, and look a little higher.” At this I raised my eyes, and saw a straight and narrow path, cast up high above the world. On this path the Advent people were traveling to the city, which was at the farther end of the path. *They had a bright light set up behind them at the beginning of the path*, which an angel told me was the midnight cry. This light shone all along the path and gave light for their feet so that they might not stumble. If they kept their eyes fixed on Jesus, who was just before them, leading them to the city, they were safe. But soon some grew weary, and said the city was a great way off, and they expected to have entered it before. Then *Jesus would encourage them by raising His glorious right arm, and from His arm came a light which waved*

over the Advent band, and they shouted, “Alleluia!” Others rashly denied the light behind them and said that it was not God that had led them out so far. The light behind them went out, leaving their feet in perfect darkness, and they stumbled and lost sight of the mark and of Jesus, and fell off the path down into the dark and wicked world below.²¹

Just when His people needed it, God again sent the prophetic gift to His church on earth. That prophetic message was given to encourage God’s people to continue their walk toward Jesus Christ, and allow Him to separate and divide them from the world. It’s the same thing Jesus prayed about just hours before His death when He said of His disciples, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:16). To follow Jesus always means—in some way and to some degree—division from the world. And it’s not always easy to follow Him. Jesus said:

Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law (Luke 12:51-53).

Jesus wants us to love our family, friends, and neighbors, of course. But the message is clear. Even if others separate their love and sympathy from us for our decision to walk with Jesus, we should continue on with Him, confident that He will never leave us nor forsake us.

The Bible’s record of Day 4 concludes, “And God set them [the greater and the lesser lights] in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good” (Genesis 1:17,18). At Creation, God set lights “in the firmament of the heaven” to divide light from darkness. Similarly, at the end of time, God has revealed His work in heaven’s sanctuary through the light of Jesus Christ and the gift of prophecy, and He has done this to divide truth from error.

In her classic book *The Great Controversy*, Ellen White emphasized the importance of understanding Christ’s current work in the heavenly sanctuary:

The subject of the sanctuary...should be clearly understood by the people of God. All need a knowledge for themselves of the position and work of their great High Priest. Otherwise it will

be impossible for them to exercise the faith which is essential at this time or to occupy the position which God designs them to fill. ...Through defects in the character, Satan works to gain control of the whole mind, and he knows that if these defects are cherished, he will succeed. Therefore he is constantly seeking to deceive the followers of Christ with his fatal sophistry that it is impossible for them to overcome. But Jesus pleads in their behalf His wounded hands, His bruised body; and He declares to all who would follow Him: "My grace is sufficient for thee." 2 Corinthians 12:9 ...Let none, then, regard their defects as incurable. God will give faith and grace to overcome them.²²

Never allow discouragement or your past failures to cloud your view of Jesus Christ, for He is the "author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2). He wants a personal relationship with you, He died so that you can live with Him forever, and He is working for you now so that you can experience His presence in your life today. This work is so important for us to understand today that one of Revelation's central passages focuses on it. As you might have already guessed, Day 5 of Creation week provides an intriguing glimpse at this crucial topic.

Chapter 8

Fowl That Fly Above the Earth

“And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.”

Genesis 1:20

One of my favorite times of year is autumn. The brisk air and the colorful leaves play a part in my attraction to this season, but so do all the birds flying overhead. In the middle of the United States where we live, it is not uncommon each fall to see enormous flocks of geese migrating southward, honking their delight at being able to escape the cold and head toward a warmer climate. Their loud passage overhead provides an unmistakable reminder that cold weather is on its way, and that I’d better be prepared for it.

God created these flying messengers on Day 5 of Creation. “And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, *and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven*” (Genesis 1:20, emphasis added). We have already discovered that the “firmament” can represent the heavenly sanctuary, where Christ serves as humanity’s High Priest. Does Revelation say anything about “fowl,” or winged creatures, that “fly above the earth” with a message about the open sanctuary of heaven? It does. In Revelation 14, three angels fly above earth at the end of time, proclaiming Christ’s soon return and how to be prepared for that tremendous event.

The First Angel’s Message

John begins his description of these angelic messages like this, “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). The Three Angels’ Messages begin with the proclamation of the everlasting gospel. These messages are not more important than the gospel, nor are they less important than the gospel. They are not an addition, or an afterthought, or a competitor to the gospel. They *are* the everlasting gospel, explained and spelled out in detail for earth’s final generation, so that there may be no misunderstanding or confusion as to what acceptance of Christ’s sacrifice, and loyalty to God, means in our world today. Why is this so important? The Bible warns about “other gospels,” dangerous counterfeits of Biblical truth that “pervert the gospel of Christ” and leave those who preach and teach them “accursed” (see Galatians 1:6-9). So what is the “everlasting gospel,” the one that brings not curses, but “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Romans 1:16)?

The everlasting gospel is the gospel that focuses on Jesus Christ. Specifically, it is the gospel that focuses on *where* Jesus Christ is and what He is doing *now*. The apostle Paul explained it this way: “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (1 Timothy 3:16). Notice the references to *where* Jesus is and *what* He is doing. When Christ was “manifest in the flesh,” the present truth was that God Himself was on Earth, wrapped in human flesh. For people at that time, their great test was to accept that Jesus of Nazareth was God incarnate. Following Christ’s death and resurrection, however, an additional element was added to the test of faith. People were still called to believe that Jesus of Nazareth was God “manifest in the flesh,” but after Christ’s ascension they also had to accept that He was now working as their High Priest in heaven’s sanctuary. Similarly, every Christian alive today is called to accept the full, everlasting gospel that includes Christ’s life, death, resurrection, ascension, and His final, ongoing work in heaven’s sanctuary.

The first angel’s message, therefore, begins with this reminder of the gospel’s core theme—that Jesus Christ died for our sins and then rose from the dead, and now serves as humanity’s High Priest in heaven’s temple. After establishing this fact, the first angel explains what difference that reality should make in the life of every sincere believer: “Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters” (Revelation 14:7).

The call to give glory to God and live a holy life is not a uniquely end-time message. God has always expected and empowered His people to live in a way that honors Him and brings glory to His name. God told Moses, “Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy” (Leviticus 19:2). Peter repeated this charge to the early Christian church, writing, “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation” (1 Peter 1:15). Since holy living has always

been God's communicated will, why does the first angel repeat it again? For at least one simple reason: God knew that at the end of time "another gospel" would lead many Christians to believe that so long as they claim to accept Jesus as their Savior, it doesn't really matter how they live or whether they even attempt to overcome sin or be more like Jesus. But the Bible says, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

The first angel goes on to announce, "the hour of his judgment is come" (Revelation 14:7). In the Old Testament sanctuary services, the Day of Atonement was regarded as a "day of judgment."²³ On this day each fall, the high priest went into the Most Holy Place of the sanctuary to make a final atonement for the sins committed by the people during the preceding year. There he would sprinkle sacrificial blood on the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant and "make atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins" (Leviticus 16:16).

At the beginning of the Day of Atonement, the Israelites were still considered "unclean" with a record of "all their sins" before the Lord. Even though sacrifices were offered every day of the year to make atonement and provide forgiveness (see, for example, Leviticus 1:4 and 4:31), the record of those sins remained, carried into the sanctuary in the blood of the sacrifice and in the body of the priest (see Leviticus 4:5-7 and 10:12,13). It was only when the high priest entered the Most Holy Place with the sacrificial blood, and applied the blood to the mercy seat that covered the law of God, that the atonement (literally, "covering") process, begun with the death of the sacrifice, was completed for those sins. Leviticus 16:30 explains, "For on *that day* [the Day of Atonement] shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that *ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord*" (emphasis added).

Why should these ancient rituals matter to us today? The earthly sanctuary and its services were typical, or symbolic, of Christ's death, resurrection, and continued ministry for humanity. Without His death on the cross forgiveness of sins and eternal life would be impossible. Yet just as the Old Testament high priests had to enter the Most Holy Place with the sacrificial blood before symbolically completing the full plan of atonement, "by his own blood he [Christ] entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Hebrews 9:12). Christ's death made possible full atonement and assured the success of God's plan of redemption, and, as in the Old Testament sanctuary services, during the anti-typical Day of Atonement Christ will apply to the hearts and lives of His people the merits of His all-sufficient sacrifice so that His people will be able to stand before Him "clean from all their sins."

The first angel brings to light the fact that this final phase of Christ's work of salvation is now going on in heaven, "for the hour of his judgment is come." This

is a solemn time in earth's history, and it should be reflected in the life of every professed Christian. For ancient Israel, the Day of Atonement was a time to "afflict your souls, and do no work at all" (Leviticus 16:29). In other words, this was a day to get serious about life, and earnestly seek for forgiveness and cleansing from all known sins, and reflect on one's relationship with God. The same is true for all Christians living today.

The first angel's message concludes with the clarion call to "worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters" (Revelation 14:7). It is every person's duty and privilege to worship God as Creator, and in this ongoing habit of worship, God promises to restore His image, or character, in that person. This union with the Creator results not only in victory over sin and the cessation of what is wrong, but, just as importantly, in the active pursuit of a life lived like Jesus Christ, for the blessing, benefit, and salvation of others.

The first angel's message, therefore, focuses on *how* you live your life. The message is timely. It's practical, and challenging. It's addressed to every person living on earth, and it's the first part of God's message to you today.

The Second Angel's Message

The second angel's message follows. "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). The reference here to "Babylon" points all the way back to the tower of Babel built by rebellious descendants of Noah not long after the flood. "And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower; whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth" (Genesis 11:4).

At this time the "whole earth was of one language, and of one speech" (Genesis 11:1), yet these tower builders greatly feared division. In an effort to unite humanity in opposition to God, Nimrod and his followers built Babel, the "beginning of his kingdom" (Genesis 10:10).²⁴ The book *Patriarchs and Prophets* comments on the deep-seated spirit of rebellion that led to Babel's construction:

The Babel builders had indulged the spirit of murmuring against God. Instead of gratefully remembering His mercy to Adam and His gracious covenant with Noah, they had complained of His severity in expelling the first pair from Eden and destroying the world by a flood. But while they murmured against God as arbitrary and severe, they were accepting the rule of the cruelest of tyrants. Satan was seeking to bring contempt upon the sacrificial offerings that prefigured the death of Christ; and as the minds of the people were darkened by idolatry, he

led them to counterfeit these offerings and sacrifice their own children upon the altars of their gods. As men turned away from God, the divine attributes—justice, purity, and love—were supplanted by oppression, violence, and brutality.²⁵

Like Nimrod and his followers, end-time Babylon seeks to unite the world in rebellion against God. It leads earth's inhabitants to "have one mind, [to] give their power and strength unto the beast" (Revelation 17:13). A full study of end-time Babylon would dive deeper into prophecy than we are able to go at this time, but here's the basic point: The first angel explains how to be part of Christ's kingdom, and the second angel warns about being part of Babylon, the earthly kingdom that represents opposition to God.

The second angel also reveals that it is the "wine" of Babylon that unites the world against God. What might this "wine" represent? The Bible compares God's pure doctrines, or teachings, to clean water: "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass" (Deuteronomy 32:2). Since pure water represents divine truth as revealed in the Bible, "wine" may represent a perversion of truth and spiritual deception. After all, in Revelation, John sees a "great whore" and states that "the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication" (Revelation 17:2). The first angel, therefore, calls every professed Christian to holy living, while the second angel warns about the results of refusing to listen to that call.

This brings up another important point. Jesus revealed that His words unite His disciples. He said, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (John 10:16). Since Christ's words, or teachings, unite His followers, it should come as no surprise that the false doctrine of Babylon—its "wine"—brings the world into a false unity that ends in destruction. No wonder Jesus warned three times in His sermon on signs of the end to not be deceived (Matthew 24:4,11,24).

Deception, however, comes in many forms. It includes more than theological or doctrinal beliefs held by many Christians that can't be found in Scripture. Perhaps the most powerful deception in Babylon's wine cup springs from a worldview and mindset that leads people imperceptibly, step by step, away from belief in absolute truth, and places personal experience and opinion on an equal or higher footing than the Word of God. The world today deifies what it calls open-mindedness, reason, and toleration. It glories in acceptance and praise of any and all lifestyle choices, and pushes for anything that promotes ecumenical unification. Many people believe and hope that acceptance of and trust in these things will elevate humanity above its current "immaturity" and further its sup-

posed upward evolution. They place their hope in the same lie that Eve fell for in Eden: “For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods” (Genesis 3:5). Indeed, the name *Babel* means “gate of god” in Babylonian, but in Hebrew it means “confusion.”²⁶ What worse deception than to believe you are living in the “pathway to divinity” when in fact your life is nothing but confusion! The second angel’s message, therefore, focuses on *where*, spiritually, you live your life. It unmaskes deception and calls for every Christian to avoid the confusion of Babylon and live in the light of Bible truth.

The Third Angel’s Message

The third angel speaks in a “loud voice,” and for good reason. This message contains one of God’s most urgent warnings ever addressed to mortals: “If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb” (Revelation 14:9,10). We will look more closely at the mark of the beast in Chapter 11. But the bottom line is that worship is the primary issue at the end of time, and whom you worship determines your destiny.

Worship is not a uniquely end-time issue. Sin began in heaven when a powerful angel decided to worship himself rather than his Creator. “I will ascend into heaven,” he said, “I will exalt my throne above the stars of God...I will be like the most High” (Isaiah 14:13,14). Although created perfect and given a job as “the anointed cherub that covereth” God’s throne (Ezekiel 28:14,15), this angel chose a different purpose for his life than the one God had given him. And this is exactly the issue with the mark of the beast. For what purpose do you live? Is it to please yourself, or to please God? It’s really that simple. The third angel’s message, therefore, focuses on *why* you live your life.

And that is the gospel in a nutshell. Revelation’s three angels summarize the most basic issues regarding sin and salvation, and reveal the three choices that every person must make: *How* will you live? *Where*, spiritually, will you live? *Why* will you live? Your answers to those questions will determine whether or not God is able to achieve His ultimate purpose in your life. What is that purpose? It’s reflected in the events on Day 6 of Creation.



Chapter 9
Out of the Dust

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.”

Genesis 1:26

At the college I attended while earning a degree in music education, I would often walk through the art classrooms, which were located in the same building as the music department. More than once I would linger next to the pottery and sculpting projects, at times admiring the emerging works of symmetry, balance, and beauty, and at other times wondering—as their student creators may have—how a particular project was going to be salvaged in order to earn a passing grade! No matter the artistic level of each piece, however, it was always fascinating to watch as a lump of clay slowly transformed into something of greater value, meaning, and purpose.

Similarly, on Day 6, Creation week reached its climax as the Master Artist miraculously transformed dust into a living, breathing, human being, shaped and molded in the image of God. Matthew Henry, a seventeenth-century Welsh minister and author, referred to man’s creation as “the centre and summary of the whole work,”²⁷ the book *Patriarchs and Prophets* identifies man as “the crowning work of the Creator,”²⁸ and the Bible says that we as human beings are “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14). What lessons about God’s work in the world, and in our lives today, can we learn from Day 6 of Creation?

In the Image of God

In Genesis 1:26 God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air,

and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.” For five days God created life using the principle of division, and that pattern did not change on Day 6. The most significant feature of human beings is that God created us to be in His image. This fact, above all else, divides and separates us from the rest of creation.

What does it mean that God created humanity with His image? The answer is revealed in the relationship between Jesus Christ and God the Father. The book of Hebrews opens by describing the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Father, and it refers to Jesus as the “express image of his person” (Hebrews 1:3). The two words “express image” in English are translated from the Greek word *charaktēr*, from which we get the word *character* in English. In other words, Jesus Christ was in the image of the Father because He reflected the Father’s character. Amazingly, God created the human race to share in the same incredible privilege.

What makes Christ’s character, and the Father’s character, so perfect? The answer, again, is found in the first chapter of Hebrews. A few verses later we read, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. *Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity*” (Hebrews 1:8,9, emphasis added). God’s character is perfect because it is perfectly *divided* between love and hate—loving what is righteous, holy, and good, and hating what is sinful, harmful, and destructive. Like any good parent, God’s purpose has always been to instill these two basic aspects of His character in His human children, so that we reflect His character that loves righteousness and hates iniquity.

Perhaps you’ve noticed that some people claim to love righteousness and all that they term “good,” but they also demonstrate little or no hatred of sin. This is not God’s character. Maybe you’ve also observed that other people claim to hate sin, and fight aggressively against the world’s many forms of injustice, but, at the same time, they show little love for truth or righteousness, or for those who attempt to live by these principles. This, too, is not God’s character. God’s character, again, is perfectly divided between loving righteousness and hating iniquity.

In order to reflect God’s character, we must first, of course, recognize and admit that sin exists. This is an increasingly volatile claim in contemporary culture, and the idea that some things are sinful is even being resisted more and more within Christianity. Sadly, today’s vehement opposition to the suggestion that something is sinful indicates how far humanity has fallen from reflecting God’s character. Rather than “hating iniquity” because of its destructive effect on human beings, far too many Christians now excuse a variety of sins on the grounds of culture, heredity, or personal preference.

We shouldn’t be surprised. The Bible predicted that this would happen. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy about sins that would exist *in the church* just before the return of Christ:

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof:* from such turn away (2 Timothy 3:1-5, emphasis added).

Shockingly, the Bible indicates that these sins will be committed and cherished by those that have “a form of godliness”—that is, by those that claim to be Christians.

God’s work of division at Creation even points to one of the prevailing sins in the world, and in the church, shortly before Christ returns. Genesis 1:27 states, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; *male and female created he them*” (emphasis added). God separated males and females at Creation. Today, however, this divinely instituted gender division is being vigorously attacked, with many Christians lagging only a few desperate steps behind the world in the race to achieve “equality” and “tolerance.” Christ loves all people irrespective of their choices, and so will all genuine Christians. But God’s love for people also prevents Him from ignoring their sins, especially when those sins occur in the church. The purpose of this book is not to focus on these particular issues. However, it is sobering to realize that at the very time in earth’s history when Christians should be focused on allowing Christ to separate them from sin and asking Him to reflect more and more of His character through them to others, many have accepted a theology, worldview, and lifestyle that rejects God’s division of the sexes, and even rebels against it.

An Impossible Promise?

In spite of this spiritual malaise that currently grips much of Christianity, the Bible promises that when Christ returns, He will have a church that reflects His purity of character: “Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:25-27). When Jesus returns, He will have a people that are prepared to stand in His holy presence! The only way that this impossible-sounding promise can become reality is for God to divide His people from their sins, *before the second coming of Jesus Christ.*

The creation of Adam and Eve on Day 6 provides some insight regarding how God will accomplish this miracle. The Bible says, “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostril the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7). The order of God’s actions is important, but to realize why this is so we must first determine what the “dust” and the “breath of life” can represent. In both the Old and New Testaments, the “breath” that brings physical life is the same Spirit that gives spiritual life. For instance, the prophet Ezekiel once had a vision in which he saw a valley of dry bones that represented “the whole house of Israel” (Ezekiel 37:11). God told Ezekiel to tell the bones that He will “cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live” (verse 5). Ezekiel did so, and God then commanded the prophet to say to the bones, “[I] shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live” (verse 14). Similarly, the gospel of John records that after His resurrection, Christ “breathed on them [the disciples], and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost” (John 20:22). The breath of life entering Adam, then, can parallel the end-time outpouring of the Holy Spirit predicted in the Bible.²⁹ Without the miracle of the breath of God entering him, Adam would have remained nothing more than a heap of dust. In the same way, we today are completely dependent on the power of the Holy Spirit working in our lives if we are to reflect the character of God.

Before God breathed into Adam and gave him life, however, He “formed” or separated him from the dust of the ground. What might the “dust” at Creation point to at the end of time? Several verses provide a clue. After Adam and Eve sinned, God found them in the garden and then said to the serpent, “Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life” (Genesis 3:14). Spiritually, “dust” is where the serpent lives, and it therefore may, in this sense, represent sin, and living in sin.³⁰ As fallen creatures with sinful natures, the “dust” is where each one of us feels most comfortable and most natural—until Christ sets us free. David wrote in Psalm 119:25, “My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me [give me life] according to thy word.” In his own power, David, like us, was hopelessly held in bondage to sin, but through faith in the power of God and His Word, new life could be gained. Sadly, the Bible predicts that at the end of time, many people will choose to continue living in sin rather than allow God to set them free. Revelation depicts them grabbing handfuls of dust and shaking it on their heads even as Babylon is destroyed: “And [they] cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city? *And they cast dust on their heads*, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness: for in one hour is she made desolate” (Revelation 18:18,19, emphasis added). One can almost picture these lost souls desperately clinging to

the burning remnants of this sinful world, unable and unwilling to divide themselves from those things that have brought them death.

On Day 6, God first divided Adam from the dust, and then breathed into him the breath of life. Similarly, God has promised to forgive, cleanse, and divide His people from sin, and to pour out the Holy Spirit upon them at the end of time in a divine shower of righteousness the Bible calls the “latter rain.” Speaking through Hosea the prophet, God said, “Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you” (Hosea 10:12). Again, notice the order. First, God’s people are to “sow...in righteousness,” “reap in mercy,” and break up their “fallow ground.” That is, they are to allow God to divide them from those things that separate them from Him, and then to let Him re-create His character in them. Then, *after* this has happened, God promises to “rain righteousness” upon them.

The apostle Peter predicted the same order of events in his sermon shortly after Pentecost. “Repent ye therefore, and be converted,” he said, “that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19). Repentance and conversion must come first, before the “times of refreshing” and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. It shouldn’t be surprising that Ellen White, God’s end-time prophet, said the same thing:

Today you are to give yourself to God, that you may be emptied of self, emptied of envy, jealousy, evil surmising, strife, everything that shall be dishonoring to God. Today you are to have your vessel purified that it may be ready for the heavenly dew, ready for the showers of the latter rain; for the latter rain will come, and the blessing of God will fill every soul that is purified from every defilement. It is our work today to yield our souls to Christ, that we may be fitted for the time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord—fitted for the baptism of the Holy Spirit.³¹

Millions of Christians are waiting expectantly for God to pour out the Holy Spirit on them and on their churches. At the same time, though, they have virtually set aside the Bible as God’s inspired Word and ignored the Ten Commandments as the rule of their lives. Disturbingly, their energy has shifted from proclaiming the everlasting gospel to focusing almost exclusively on things like social justice causes, increasing the church’s political power, or protecting the environment. While not all of these other pursuits are bad, and some can even be good, without a primary focus on the everlasting gospel, at the end of the day people are still left in their sins.

God wants to pour out His Spirit on the church, but He cannot send this blessing on those who have no interest in overcoming sin or in being more like

Jesus. This challenging statement from the book *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessings* puts it this way: “If you cling to self, refusing to yield your will to God, you are choosing death. To sin, wherever found, God is a consuming fire. If you choose sin, and refuse to separate from it, the presence of God, which consumes sin, must consume you.”³² God’s people today should pray to be divided from sin so that they can be filled with the Holy Spirit and united with Jesus Christ, for the Holy Spirit is the very presence of Christ Himself. As Paul wrote, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” (Galatians 2:20). There is no other experience more important in our lives today. There is no other promise that Christ is more ready and willing to fulfill, for it is His promise to live within us personally.

The Power of the Gospel

During the first five days of Creation week, God accomplished His work by speaking. On the sixth day, however, He knelt down on the ground and became personally involved in drawing Adam out of the dust. In the same way, God became personally involved in our salvation when He allowed sin to touch His Son, for “God [sent] his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (Romans 8:3). The good news of the gospel is that Jesus has earned the right to condemn sin in your life, too, and to set you free from its power. This is why we have promises like Romans 6:13, “Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.”

This promise is echoed in 1 Corinthians 10:13. “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” Paul shared this promise with the church in Corinth, a church composed of people who had been rescued from the power of sin. Look at what he wrote to this same group of people just a few chapters earlier:

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. *And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God* (1 Corinthians 6:9-11, NKJV, emphasis added).

The church in Corinth was made up of people who had come to Christ with all of their sins and weaknesses, but they didn't stay that way. The power of the gospel changed and transformed them, and their experience is proof that Christ can do the same thing for you today. Perhaps you feel that God can never accomplish this miracle in your life, and that these promises just can't be for you. These thoughts are a lie from the devil, a deception from the enemy who dwells in the "dust" of sin.

We can praise God that Christ's personal involvement with humanity didn't end at the cross, or at His resurrection, or even at His ascension. It continues today through His ministry in heaven's sanctuary. His greatest desire is that you will invite Him into your heart and allow Him to take full control of your life. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock," He says. "If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me" (Revelation 3:20). Christ's incredible promise to unite Himself with His church will be fulfilled before His second coming, and it's illustrated in the final events on Day 6 of Creation week.

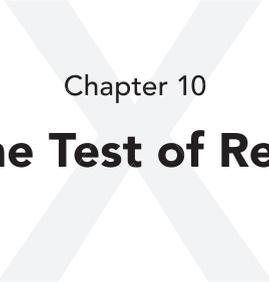
The Marriage

Following Adam's creation, God had one more surprise—the creation of woman through the division of a rib from Adam's side. "And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man" (Genesis 2:22). When that miraculous operation was complete, God finally performed Creation week's climactic act of unification—the marriage of the man and the woman. Looking at Eve, Adam said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, *and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh*" (Genesis 2:23,24, emphasis added).

The covenant of marriage symbolizes Christ's promise to unite Himself with His church, and to become "one flesh" with each of His disciples. "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church...For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones" (Ephesians 5:23,30). The result of this spiritual union is not left in doubt. Christ will "sanctify and cleanse it [the church] with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:26,27). Revelation, too, speaks of Christ accomplishing this work in His people at the end of time: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints" (Revelation 19:7,8).

Human history is not simply lurching forward without rhyme or reason. The plan of salvation and the everlasting gospel are headed toward a grand climax, one that will forever settle the questions, *Is Jesus able to save His people from their sins? Is He able to re-create in them His character of loving righteousness and hating iniquity? Is He able to divide them from sin? Is God able to so fully redeem sinners that they can be united with Him?*

God's great end-time revival that began in the middle ages will conclude some day soon. It will finish with the full power of the gospel displayed in the life of individual believers as they allow God to separate them from sin, recreate His character in them, and fully unite them with Christ. When this final division from sin and union with Christ takes place, the everlasting gospel will be preached and demonstrated "in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:14). And when it does, God will look at His perfect work of redemption, look at every person saved, and pronounce it all "very good."



Chapter 10

The Test of Rest

“And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.”

Genesis 2:2

Several years ago, as my wife Stacey and I prepared for the birth of our first baby, we enrolled in a birth method class that promised to help the painful delivery process proceed as quickly as possible. For weeks we practiced various methods of helping my wife relax and rest her mind and body through increasing levels of pain. The practice paid off—our son James arrived so quickly that the doctor was not even in the room when our precious baby literally landed on the floor. I can’t say the surprisingly fast delivery was without pain for my wife, but her persistent practice in resting through discomfort enabled her to survive the final test.

A final test of faith awaits God’s people at the end of time, and, as with our rapid-delivery baby experience, those who will survive this test must learn to “rest” in God. The Bible calls this test the mark of the beast. As we are about to discover, God has revealed the fundamental issues connected with the mark of the beast since Day 7 of Creation week. On that day God entered His Sabbath rest and divided time itself. Similarly, the end-time mark will divide and separate those who unite with Him and follow His example from those who don’t.

The Sabbath Rest

The Sabbath originated at Creation, for the Bible record states, “And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and

sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made” (Genesis 2:2,3). On the seventh day, God divided a 24-hour period of time, blessed it, and set it apart from the other six days of the week as a perpetually recurring memorial of His creative power. The fourth commandment reminds humanity that God’s rest on the seventh day of Creation week forms the basis for Sabbath observance:

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: *For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day:* wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it (Exodus 20:8-11, emphasis added).

Just as the Sabbath represents God’s completed creation of the physical world, it also points to His ability to re-create fallen, sinful people in His image, with His character, so that they are once again like Him. It symbolizes the spiritual rest that comes with full surrender to God and trust in Jesus Christ. God told the ancient Israelites, “Verily my Sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; *that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you*” (Exodus 31:13, emphasis added). Centuries later, God repeated this lesson through the prophet Ezekiel, saying, “Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, *that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them*” (Ezekiel 20:12, emphasis added).

The author of Hebrews expressed the same idea to the early Christian church. First, the warning was penned, “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it” (Hebrews 4:1). The “rest” in this passage points to the spiritual rest that comes with acceptance of the gospel, “[f]or unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we which have believed do enter into rest” (Hebrews 4:2,3). After the promise is given of “rest” through faith in God, a reminder about the Sabbath follows, “For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works” (Hebrews 4:4). As with Old Testament Israel, every New Testament Christian is called by God to participate in seventh-day Sabbath rest as a sign of faith in God’s power and promise to save from sin. The lesson is repeated in Hebrews 4:11. “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own

works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.”

It was exactly this issue—failure to enter God’s rest—that led Adam and Eve into sin. God commanded Adam in the Garden of Eden, “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2:16,17). Had Adam and Eve faithfully and lovingly obeyed their Creator, they would have lived forever—free from sin and free from pain, destruction, and separation from God that sin brings. In other words, they would have lived securely in God’s “rest.”

Notice carefully, however, Satan’s temptation to Eve: “[Y]e shall not surely die: For God doth know that *in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil*” (Genesis 3:4,5, emphasis added). A restless desire to elevate herself above the position that God had given her led Eve to distrust, and then disobey, God. Unfortunately, Eve’s restlessness has been shared by humanity ever since, for it is the natural state of the sinful heart. Consider this insightful statement from the book *Patriarchs and Prophets*:

Such has been Satan’s work from the days of Adam to the present, and he has pursued it with great success. He tempts men to distrust God’s love and to doubt His wisdom. *He is constantly seeking to excite a spirit of irreverent curiosity, a restless, inquisitive desire to penetrate the secrets of divine wisdom and power.* In their efforts to search out what God has been pleased to withhold, multitudes overlook the truths which He has revealed, and which are essential to salvation. Satan tempts men to disobedience by leading them to believe they are entering a wonderful field of knowledge. But this is all a deception. *Elated with their ideas of progression, they are, by trampling on God’s requirements, setting their feet in the path that leads to degradation and death.*³³

Don’t miss the connection between resting by faith in God and obedience to His law. If Eve had truly rested in God’s love and providence for her needs, she would never have accepted the serpent’s invitation to seek the “hidden knowledge.” Likewise, if Adam had truly rested in God’s love and providence for him, he would not have chosen to follow his wife into sin:

Adam had enjoyed the companionship of God and of holy angels. He had looked upon the glory of the Creator. He understood the high destiny opened to the human race should they remain faithful to God. Yet all these blessings were lost sight of in

the fear of losing that one gift which in his eyes outvalued every other. Love, gratitude, loyalty to the Creator—all were overborne by love to Eve. She was a part of himself, and he could not endure the thought of separation. *He did not realize that the same Infinite Power who had from the dust of the earth created him, a living, beautiful form, and had in love given him a companion, could supply her place.* He resolved to share her fate; if she must die, he would die with her...He seized the fruit and quickly ate.³⁴

Adam and Eve's disobedience, and the continued disobedience of humanity ever since, is really a symptom of a lack of love for God. It's a sign of rebellious independence from God's will, and a repetition of Eve's "restless, inquisitive desire" to experience that which God has forbidden. It's part of the disease of sin that we are all born into.

But our situation is not hopeless! Jesus once said to His disciples, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). This is a promise as much as it is a command. If you love Me, Jesus is saying, you will joyfully keep my commandments. Jesus continued, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever" (John 14:16). Jesus here refers to the Holy Spirit as the Comforter—as One Who leads people into a restful and peaceful surrender to God that bears fruit in obedience to God's law. Resting by faith in God's love for them would have shielded Adam and Eve from the power of sin, and it will do the same for you today. Resting in Christ's love will also enable people to remain loyal to God when the mark of the beast is enforced.

The Mark of the Beast

The mark of the beast is a deep Bible study, and there is not room in this chapter to fully explore all the issues surrounding this subject. However, even a brief glance at several passages in Revelation reveals the key issues:

1. **It centers on the issue of worship (Revelation 13:15; 14:9).** The first angel's message concludes by calling all people to "worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters" (Revelation 14:7), and according to the fourth commandment, one important way we worship God as Creator is to keep the seventh-day Sabbath holy (Exodus 20:8-11). Those who avoid the mark, therefore, will recognize God's authority by resting and worshipping Him on the seventh-day Sabbath. Physically and spiritually, they will enter God's Sabbath rest by worshipping Him as their Creator and Savior.
2. **It is enforced on all people in the world (Revelation 13:16).** Because the mark is enforced on all people in the world, it must be directed against

something that applies to and affects every person in the world. While things like tradition, culture, education, and technology differ from person to person and place to place, time is a common, inescapable denominator shared by every person in the world. The recurring, weekly seventh-day Sabbath rest is something understandable and accessible to every person on earth. A global law prohibiting true Sabbath worship, and enforcing a false day of worship, would likewise affect every living person.

3. **It is received in the forehead or in the hand (Revelation 13:16; 14:9).** The mark of the beast is a counterfeit of the seal of God, which is also placed in the forehead (Revelation 7:1-3). God places His seal on His servants (Revelation 7:3), or those who obey Him (Romans 6:16). Thus, God's servants who avoid the mark must "keep the commandments of God" (Revelation 14:12), and this would include the fourth commandment to "remember" that "the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God" (Exodus 20:8,10).
4. **Wonders and miracles are used in its acceptance and enforcement (Revelation 13:13,14).** In Eden, Eve's curiosity was aroused by the "miracle" of a talking serpent, and in His sermon on the end times, Jesus warned repeatedly about not being deceived (Matthew 24:4,11,24-26). Learning to live "by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7), therefore, will be essential in order to avoid the mark. And where does faith come from? The Bible says that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). Those who avoid the mark, then, must place their faith and trust in the word of God, not in the evidence of their senses or in anything else. This means that many of the arguments used today in support of legislating Sunday sacredness, such as religious traditions, cultural norms, political expediency, and social or environmental benefits, cannot be trusted in regards to understanding and avoiding the mark of the beast. Rather, based on the Bible's warning, we should expect that "wonders" and "miracles" will be used in connection with the push to enforce the counterfeit Sabbath rest.
5. **Those who receive it "have no rest day nor night" (Revelation 14:11).** While those who receive the mark "have no rest," those who remain faithful to God are promised that they will "rest from their labours" (Revelation 14:13). This promise includes those who physically "die in the Lord," as well as those who have "died to sin" by being baptized into Jesus Christ (Romans 6:2,3). Those who avoid the mark, therefore, have "ceased from [their] own works" (Hebrews 4:10), have entered spiritual rest in Christ, and now "walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4).
6. **Those who avoid it "have the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12).** Those who avoid the mark of the beast understand that no one is saved by keeping the commandments, for "by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of

yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8,9). Those who have been saved by Jesus will do His “good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). Their keeping of God’s commandments is a result of their union with, and spiritual rest in, Christ.

The mark of the beast as Satan’s final attack against God’s authority and His blessing of the seventh-day Sabbath, therefore, is deeply imbedded in Scripture. Just as God ended Creation with the division of sacred time, He will end the work of salvation with the same division of time. The seventh-day Sabbath has always been, and always will be, a sign of God’s creative and re-creative power. It is heaven’s weekly invitation to a personal relationship with God—a relationship that forgives, cleanses, and protects from sin, and a relationship through which the Creator promises to restore His image within people.

It’s a rest everyone needs to experience.

It’s a rest you can have today.

Chapter 11

Divided

*“And I heard another voice from heaven, saying,
Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins,
and that ye receive not of her plagues.”*

Revelation 18:4

Ever since sin entered this world, God has worked to separate people from this deadly spiritual cancer that separates us from Him. In Eden God gave the first gospel promise to “put enmity” (Genesis 3:15) between His people and sin. This enmity must be created through divine power, for it does not naturally exist in the fallen human heart. Fortunately, God can perform heart surgery! Speaking through the prophet Ezekiel, God said, “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 36:25,26). God’s promise of spiritual cleansing depends on Him removing the “stony heart” of flesh that we are all born with and naturally feel so comfortable following.

God’s removal of our “stony heart” can be a painful process. It is rarely enjoyable, at least at the time, when God re-arranges life’s self-centered priorities and values. It often hurts, at least temporarily, when God removes goals and aspirations that once appealed to the unconverted heart. Yet this division is essential, for God promises to save people *from* sin, not *in* sin: “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

God has always called His people to separate and divide from the world. He called Abram at age 75 to separate from his home, his family, and his occupation.

“Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee,” God told him. “And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 12:1-3). Abram’s willingness to separate from the world ensured God’s blessing and protection in his life, and resulted in blessings for all humanity to follow.

At the time of the Exodus, God promised to separate Israel from their slavery in Egypt. “I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage,” God said through Moses (Exodus 6:6). God explained His purpose for Israel—that they be a “peculiar” and “holy people” that “keep the commandments of the Lord thy God” (Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 28:9). If they would follow this life of separation from the world, God promised them blessings and protection, just as He had promised Abram. “The Lord shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways” (Deuteronomy 28:7). Israel’s safety and effectiveness in the world depended upon their willingness to live divided from the world. Even more importantly, God revealed the ultimate reward for Israel’s willingness to separate from the world—union with Him, “that I may dwell amongst them” (Exodus 25:8).

God never changes (Malachi 3:6), and neither does His reason for calling people to follow Him. Shortly before His death, Jesus prayed for His disciples: “I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:14). As with Abraham and ancient Israel, the disciples were called to allow God’s word to separate and divide them from the world. God’s promise to them, and the church that He would form through them, was also the same—He would bless and protect them from the enemy’s attacks, and empower His church so completely that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18).

The light of biblical Christianity almost blew out during the Dark Ages. However, for nearly 700 years God has followed the same principles of division as He used during Creation week to bring Christianity back into the light and prepare people to meet Jesus Christ at the second coming. The Reformation began as the light of Bible truth pierced the spiritual darkness, just as God began Creation week by creating light that “divided the light from the darkness” (Genesis 1:4). During the Reformation, God’s work of dividing people from error continued as many people rediscovered sanctuary truths, including the reality of Jesus Christ as humanity’s High Priest in heaven’s sanctuary. Just as some people accepted those truths and others rejected them, on Day 2 of Creation week God placed “a firmament in the midst of the waters” to “divide the waters from the waters”

(Genesis 1:6). On Day 3 of Creation week dry land appeared and again divided the waters, just as God eventually prepared a “wilderness” in a New World that offered freedom and protection for those that desired to follow the Bible.

In the nineteenth century, the Reformation grew into an Advent Awakening as Christians from many denominations, and from many places in the world, understood from Bible prophecy that Christ’s second coming was near. Similarly, on Day 4 of Creation week God placed “lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth” (Genesis 1:15). That Advent Awakening lives on today as an Advent Movement, commissioned to share Revelation’s Three Angels’ Messages with the world. In the same way, on Day 5 of Creation week God created winged creatures that “fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven” (Genesis 1:20).

On Day 6, God completed His work of physical creation by separating man from the dust and then breathing into Him the breath of life. Similarly, as God’s work of spiritual division draws to a close today, through the power of the everlasting gospel He will re-create many people “in the image of God” (Genesis 1:27), with His character, separated from sin and filled with the Holy Spirit of Christ’s presence. When this happens, Christ will “be joined unto his wife,” the church, “and they two shall be one flesh” (Ephesians 5:31), just as Adam and Eve were united together in marriage at the conclusion of Day 6. In the same way, at the end of time, God’s people will be united with Jesus Christ at “the marriage of the Lamb” (Revelation 19:7). Clothed in “fine linen, clean and white” (Revelation 19:8), Christ’s church will reflect His righteousness, “not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:27). Finally, Adam and Eve celebrated their marriage by entering into God’s Sabbath rest on Day 7 of Creation week. Similarly, the sign of God’s completed work at the end of time will be participation in Sabbath rest on God’s holy seventh day, “For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his” (Hebrews 4:10).

The Cleaver of Truth

God separates and divides people from the world so that we can be united with Him, for “Christ in you, [is] the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27). Jesus wants nothing more than to be eternally united with the people He died to save. Today, He remains knocking at the door of our hearts, repeating the promise, “[I]f any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:20). Yet, rather than open that door and pursue true and complete unity with Christ, far too many of us remain fascinated and entranced under the tree of death, staring longingly, like Eve, at the forbidden

fruit. Embarrassed by our past, shy about our message, and fearful to stand alone, we remain divided from Christ, and united with the world.

Seventh-day Adventists must not now, at this most critical time, surrender the unique history, prophetic identity, or the heaven-inspired message and mission that have shaped and guided this final phase of the Advent Movement for over 170 years. Our challenge today is the same challenge that has faced God's people through all of history—to stand divided from the world:

Seventh-day Adventists have been chosen by God as a peculiar people, separate from the world. *By the great cleaver of truth He has cut them out from the quarry of the world and brought them into connection with Himself.* He has made them His representatives and has called them to be ambassadors for Him in the last work of salvation. The greatest wealth of truth ever entrusted to mortals, the most solemn and fearful warnings ever sent by God to man, have been committed to them to be given to the world.³⁵

As the world pushes for a blind unity that leads to doctrinal compromise, worldly favor, and spiritual death, Seventh-day Adventists must sound a different call—a call for division from sin and unity with Christ. If we fail, our only reward will be to plunge off “the face of the deep” (Genesis 1:2) into the void and darkness of Babylonian confusion.

United to this darkness, we fall.

Divided, we stand.

Endnotes

- 1 God did perform one work of unification during Creation week. Late on the sixth day, after life had been created through a continual and repeated process of division, God united Adam and Eve in marriage, and they became “one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). This act of unity holds tremendous implications for us today, and we will study this in depth later in this book.
- 2 Ellen G. White, *Christian Experience and Teachings* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1940), pp. 241-2 (emphasis added).
- 3 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Boise: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), p. 51 (emphasis added).
- 4 See Genesis 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,24,26,29
- 5 Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Boise: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), p. 14 (emphasis added).
- 6 “Antinomian,” *Standard College Dictionary* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World., Inc., 1966).
- 7 John Wesley, “Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount: Discourse Five” (Sermon 25), quoted in Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Boise: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), p. 263 (emphasis added).
- 8 *The Great Controversy*, p. 292.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 287 (emphasis added).
- 10 <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/wesley/journal.vi.iii.v.html>
- 11 *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, vol. IV, The Great Century A.D. 1800-A.D. 1914 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1941), pp. 2-4; quoted in Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Boise: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), p. 690.
- 12 *The Great Controversy*, p. 357.
- 13 Many prophecies in addition to Daniel 8:14 use the day-for-a-year principle, such as the 40 years in Numbers 14:34; the 390 days and 40 days in Ezekiel 4:5,6; the three-and-a-half years of Daniel 7:25; the 70 weeks in Daniel 9:24; the 42 months in Revelation 11:2; and the 1260 days in Revelation 12:6.
- 14 Artaxerxes’ decree can be read in its entirety in Ezra 7:12-28. In fulfillment of the prophecy to “restore and to build Jerusalem,” Artaxerxes provided for the reconstruction of Jerusalem to be completed, as well as for an autonomous Jewish government to once again be established.
- 15 If you use a calculator to add 2,300 to negative 457, you will end up with 1,843. This is because in the world of math, the number zero separates negative and positive numbers. However, there was never a “zero year” between bc 1 and ad 1, so the correct calculation of the time prophecy concludes the 2,300 years in ad 1844.

- 16 This date was chosen because the Jewish Day of Atonement fell on that day in the year 1844. On the annual Day of Atonement the ancient Hebrew sanctuary was cleansed of its record of sin as explained in Leviticus 16.
- 17 F. Reed, in the *Christian Advocate and Journal* (December 13, 1833); quoted in *The Great Controversy*, p. 333.
- 18 *mow'ed* (H4150) in James Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007).
- 19 H. Edson manuscript, Heritage Room, Andrews University; Spalding, I: 97-101; Froom, IV: 879-881; quoted in R.W. Schwarz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1979), p. 62.
- 20 Ellen G. White, *The Review and Herald* (January 20, 1903).
- 21 Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000), p. 14 (emphasis added).
- 22 *The Great Controversy*, pp. 488-9.
- 23 For instance, the Babylonian Talmud states, "It has been taught: 'All are judged' on New Year and their doom is sealed on the Day of Atonement..." ("Talmud Rosh Hashanah" 16a, 16b, trans. in *The Babylonian Talmud*, ed. by Isidore Epstein, 35 vols. [London: The Soncino Press Ltd., 1935-1952], pp. 57-59, 63). Similarly, the *High Holyday Prayer Book* states, "The great shofar is sounded; a gentle whisper is heard; the angels, quaking with fear, declare: 'The day of judgment is here...On Rosh Hashanah their destiny is inscribed, and on Yom Kippur [the Day of Atonement] it is sealed'" (Philip Birnbuam, *High Holyday Prayer Book: Yom Kippur* (New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1960), pp. 506, 508.
- 24 The Bible's first reference to an earthly kingdom occurs here in Genesis 10:10 in reference to Babel. Likewise, the Bible's final reference to an earthly kingdom is found in Revelation 17, the chapter that talks about spiritual Babylon. At the end of time, the kings of the earth "give their kingdom unto the beast" (Revelation 17:17), which Revelation 17:1-5 reveals is the power that controls Mystery Babylon.
- 25 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Boise: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1958), p. 120.
- 26 "Babel," *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* (New York: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1960).
- 27 Henry, M. "Commentary on Genesis 2 by Matthew Henry." Blue Letter Bible. Last Modified 1 Mar, 1996. https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/mhc/Gen/Gen_002.cfm
- 28 *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 44.
- 29 Many Bible verses describe the end-time outpouring of the Holy Spirit as the "latter rain." See, for instance, Hosea 6:3; Joel 2:23; Zechariah 10:1; and James 5:7.
- 30 Some might argue that because the Bible says God formed man "of the dust of the ground," the use of this analogy might actually be inferring that God formed man "of sin" or even "in sin." This would ignore God's own verdict of His creation being "very good" in Genesis 1:31. Furthermore, the word of does not appear in the Hebrew between "man" and "the dust." Therefore, a proper translation of the verse could also be, "And the Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground." Even if this interpretation is accepted, it must be remembered that God's creation, including the physical dust in Eden and the man formed from it, was perfect. The comparison of "dust" at Creation with "sin" at the end

of time is employed only to illustrate the Bible's larger message that God has promised to separate, divide, and save His people from, not in, sin (Matthew 1:21 and Romans 11:27).

- 31 Ellen G. White, *The Review and Herald* (March 22, 1892).
- 32 Ellen G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1956), p. 62.
- 33 *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 54 (emphasis added).
- 34 *Ibid.*, p. 56.
- 35 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), p. 138 (emphasis added).

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