

Old Paths

Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.
Jeremiah 6:16

The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant.
Psalm 25:14

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Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: (Numbers 23:24)



Discipleship, Part 2

By Allen Stump

Becoming a disciple of Christ

This is the second part of a three-part series on discipleship. In the first part, we looked at the basis of discipleship. In this issue of *Old Paths*, will look at what it takes to become and to stay a disciple of Jesus. The third part will examine how to make disciples. Certainly, it would be hard for us to teach and train someone to become something we are not. This is an important principle. I cannot teach you how to become a master carpenter if I do not know carpentry myself. If I am not first a true disciple of Jesus, I cannot make disciples of others.

Let us remember that in Part 1 of this series we learned that being a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ means:

1. Learning from him
2. Obeying his words
3. Staying in fellowship with him
4. Making others disciples of him

This study will focus on the first three of these points.

Jesus called people to follow him

The Lord Jesus plainly called for people to follow him. We see an example when he called Peter, Andrew, and the sons of Zebedee from their fishing boats:

And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. 19 And he saith unto them, **Follow me**, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him. And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him. (Matthew 4:18–22)

Jesus asked them to follow him, and what was their reaction? We read in Luke's account:

And when they had brought their ships to land, they **forsook all, and followed him.** (Luke 5:11)

The Greek word translated “forsook” is from ἀφίημι *aphiēmi*. *Aphiēmi* means to forsake, to leave, even to divorce. This means that the disciples turned their back on their former lives. It implies a choice and a commitment.

There was nothing the disciples were not willing to leave behind. By agreeing to follow Jesus, they became his students. They recognized him as a teacher and a leader, and they made the commitment to be his disciples, to live as he lived, and to teach his doctrine to others.

There have been false teachers with substitute teachings through the ages—Buddha, Mohammed, Zoroaster, for example. They had their followers who adopted their teachings, but they were all following the prince of this world. They were disciples, but, in reality, they were the disciples of Satan.

What it mean to follow Jesus

The first command Jesus ever gave to Peter was “follow me” (Matthew 4:19). I find it interesting that the last thing that Jesus said to Peter was also to follow him. John records:

Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? *follow thou me.* (John 21:22)

Although these two commissions seem on the surface to be identical in the English language, they are actually different.

Christ used two distinct phrases intentionally, and Peter certainly understood the profound distinction between them.

And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him. (Luke 5:11)

Christ's first command was "follow [δεῦτε *deute*] me" (Matthew 4:19). *Deute* means to come! It was a forceful and very persuasive way of making the call.

Peter and the other fishermen understood what Jesus meant. The Lord was directly, powerfully, and with desire directing Peter and the others to become his followers.

By leaving their past behind, these four fishermen were making a commitment to learn from Jesus. They recognized him as a teacher, or a Rabbi, and were willing to dedicate themselves to becoming his official students. Christ was saying, *I want you to learn from me.*

The Lord's last command to Peter is more of a request or a plea. Jesus had just asked Peter three times if he loved him, as recorded in John 21:15–19. That motivating, powerful, and personal conversation was coming to its end when Peter turned around and saw the apostle John following them (John 21:20). A desire came over Peter to know John's future. Peter looked at John and then asked the Lord, *What about him?* And it is here that Jesus gives his last word of instruction to Peter.

If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. (John 21:22)

The Greek word for *follow* here is from ἀκολουθεῖω (*akoloutheō*). *Akoloutheō* means "to move behind someone in the same direction" (William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., revised and edited by Frederick William Danker).

In simple language, Christ was saying, in effect, to Peter, *It does not matter about anyone else. Don't be worried about others. You follow me.*

This last command sounds like the first, but Christ's tone and his intent is much different. With love, compassion, and purpose, Jesus is saying, *Peter, you stay close to me. Don't worry about anyone else. I want you to stay close and follow me.*

These two commands from the beginning of our Lord's ministry until the end clearly articulate the truth of what it means to be a disciple of Christ. His followers were expected to learn from him. He wanted them to be students, eager pupils, who desired to soak in everything he could possibly teach them.

I remember teaching a teenager once how to maneuver and roll a kayak in a flowing river. The student was eager to try everything that was shown. The desire to reach a higher degree of proficiency was very clear. I thought about us as disciples of Jesus. Are we as eager to learn and mimic our Teacher as my student was that day?

Jesus also wanted his disciples to stay close to him in order to learn by following his example. Christ wanted his disciples' love for him to motivate them to follow his pattern and to model themselves after him.

To be a disciple is to be a whole-hearted follower of Christ. We grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ through the renewing of our minds. We have a new heart regenerated in us by the Holy Spirit.

Children play a game called follow the leader. You may have played it when you were a child. It is all about going in the same steps as the one leading. God calls us to accept Christ as our leader and to follow him by walking in his steps. The only way we can follow Jesus is to walk even as he walked.

He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked. (1 John 2:6)

Practical implications of being a disciple of Jesus

Remember to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ means:

1. To learn from him
2. To obey his words
3. To stay in fellowship with him
4. To make others disciples of him

These four imperatives are the very essence of true discipleship. These four requirements were essential for Christ's disciples then and are necessary for followers of Christ today.

How to learn from Christ

So how are we to learn from Christ? We learn by listening carefully to his teaching. The teaching ministry of Christ was one of the most important aspects of his earthly ministry. It is interesting to note that immediately upon calling his first disciples they followed him throughout Galilee, listening to him teach and preach:

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. (Matthew 4:23)

In fact, the sermon of Christ that more people know than any other, the Sermon on the Mount, was presented soon after he commanded Peter, Andrew, James, and John

to follow him. Obviously, the Lord's teaching ministry was one of the most important aspects of how he disciplined his followers.

Christ's final mandate to his disciples also included an emphasis upon teaching.

Go ye therefore, and *teach all nations*, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 *Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.* (Matthew 28:19–20)

How can you teach what you do not know? You cannot! The proclamation of Scripture must be a priority, but you must first know it to teach it.

I was trained to be a mathematician when I was younger. I had to learn many theorems, like the Pythagoras theorem which states $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$. A lot of students learn that, but I had to also learn things not as well known, such as the mean value theorem of calculus:

If $f(x)$ is continuous on $[a, b]$ and differentiable on (a, b) then there is a c such that

$$f'(c) = \frac{f(b) - f(a)}{b - a}$$

I could not be expected to teach these things without knowing them first myself.

Christ expects teaching to be a priority for his disciples today, but they must know what they are to teach. The early followers of Jesus were learners, pupils, or, simply, students. Christ's followers today must be all those things as well. Learning from Christ today means hearing, studying, and applying the written word of God.

Secondly, Christ's disciples learned from him by being willingly obedient to his word.

There is an important aspect of Christ's teaching ministry that he continually emphasized with his disciples. He expected his disciples to put what he taught them into practice in their lives, and Jesus still expects his followers to do that today.

This principle is also included in the Great Commission: "Go therefore and make disciples . . . Teaching them to *observe* all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19, 20). The word "observe" in this passage is $\tau\eta\rho\acute{\epsilon}\omega$ (*tēreō*). *Tēreō* does not mean to see or to look in a visual manner, but it means to do or to implement, even to *guard*, as in Revelation 14:12:

Christ expects teaching to be a priority for his disciples today, but they must know what they are to teach.

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

Christ wants us to follow his words that he personally spoke, as well as those he has inspired through the prophets.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. (2 Timothy 3:16–17)

But be ye *doers* of the word, and not hearers only, *deceiving your own selves.* (James 1:22)

The Greek word translated *doers* is from $\pi\omicron\iota\eta\tau\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ (*poiētēs*) and means exactly what the English translation conveys—to perform some action in thought, word, or deed. Paul used it in Romans 2:

(For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the *doers* of the law shall be justified. (Romans 2:13)

To become a disciple of Christ fundamentally is to listen to his teachings and to adhere to them.

How to stay close to Christ

If we come to Jesus just as we are and accept his righteousness, how are we to remain a disciple of Jesus?

Firstly, Christ's disciples stay close to him by personally spending time in his word. It is obvious from any study in scripture of Christ's dealings with his disciples that the key to his ministry with them was that he spent a quantity of time with them, as well as quality time. To be able to spend time with them, he ordained them.

And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, (Mark 3:14)

The Greek word translated *that* is $\acute{\iota}\nu\alpha$ (*hina*). It is a primary conjunction denoting purpose. Jesus ordained the twelve so that they should be with him.

The key to discipleship was the opportunity to get close to the teacher. Verse 15 adds: "And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils," but the main and first point is to be with the Lord.

After Jesus' resurrection and his time of continued teaching, he assembled his followers one more time before he ascended back into heaven. Jesus took that opportunity not

only to give them one more set of instructions, which we call the great commission, but also to give them an amazing message of encouragement:

. . . lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Matthew 28:20)

Christ's disciples realized that Jesus was about to return to his heavenly Father but in this last time together, he helped them to understand they would always have his presence.

Today it is vital for Christ's followers to understand this significant truth as well. Being a disciple of Christ means spending time with him. Even though Jesus is not physically present today, his followers can stay close to him by spending time in his word.

It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. (John 6:63)

Secondly, Christ's disciples stay close to their master by making prayer a priority. The life of Jesus was a life of prayer, and he wanted his disciples to understand that prayer would be a key to their success. Success breeds success, and the disciples came to connect Christ's success with his prayer life; therefore, they wanted to learn to pray as he did.

And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. (Luke 11:1-4)

Jesus expected his disciples to pray:

And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him. And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. . . . And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow, And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. (Luke 22:39-40, 45-46)

Christ expected his disciples to put what he taught them into practice in their lives, and Jesus still expects his followers to continue that today.

The importance of being and of staying close to Jesus is because Jesus is our access to God:

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 an 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)

Christ was the way by which patriarchs and prophets were saved. He is the way by which alone we can have access to God. (Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 663.3)

The darkness of the evil one encloses those who neglect to pray. The whispered temptations of the enemy entice them to sin; and it is all because they do not make use of the privileges that God has given them in the divine appointment of prayer. **Why should the sons and daughters of God be reluctant to pray, when prayer is the key in the hand of faith to unlock heaven's storehouse, where are treasured the boundless resources of Omnipotence?** Without unceasing prayer and diligent watching we are in danger of growing careless and of deviating from the right path. The adversary seeks continually to obstruct the way to the mercy seat, that we may not by earnest supplication and faith obtain grace and power to resist temptation. (Ellen White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 94.2; emphasis supplied)

Heaven has established prayer as a way for Christ's followers to communicate with the almighty God. Prayer proves that Christ's disciples are dependent upon him, and true disciples of Christ will be characterized by a vibrant prayer life.

The priorities of the Christian life have been illustrated by this analogy: As we must eat physical food to survive, so must we eat of the word of God and study daily. As we breathe moment by moment to live, so must we pray without ceasing. Finally, we must exercise to stay strong, and witnessing is the spiritual exercise of the disciple.¹

Conclusion

Christ expects his disciples to follow him, to learn from him, to obey him, and to stay close to him. That is what Jesus wanted from his followers during his earthly ministry, and he expects no less from his disciples today.



1. This last part of the analogy will be the theme of the third part of this study next month.

Questions and Answers

By Allen Stump

We receive biblical questions on a regular basis. All questions are considered to be an honest and sincere effort to either learn a biblical position or our relationship to the Bible. Below are some questions of an excellent nature that may have a wide field of interest; therefore, we are publishing them.

Is it false to worship Christ as God?

The answer is a plain no! The apostle Paul, speaking of Christ, says:

Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. (Hebrews 1:3–6)

Notice that Jesus has obtained a more excellent name than the angels. The Father declares Christ to be his Son and worthy of worship, and then in verse 8 the Father proclaims, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom” (Hebrews 1:8). If the Father can declare Jesus to be God, then we certainly can too and worship him as such.

Ellen White wrote very strongly on this matter:

The world was made by him, “and without him was not anything made that was made.” If Christ made all things, he existed before all things. The words spoken in regard to this are so decisive that no one need be left in doubt. Christ was God essentially, and in the highest sense. He was with God from all eternity, God over all, blessed forevermore. (Ellen White, *The Review and Herald*, April 5, 1906, par. 6)

A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner had equally strong statements on this matter:

Christ Himself taught in the most emphatic manner that He is God. When the young man came and asked, “Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” Jesus, before replying to the direct question, said, “Why callest thou Me good? There is none good but One, that is, God.” Mark 10:17, 18. What did Jesus mean by these words? Did He mean to disclaim the epithet as applied to Himself? Did He mean to intimate that He was

not absolutely good? Was it a modest depreciation of Himself? By no means, for Christ was absolutely good. To the Jews, who were continually watching to detect in Him some failing of which they might accuse Him, He boldly said, “Which of you convinceth me of sin?” John 8:46. In the whole Jewish nation not a man could be found who had ever seen Him do a thing or heard Him utter a word that had even the semblance of evil, and those who were determined to condemn Him could do it only by hiring false witnesses against Him. Peter says that He “did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth.” 1 Peter 2:22. Paul says that He “knew no sin.” 2 Corinthians 5:21. The Psalmist says, “He is my Rock and there is no unrighteousness in Him.” Psalm 92:15. And John says, “Ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins, and in him is no sin.” 1 John 3:5. (E. J. Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, p. 13.1)

After expounding on Hebrews 1, A. T. Jones concluded:

Thus, in the first chapter of Hebrews Christ is revealed higher than the angels, as God; and as much higher than the angels as is God, because He is God. (A. T. Jones, *The Consecrated Way to Christian Perfection*, p. 16.2)

There can be confusion on this point if we have misunderstandings on how the term *God* is used in the Bible. In some places the Bible speaks of *gods*, false ideas about a deity which does not exist (Genesis 3:5; Exodus 20:3; 32:31; Jeremiah 10:11).

The term *god* is used in Exodus 7:1 to refer to Moses, who in this text was said to be a god to Pharaoh.

Certainly, the most common idea of *God* and usage of that concept is for the supreme being of the universe, the one who is credited with the creation of all things. This is the Father. “But to us there is but one God, the Father, *of whom are all things*, and we in him” (1 Corinthians 8:6). (See also 1 Corinthians 1:3; Revelation 4:11.) In fact, the Father is called the God of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 11:31; Ephesians 1:3, 17.)

Finally, the word *God* is used to express having the divine nature (John 1:1). Jesus is certainly not the same person or being as the Father, but he has the divine nature because he is the begotten Son of God. Like produces like kind (Genesis 5:3), and the divine Father brought forth a divine Son. This is why Jesus could say “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30). Certainly, they are not one in being but one in nature and goodness.

What is your scope of unity? Does it agree with *Early Writings*, page 63?

The word *unity* only appears twice in the Bible:

Endeavouring to keep the *unity of the Spirit* in the bond of peace. (Ephesians 4:3)

Till we all come in the *unity of the faith*, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: (Ephesians 4:13)

In both verses the word *unity* is from the Greek word ἐνότης (*henotēta*), which is the accusative, singular, feminine form of ἐνότης (*henotēs*) and which is defined as “a state of oneness or of being in harmony and accord, unity” (William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., revised and edited by Frederick William Danker)

The scripture states this oneness is of the Spirit and of the faith. Since the Scriptures were inspired by the Spirit of God (2 Peter 1:21) and since the faith is based in the word of God (Romans 10:17), the unity of the Bible is a unity of belief and practice of the word of God. This is in harmony with the counsels:

The Lord calls upon us to unify in harmony with Bible truth. (Ellen White, *The Upward Look*, p. 149.2)

I urge our brethren to unify upon a true, scriptural basis. (Ellen White, *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 175.1)

The word *unity* is not found in *Early Writings* on page 63, but perhaps the questioner has the first paragraph in mind, where we read:

There are many precious truths contained in the Word of God, but it is “present truth” that the flock needs now. I have seen the danger of the messengers running off from the important points of present truth, to dwell upon subjects that are not calculated to *unite the flock* and sanctify the soul. Satan will here take every possible advantage to injure the cause. (Ellen White, *Early Writings*, p. 63.1; all emphasis supplied in this article unless otherwise noted)

What are some of the important present truths to unite the flock? In the next paragraph, we read:

But such subjects as the sanctuary, in connection with the 2300 days, the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, are perfectly calculated to explain the past Advent movement and show what our present position is, establish the faith of the doubting, and give certainty to the glorious future. These, I have frequently seen, were the principal subjects on which the messengers should dwell. (*Ibid.*, p. 63.2)

While not limiting the need to teach present truth to just the 2300 days and the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, these certainly are biblical teachings that must be kept paramount. The commandments of God certainly include the fourth commandment, which most of the professed Christian world ignores, and also includes the first commandment, which most professed Christians, in-

cluding the great majority of those who call themselves Seventh-day Adventists, deny. They do this by holding to the doctrine of the trinity. Concerning the importance of the truth about God, Ellen White regarded it as one of the pillars of our faith:

Those who try to bring in theories that would remove the pillars of our faith concerning the sanctuary or concerning the personality of God or of Christ are working as blind men. They are seeking to bring in uncertainties and to set the people of God adrift without an anchor. (Ellen White, *Ye Shall Receive Power*, p. 235.4)

Further, since the commandments of God in *Early Writings* are referring to the Ten Commandments and since sin is the transgression of the Ten Commandments (1 John 3:4), then the doctrine of sin is important to understand so that we might know how to properly keep the commandments of God.

Are humans born with a sinful nature or just inherited tendencies from Adam to sin or both?

The Bible never uses the terms *sinful nature* or *inherited tendencies*. Usually, where the Bible is silent, we should be too, but there are verses from which we can gain insight without the use of these exact terms. For example, the words *incarnation* and *millennium* are not in the Bible, but they represent doctrines which the Bible teaches.

The most common word translated *nature* in the Bible is φύσις (*phusis*). *Phusis* means that which is “instinctive” (Robert L. Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries: Updated Edition*) or “condition or circumstance as determined by birth” (William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon*).

Ellen White speaks of humanity as having a *sinful nature* (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pages 238.2, 373.1, for example). She also says that we are to overcome this nature and conform to the image of Christ:

We know not how soon our lifework here may close, and how essential that our low, sinful nature should be overcome, and we conform to the image of Christ. (Ellen White, *This Day with God*, p. 117.4)

The sinful nature is something we are born with, something that is determined by our birth. Does this mean that God will hold children accountable as sinners and lost from the state of birth because of what Adam and the children’s parents have passed on to them?

The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin.

(Deuteronomy 24:16; see also Jeremiah 31:30, Ezekiel 18:20)

We see the principle of children inheriting the parents' nature but of God providing a way for the children to walk worthy in the life of Seth:

Seth was a worthy character, and was to take the place of Abel in right doing. Yet he was a son of Adam like sinful Cain, and inherited from the nature of Adam no more natural goodness than did Cain. He was born in sin; but by the grace of God, in receiving the faithful instructions of his father Adam, he honored God in doing his will. He separated himself from the corrupt descendants of Cain, and labored, as Abel would have done had he lived, to turn the minds of sinful men to revere and obey God. (Ellen White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 60.2)

In fact, we read:

He [Jesus] took upon His sinless nature our sinful nature, that He might know how to succor those that are tempted. (Ellen White, *Medical Ministry*, p. 181.3)

Certainly, if Christ took upon himself our sinful nature, it did not make him a sinner, else Jesus would cease to be the complete and pure sacrifice for our sins.

Though our *nature* provides many *tendencies* to sin, we need not ever surrender to those tendencies, but we may have victory through Christ.

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, (Jude 1:24)

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. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

Having a sinful nature with tendencies to sin is not the same as sin, and, further, it is not an excuse for sin, for God has provided all the help we need. Does this help come from within us? No, of course not. We cannot uplift ourselves, but God, through Christ, can and will help us, if we will simply call out to him. Writing in a *Signs of the Times* article, Ellen White noted:

You may claim much leniency because of your human nature, of your temptations and trials, and seek to excuse yourself for sin because of inherited tendencies, but Christ gave himself in behalf of humanity, and there is no reason for failure. Christ bore temptations such as you will never be called upon to bear. He suffered as you will never suffer. He knew all your griefs, he has carried your sorrows. He has made it possible for you to be an overcomer. Do not say it is impossible for you to over-

come. Do not say, "It is my nature to do thus and so, and I cannot do otherwise. I have inherited weaknesses that make me powerless before temptation." We know you cannot overcome in your own strength; but help has been laid upon One who is mighty to save. When God gave his only begotten Son, he provided everything essential to your salvation. (Ellen White, *The Signs of the Times*, June 17, 1889, par. 11)

There may be a question about Ephesians 2:3, where Paul writes that we "were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" or "by nature deserving of wrath" (NIV).

Let us read the whole verse:

Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. (Ephesians 2:3)

Notice that Paul speaks of times past with the lusts of the flesh. It could be said that the wrath of God comes on those who fulfill the fleshly desires. The Greek verb translated *were*, however, is ἦμεν (*ēmen*), which is an imperfect form of εἶμι (*eimi*), meaning to exist.¹ It is translated as *were*, *are*, *is*, etc. The imperfect tense normally speaks of continuous action or state of being but does not always carry this idea. In Matthew 23:30, Jesus, speaking as the scribes and Pharisees thought, said: "If we *had been* in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets." The phrase *had been* is translated from *ēmen* but clearly has a limited time frame. In fact, the seven other usages of *ēmen* in the New Testament are all limited in their relationship to time (Acts 16:12; 27:37; Romans 7:5; Galatians 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:4; 2 Thessalonians 3:10; Titus 3:3).

Concerning Ephesians 2:3, the Greek scholar Marvin Vincent writes:

That man is born with a sinful nature, and that God and sin are essentially antagonistic, are conceded on all hands: but that unconscious human beings come into the world under the blaze of God's indignation, hardly consists with Christ's assertion that to little children belongs the kingdom of heaven. It is true that there is a birth-principle of evil, which, if suffered to develop, will bring upon itself the wrath of God. (Marvin Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, vol. 3, p. 375)

If the sinful nature is accounted as sin, then children certainly need to be baptized to wash away this *original sin*, as the Catholic Church calls it, but notice the promise given by God through Jeremiah:

1. An example is John 8:58, where Jesus declared "Before Abraham was, I am (ἐγὼ εἶμι).

Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not. Thus saith the LORD; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the LORD; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, saith the LORD, that thy children shall come again to their own border. (Jeremiah 31:15–17)

This prophecy is about the children killed because of the order of Herod when Jesus was born. They were small infants, and yet the promise is that they will return to their own border (parents) from the land of the enemy.

Are children born righteous and receive this righteousness from their parents? If so, are they considered righteous until they are considered accountable at age 12?

The Bible says nothing about children being born as sinners,² but neither does it say they are born righteous. However, we do have this one statement from Luke 1:15, concerning John the Baptist:

For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. (Luke 1:15)

While it might be inferred, the Bible does not speak about children being born neutral. There is no definite statement of Scripture or Spirit of Prophecy statement on this point; therefore, it is only speculation to try to answer it. As noted earlier, according to the Bible, “sin is the transgression of the law [Ten Commandments]” (1 John 3:4). “Where no law is, there is no transgression” (Romans 4:15). Certainly, newborn babies do not have an understanding of right and wrong. God does not hold them accountable. There comes a time, however, when very young children become aware of right and wrong, and selfishness demonstrates its ugly head.

Children are left to come up instead of being trained up. The poor little children are thought not to know or understand a correction at ten or twelve months old, and they begin to show stubbornness very young. (Ellen White, *The Review and Herald*, September 19, 1854, par. 2)

This is much younger than the age of twelve years. According to a Jewish website: “A Jewish boy automatically becomes a bar mitzvah [son of the commandment] upon reaching the age of 13 years, and a girl upon reaching the

age of 12 years” (https://www.jewfaq.org/bar_mitzvah; accessed 1–31–23)

According to Luke 2, Jesus was twelve years old when he went to Jerusalem and sat with the Rabbis, asking questions; however, there is no inspired statement to sustain an exact age that can be used to determine an age of accountability.

What about the righteousness of the parents? Does it have an effect upon the infants or young children? While no person can transfer righteousness to another, the lives of the parents give the Spirit of God the ability to work in a special way for their children.

Even the babe in its mother's arms may dwell as under the shadow of the Almighty through the faith of the praying mother. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his birth. If we will live in communion with God, we too may expect the divine Spirit to mold our little ones, even from their earliest moments. (Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 512.3)

Beyond what Inspiration has given us on this matter, speculation is fruitless, but what we do know is that even children at a young age can be born again and receive Jesus into their hearts. This is the birth that is most important to understand.

I have heard some say that sin does not begin in the mind but in the flesh, especially the lower extremities. Is this true?

Jesus taught that sin begins in our minds. In the Sermon on the Mount, he spoke of having anger as murder and promiscuous thoughts as adultery (Matthew 5:21, 22, 27, 28).

The young who desire immortality must stop where they are and not allow an impure thought or act. *Impure thoughts lead to impure actions.* (Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 408.1)

The Bible is clear that the flesh produces desires within a person. John writes:

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. (1 John 2:16)

Paul even graphically depicts a struggle between the flesh and the Spirit in his epistle to the Galatians:

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. (Galatians 5:16–17)

Yet, it is clear that the flesh and its lust are not to control the believer. In verse 24, we read:

2. For a detailed explanation of Psalm 51:5, please go to https://archive.smyrna.org/op/2006/op06_1.htm.



The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness. (Psalm 72:3)

And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. (Galatians 5:24)

Paul also notes:

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. (Romans 6:12)

It should be noted that the way we live affects the body, and this affects the brain from which the mind works. We are told that:

The relation that exists between the mind and the body is very intimate. When one is affected, the other sympathizes. (Ellen White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 241.1)

The brain is the citadel of the whole man, and wrong habits of eating, dressing, or sleeping, affect the brain, and prevent the attaining of that which the student desires,—a good mental discipline. Any part of the body that is not treated with consideration will telegraph its injury to the brain. (Ellen White, *Christian Education*, p. 124.2)

A mistreatment of the body or of the mind can lead to temptation; however, the Bible is also clear that being tempted is not sin. Nobody has ever endured the temptations that our Saviour, Jesus Christ, endured; yet, he was without sin (James 1:14, 15; Matthew 4:1–11; 1 Peter 2:22).

For we have not an 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. (Hebrews 4:15)

Temptation is not sin. Jesus was holy and pure; yet He was tempted in all points as we are, but with a strength and power that man will never be called upon to endure. (Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 425.4)

Clearly, without the working of God, we could never overcome sin nor even have a desire to overcome sin. The

unnatural desire to be free from sin was given to humanity by God after Adam and Eve sinned:

And I will put *enmity* between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. (Genesis 3:15)

Through prevenient grace God has made a way for mankind to escape sin.

It is after man has received light and evidence, after he has seen the contrast between truth and error, that the struggle against sin begins in his heart. But this enmity against wrong did not exist in his heart until Christ placed it there. (Ellen White, *Special Testimonies*, Series B, no. 2, p. 8.3)

The last part of the question speaks of sin possibly coming from the “the lower extremities.” These lower extremities are not defined in the question, but we assume that the reproductive organs are meant.

Are the reproductive organs sinful? No more than the feet, arms, heart, or lungs. Do passions arise that are connected to these organs? Yes, of course, but there are passions which are holy and passions which are unholy, or sinful. It is when we dwell upon those unholy passions and consent to them with our minds that we have sinned and not until.

Do you believe that for the Christian sin remains but doesn't reign?

This question is dependent upon how we define sin. If the Calvinist/Catholic view of sin is accepted that sin is one's nature, then the answer might be yes—might be—because some who hold this view of sin declare that we can never overcome in the flesh, while others make room for overcoming sin, though for that to happen becomes a very cloudy thing when the definition of sin is wrong. However,

if one understands the biblical definition of sin, then the answer is no. Sin neither remains nor reigns.

Again, we cannot state enough that the Bible declares sin to be “the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4). Over a score of times Ellen White declares in various ways this is the only definition of sin in the Bible. Notice the following:

Our only definition of sin is that given in the word of God; it is “the transgression of the law;” it is the out-working of a principle at war with the great law of love which is the foundation of the divine government. (Ellen White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 492.2)

The only definition we find in the Bible for sin is that “sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4). (White, *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 320.1)

Christ is not the minister of sin. And what is sin? The only definition given in God’s word is, “Sin is the transgression of the law;” and the apostle Paul declares, “Where no law is, there is no transgression.” The law is the great standard that will measure every man’s character. (Ellen White, *The Bible Echo*, June 11, 1894, par. 7)

The Bible is clear that sin is not to reign over the Christian:

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. (Romans 6:6)

For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. (Romans 6:14)

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, (Jude 24)

Does sinful human nature remain until glorification?

The apostle Paul writes that at the second coming of Christ:

For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. (1 Corinthians 15:53–54)

The change of the old nature does not happen until Jesus comes, but the good news is that God gives us the victory over the fallen flesh through having the mind of Christ.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: (Philippians 2:5)

The Bible never enjoins us to have the body or flesh of Jesus Christ, for we have that flesh already. What we need is the mind of Jesus to overcome the flesh, just as he overcame the flesh. Our overcoming is as he overcame.

In the book *The Great Controversy*, we read about the blotting out of sins:

The work of the investigative judgment and the blotting out of sins is to be accomplished before the second advent of the Lord. Since the dead are to be judged out of the things written in the books, it is impossible that the sins of men should be blotted out until after the judgment at which their cases are to be investigated. **But the apostle Peter distinctly states that the sins of believers will be blotted out** “when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ.” Acts 3:19, 20. When the investigative judgment closes, Christ will come, and His reward will be with Him to give to every man as his work shall be. (White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 485.2)

Again, our definition of sin becomes important here. If the sins which Christ is to blot out constitute our nature, then transgression, the breaking of God’s holy law, can and will continue until Jesus comes! As we have seen, however, this view is incorrect. All who have accepted Christ as Saviour will have the record of all their sins (thought, word, and deed) blotted out because they have ceased from sin in this world and have accepted the forgiving grace of Christ to cover their past sins and the sustaining grace of Christ to carry them day by day.

Does not Ellen White speak about receiving a new nature at conversion? Ellen White in several places speaks about the work of the Spirit implanting in the believer a *new nature*:

The Holy Spirit implants a new nature, and molds through the grace of Christ the human character, until the image of Christ is perfected. (White, *The Upward Look*, p. 27.4)

The Spirit works upon man’s heart, according to his desire and consent implanting in him a new nature . . . (Ellen White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 411.1)

What Ellen White never states is that the old nature is eradicated before the second coming of Jesus. That nature is still there, but it is now in subjection to the Spirit of God and the new nature. We see a parallel with the Son of God accepting man’s fallen nature.

He [Jesus] took upon His sinless nature our sinful nature, that He might know how to succor those that are tempted. (White, *Medical Ministry*, p. 181.3)

Humanity is to be a partaker of the divine nature. Peter writes that we are to “be partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4). “Divinity and humanity are blended in him who has the spirit of Christ” (Ellen White, *The Youth’s Instructor*, June 30, 1892, par. 3)



Climate Change and the Real Issues

By Allen Stump

Throughout church history, Satan has devised many smokescreens—unimportant and even devious issues to attract the minds of God’s people to keep them away from the important issues that should have their focus and attention. Today, for example, we hear about the flat earth theory and think this concept is from the Middle Ages. It goes back beyond that, but this was also an issue in the days of Ellen White. People were agitating this issue. She had to contend with what her grandson, Arthur White, called, “a rather erratic church member” (Arthur White, *Ellen G. White: The Early Elmshaven Years: 1900–1905*, p. 351.2) whose great burden was to save the Seventh-day Adventist Church from the belief of a global (round) world. This caused Ellen White to state:

I have a message to this people in regard to the life they must live in this world, to prepare them for future life which measures with the life of God. We have nought to do with the question whether this world is round or flat. [The important thing] is to serve God with full purpose of a renewed heart, sanctified and made holy by the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ. (Ellen White, *Letters and Manuscripts*, vol. 19, Ms 145, 1904, par. 3; brackets in original)

We have heard teachings on feast days, on prophecies longer than the 2,300 days, on God does not destroy, and on much more. I promise you that Satan is well pleased when we put our time, money, and efforts into these projects and by so doing neglect the great work that must be accomplished.

Today one of the great theories being considered is the idea that climate change will bring the Sunday law in the United States and lead to the mark of the beast.

God has a plan to counter every move of the devil, and climate change may very well be real. Regardless of its validity or cause, the cry to save ourselves by saving the earth will be used by Satan to stir the masses to do something to save themselves and *mother earth*. The people will, therefore, call for a day of rest each week to slow down the rate of climate change. Those true to God’s commandments cannot obey the commandments of men that contradict the law of God and will be persecuted; however, God is not going to allow his message to be hidden by Trojan horses. The gospel-saving issues will be made clear, and nobody will be confused on why the saints are being persecuted, on what the real cause of earth’s calamities are, and on what God requires of each one in the final days of earth’s current history.

The undercurrents

Let us consider what I will call the undercurrents or the real reason for hatred of God’s people. We will gain some perspective from Ellen White, writing in a *Review* article, to get some history that we can expect to be repeated:

As soon as you gain a clear view of the power and goodness of Christ, your murmuring will cease. You will not pick at the faults of others. It is Phariseism that leads men to exalt themselves by depreciating their brethren. An experience that some of us had some years ago at Battle Creek comes to my mind. There were several ministers who were very much disturbed because we kept the Sabbath and worked on Sunday. They went to the officers of the law, and said, “We have a petition to place before you. We want you to arrest these people who are keeping Saturday, and working on Sunday.” The officer said, “I have heard that these people are quiet, law-abiding, honest, and religious people, and I see no occasion for interfering with them.” Then the minister showed him a petition that pleaded for a law to prohibit Sabbath-keepers from working on Sunday. The officer took the paper, and tore it to pieces, and said, “Get out, you bigots!” Brethren, I fear that there are bigots among us. Stop picking flaws in the character of others, and attend to your own work. When persons come to you with miserable tales of the mistakes and misdoings of others, do not listen to them. Say to yourself, “Is it my work to go and help settle this matter? If it is, God help me.” But if it is not your work, let it alone. (Ellen White, *The Review and Herald*, June 11, 1889, par. 9)

The Adventists would not honor the papal Sunday. This infuriated the Sunday-keepers. To stop the Adventists, they wanted the state (the police) to arrest them. It is a fact that when people do not have their own house in order, they come looking for other people’s problems, or what they perceive as problems, to use these issues to hurt, harass, and even destroy those people. Paul notes this principle:

Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. (Romans 2:1)

In simple terms, we accuse others of the sins we ourselves are most guilty. The Sunday-keepers at Battle Creek about whom Ellen White wrote were breaking the fourth commandment. What did they do? Instead of repenting and coming into submission to the law of God, they declared that those who were keeping the fourth commandment were really breaking the commandment!

Do you remember the story of Mordecai the Jew and Haman? Haman was an officer of King Ahasuerus, and Mordecai would not bow down to him. Haman thought that Mordecai was a troublemaker because he would not honor the established order. There is a parallel today:

The Protestant world today see in the little company keeping the Sabbath a Mordecai in the gate. His character and conduct, expressing reverence for the law of God, are a constant rebuke to those who have cast off the fear of the Lord and are trampling upon His Sabbath; the unwelcome intruder must by some means be put out of the way. (Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 450.1)

Disasters are coming to this world. There will be no correct explanation that can be given for these troubles. A scapegoat will be found in those who keep the seventh-day Sabbath.

Disasters will come

Jesus prophesied of trouble in the last days:

For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. (Matthew 24:7-8)

We are also told:

The time is at hand when there will be sorrow in the world that no human balm can heal. The Spirit of God is being withdrawn. Disasters by sea and by land follow one another in quick succession. How frequently we hear of earthquakes and tornadoes, of destruction by fire and flood, with great loss of life and property! Apparently these calamities are capricious outbreaks of disorganized, unregulated forces of nature, wholly beyond the control of man; but in them all, God's purpose may be read. They are among the agencies by which He seeks to arouse men and women to a sense of their danger. (Ellen White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 277.1)

Here we see that God allows or even sends troubles to arouse people to repentance. Recently the State of California has had record-breaking rain and flooding. At least eighteen died, with thirty-one of fifty-eight counties being declared disaster areas. Thirty thousand had to flee their homes and over one hundred fifty-five thousand were without power and basic services. There was well over a billion dollars worth of damages. This last storm was the sixth in a series, with more projected to come. In the United States last year there were over \$165,000,000,000 worth of storm-related damages.

This is blamed on global warming and climate change. As the whole world warms, including the oceans, the atmosphere is able to hold more moisture, so storms can be bigger.

The carbon emissions from using fossil fuels are claimed to bring about the so-called greenhouse effect. To stop this, lifestyle changes must happen.

Pope Francis, in his 2015 encyclical "Laudato Si," which means *praise be to you*, famously stated in the title the need to "care for our common home." This document of more than thirty-eight thousand words calls for people to take care of the earth. In the first part of the encyclical, Pope Francis writes about the oceans, forests, and wildlife and of the harm we bring them. He writes about the "toxic emissions" of the urban areas and about how governments are not doing enough and must do more.

In the second part, he writes about faith and how, from a Christian's viewpoint, we learn from the creation account:

The creation accounts in the book of Genesis contain, in their own symbolic and narrative language, profound teachings about human existence and its historical reality. They suggest that human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbour and with the earth itself. (Pope Francis, "Laudato Si," par. 66; English translation accessed 2-2-23 at https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html)

Some have understood that "the Pope's encyclical calls for Sunday to be implemented as a weekly day of rest to save the environment" (<https://www.openpr.com/news/2208096/adventists-in-italy-join-laudato-si-circles-a-catholic>; accessed 1-13-23). This, however, is not directly stated in the encyclical, though it certainly could be deduced. In paragraph 237, Pope Francis stated:

On Sunday, our participation in the Eucharist has special importance. Sunday, like the Jewish Sabbath, is meant to be a day which heals our relationships with God, with ourselves, with others and with the world. Sunday is the day of the Resurrection, the "first day" of the new creation, whose first fruits are the Lord's risen humanity, the pledge of the final transfiguration of all created reality. It also proclaims "man's eternal rest in God". . . . The law of weekly rest forbade work on the seventh day, "so that your ox and your donkey may have rest, and the son of your maidservant, and the stranger, may be refreshed" (*Ex* 23:12). Rest opens our eyes to the larger picture and gives us renewed sensitivity to the rights of others. And so the day of rest, centred on the Eucharist, sheds it light on the whole week, and motivates us to greater concern for nature and the poor. (Pope Francis, "Laudato Si," par. 237)

At the end of the encyclical, Francis interestingly speaks of the trinitarian god whose threefold nature is seen in the creation and speaks of the idea that the better we care for

environment the more we will be able to see this threefold nature of the trinity.

Some disasters are warnings from God, but some are not

We noted that inspiration declares there will be disasters upon the earth. Some will be brought by God, but not all will be. What will be the other source?

While appearing to the children of men as a great physician who can heal all their maladies, he [Satan] will bring disease and disaster, until populous cities are reduced to ruin and desolation. Even now he is at work. In accidents and calamities by sea and by land, in great conflagrations, in fierce tornadoes and terrific hailstorms, in tempests, floods, cyclones, tidal waves, and earthquakes, in every place and in a thousand forms, Satan is exercising his power. He sweeps away the ripening harvest, and famine and distress follow. He imparts to the air a deadly taint, and thousands perish by the pestilence. These visitations are to become more and more frequent and disastrous. Destruction will be upon both man and beast. “The earth mourneth and fadeth away,” “the haughty people . . . do languish. . . .” (Ellen White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 589.3; first ellipsis in original)

The real issue

So, as we noted in the beginning, there are real issues running underneath the surface of things.

It is on the law of God that the last great struggle of the controversy between Christ and His angels and Satan and his angels will come, and it will be decisive for all the world. . . . Men in responsible positions will not only ignore and despise the Sabbath themselves, but from the sacred desk will urge upon the people the observance of the first day of the week, pleading tradition and custom in behalf of this man-made institution. They will point to calamities on land and sea—to the storms of wind, the floods, the earthquakes, the destruction by fire—as judgments indicating God’s displeasure because Sunday is not sacredly observed. These calamities will increase more and more, one disaster will follow close upon the heels of another; and those who make void the law of God will point to the few who are keeping the Sabbath of the fourth commandment as the ones who are bringing wrath upon the world. This falsehood is Satan’s device that he may ensnare the unwary. (Ellen White, *Christian Service*, p. 155.2; ellipsis in original)

Who will be blamed?

Who will be blamed for these things? Will the populace accept responsibility because they have used wood-burning stoves, fossil-fuel-burning vehicles, and/or electric air conditioning for their buildings? NO!

The Lord has a controversy with his professed people in these last days. In this controversy men in responsible positions will take a course directly opposite to that pursued by Nehemiah. They will not only ignore and despise the Sabbath themselves, but they will try to keep it from others by burying it beneath the rubbish of custom and tradition. In churches and in large gatherings in the open air, ministers will urge upon the people the necessity of keeping the first day of the week. There are calamities on sea and land: and these calamities will increase, one disaster following close upon another; and the little band of conscientious Sabbath-keepers will be pointed out as the ones who are bringing the wrath of God upon the world by their disregard of Sunday. (Ellen White, *The Review and Herald*, March 18, 1884, par. 8)

Men in responsible positions will not only ignore and despise the Sabbath themselves, but from the sacred desk, will urge upon the people the observance of the first day of the week, pleading tradition and custom in behalf of this man-made institution. They will point to calamities on land and sea—to the storms of wind, the floods, the earthquakes, the destruction by fire—as judgments indicating God’s displeasure because Sunday is not sacredly observed. These calamities will increase more and more, one disaster will follow close upon the heels of another; and those who make void the law of God will point to the few who are keeping the Sabbath of the fourth commandment as the ones who are bringing wrath upon the world. This falsehood is Satan’s device that he may ensnare the unwary. (Ellen White, *The Signs of the Times*, January 17, 1884, par. 12)

Could inspiration be more plain? Those who demonstrate loyalty to God by keeping all of his commandments will be seen by the multitudes as “a Mordecai in the gate” worthy of destruction!

Will the world understand the true issues?

Yes, the world will understand the true issues because God is not going to let them go to destruction in ignorance. God is sending forth messages of warning in what we call the three angels’ messages:

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, 7 Saying with a loud voice, 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 14:6–7)

The first angel calls all to the everlasting gospel, which includes the worship of the Creator. A quote almost di-

rectly from the Sabbath commandment is included in this message.

But God makes it clear that this is not an optional message if we are to be saved. Another message also is proclaimed:

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 message of the second angel proclaims the fall of Babylon. Babylon has formed unlawful alliances with the world and now must face the results of her fornication.

There is another message given with a loud voice, meaning it is given in great power through the Spirit of God:

And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, 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)

God's judgments in the past have been poured out with mercy, but now there is no dilution. The crime of those accepting the mark of the beast, Sunday worship, is so grievous in God's sight, after he has given plain, straight, and clear warnings, that mercy cannot be shown.

This message is joined by the angel depicted in Revelation 18 and swells into a loud cry.

And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. 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. (Revelation 18:1–2)

Here the message of Revelation 14:8 is repeated. Babylon's fall is so complete that she is now a place where devils live! Imagine—churches whose beginnings were in the great reformation have, instead of continuing in truth, rejected light and fallen so far that they have demons in control.

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. 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 18:3–4)

God is so direct in this message. If you do not come out of Babylon, you will suffer the plagues on this earth, and, worse, you will be eternally lost.

Beloved, God is making his case clear, loud, and distinct. The people will be able to know the issues before destruction comes. Just as the world was given warning before the flood by Noah, just as Nineveh was given warning of possible destruction from Jonah, and just as the Jews were warned before the destruction of Jerusalem, God's people will give a clarion call to all who will hear and heed the warning. Some today may think that climate change will be declared the villain for the plagues upon the earth, but the real issues will be plain at that time:

But not one is made to suffer the wrath of God until the truth has been brought home to his mind and conscience, and has been rejected. There are many who have never had an opportunity to hear the special truths for this time. The obligation of the fourth commandment has never been set before them in its true light. He who reads every heart and tries every motive will leave none who desire a knowledge of the truth, to be deceived as to the issues of the controversy. The decree is not to be urged upon the people blindly. Everyone is to have sufficient light to make his decision intelligently. (White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 605.1)

We must give this message quickly, line upon line, precept upon precept. Men will soon be forced to great decisions, and it is our duty to see that they are given an opportunity to understand the truth, that they may take their stand intelligently on the right side. The Lord calls upon His people to labor—labor earnestly and wisely—while probation lingers. (Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 126.3; *Christian Service*, p. 79.1)

Do you see that God wants all to understand and be intelligent on the issues? God will not leave any in ignorance except those who wish to stay ignorant.

Great and terrible issues are before us as a people. What will we do about them? How will we react? Will we board the LGBTQ woke train because it is popular with the ungodly masses? Will we invest our time, money, and efforts into saving the planet, or will we be about our Father's business?

Let me be clear. There is nothing wrong with recycling. There is nothing wrong with being good stewards of the earth. We should not be pouring toxins and deadly wastes into our streams and rivers, but our focus is the message about the one who made the "heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." What must be presented now is how one may advance in the divine life.

May God give us wisdom to know what are the devil's rabbits versus what are the true issues that face us and the world.

Yes, trouble and more trouble is coming, for we have this promise:

Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble . . . (Jeremiah 30:7a)

Yet, we have the promise:

. . . but he shall be saved out of it. (Jeremiah 30:7b)

In the same way Jacob prevailed, we shall prevail.

It was by self-surrender and confiding faith that Jacob gained what he had failed to gain by conflict in his own strength. God thus taught His servant that divine power and grace alone could give him the blessing he craved.

Thus it will be with those who live in the last days. As dangers surround them, and despair seizes upon the soul, they must depend solely upon the merits of the atonement. We can do nothing of ourselves. In all our helpless unworthiness we must trust in the merits of the crucified and risen Saviour. None will ever perish while they do this. The long, black catalogue of our delinquencies is before the eye of the Infinite. The register is complete; none of our offenses are forgotten. But He who listened to the cries of His servants of old, will hear the prayer of faith and pardon our transgressions. He has promised, and He will fulfill His word. (Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 202.4)

Beloved, please seek God while he may be found so you will know his will for you in these last days, and may he bless you lots and lots and lots. 卐

Excerpts from The 1919 Bible Conference, Pages 240–246

(These excerpts from the 1919 Bible Conference were a part of the discussion held on the doctrine of Christ and on if there was a trinity. It can be seen that just four years after Ellen White died there was already a push to move the church off the platform of truth. Editor)

WILCOX: We all believe the deity of Christ. It is not a question as to his deity or non-deity. In all this discussion there is no question regarding this.

WAKEHAM: Would you consider the denial of the co-eternity of the Father and Son was a denial of that deity?

PRESCOTT: That is the point I was going to raise: Can we believe in the deity of Christ without believing in the eternity of Christ?

BOLLMAN: I have done it for years.

PRESCOTT: That is my very point—that we have used terms in that accommodating sense that are not really in harmony with the Scriptural teaching. We believed a long time that Christ was a created being, in spite of what the Scripture says. I say this, that passing over the experience I have passed over myself in this matter—this accommodating use of terms which makes the Deity without eternity, is not my conception now of the gospel of Christ. I think it falls short of the whole idea expressed in the Scriptures, and leaves us not with the kind of a Saviour I believe in now, but a sort of human view—a semi-human being. As I view it, the deity involves eternity. The very expression involves it. You cannot read the Scripture and have the idea of deity without eternity.

KNOX: I believe all the statements that were made this morning by Elder Prescott concerning the promises that are given to us through Jesus Christ—that is, the many

Scriptures that were read; and I believe they are made sure to us because they are bound up in the Deity of Jesus Christ. I think that we are all agreed in the deity of the Son of God (Amens).

I think also that we ought to remember what Brother Danielle reminded us of this morning, that we cannot by searching find out God—that this is a matter—a subject that will be unfolding all through the days of eternity. And yet I do believe that the Lord has given us glimpses in his Word, which he has intentionally placed there, to draw our minds out into the contemplation of truths concerning God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost.

Now I can not but believe as Brother Prescott has said, the Deity must be eternal. But the difficulty with me is that I can not believe that the deity of the Son as a separate existence is eternal. I believe in the trinity of God, and I believe that Jesus is God. It says, “Unto us a son is born?” and then you remember the names by which he is called—the Everlasting Father—the Prince of Peace—in Isaiah. The same Scripture speaks of him as the Son and as the Everlasting Father.

You remember the Word says that “in the beginning was the Word.” Now that has been spoken a number of times, and by it we are carried back through eternity. But the same words are used exactly concerning the existence of matter. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now some time God called the things that we see out of the things that did not appear. I do not suppose there is one here that will contend the co-existence of matter with out God. Matter has been called into existence by God; but it was called into existence “in the beginning,” and “in the beginning” was the Word. Now the Word was

the agency God used to call matter into existence, for “by him were all things made that were made.”

Now again the servant of God speaks of the Son as the first created being. I never saw that, and never believed that, but it speaks of him as having sprung from the bosom of the Father. Now the Word also speaks of Levi paying tithes while he was in the loins of Abraham. Now it would have been equally true if the Lord’s Spirit had carried the acts of Levi back to the time when he was in the loins of Adam. From God’s view point Levi had existed in the loins of his forefathers from the very beginning of time, but he did not have a separate existence until he was born.

And so Christ, was with the Father, and of the Father—and the Father—from eternity; and there came a time—in a way we cannot comprehend nor the time that we cannot comprehend, when by God’s mysterious operation the Son sprung from the bosom of his Father and had a separate existence.

PRESCOTT: I would like to call Brother Knox’s attention to this, and ask how on that basis he would deal with John 8:58 “Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was born I am.” What does “I am” as to our conception of time, mean?

KNOX: His personal existence. I believe in the eternity of Jesus Christ. I cannot grasp the eternity of his separate and distinct existence.

TAIT: I feel we are discussing something we ought to wait sixty billion years before we start in on. Some of these scriptures do not mean to me what the brethren say they mean to them. But now I think if we still get hold of Christ and what he is to us now and what he will be to us who will reign with him in glory we will go a long ways. Now I am willing to wait to found out a lot of things I do not understand now, until I get on the other side.

A. G. DANIELLS: Now we shall have to change the order. We don’t want to keep on and go too far in fine distinctions. But I don’t think I can altogether with Brother Tait. I have enjoyed these discussions. They have been helpful to me. I am glad for them.

H. C. LACEY: Is it necessary, in order to have a heart apprehension of a Bible truth, that our minds should have a clean-out apprehension of it. Are we not to understand the theory within the mind as well as with the heart? I have enjoyed these discussions, and I think the Bible has given us enough to answer that question. I didn’t see it myself, years ago. But now I think I can see how Jesus can be the eternal son.

M. C. WILCOX: Doesn’t the heart sometimes apprehend what the mind cannot comprehend?


A. G. DANIELLS: So far as I am concerned, I went along with a mystified idea quite a while, and the thing that began to knock the scales from my eyes was when the Desire of Ages came out. I was in Australia when the page proofs were brought out. I never believed some other things till the Testimonies came out and set me thinking. And I said, Look here, Sister White has always been in harmony with the Bible, now she has dropped a stitch somewhere or else I am wrong. I went to studying, and that did more for me.

Perhaps we have discussed this as long as we need to. We are not going to take a vote on trinitarianism or arianism, but we can think. Let us go on with the study.

W. T. KNOX: Does the discussion, so far as it has gone, involve the question of trinitarianism or arianism? I can’t see that it does.

W. W. PRESCOTT: Some things have been said this afternoon which I think a word will just help the whole thing. I referred to this scripture: “For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.” I also referred to other scriptures of the same character in my studies. Perhaps some will remember, and brought out the point that Christ’s attributes, what he was, was subordinate to the Father in this sense, that it was derived from the Father, but not that it was any less. The same glory, the same power, that the Father had. But you can’t put those things to cold reasoning after our manner of dealing with such things, and say that the one who derived is just as great as the one from whom he derived it.

JOHN ISAAC?: What are we Bible teachers going to do? We have heard ministers talk one way. Our students have had Bible teachers in one school spend days and days upon this question, then they come to another school, and the other teacher does not agree with that. We ought to have something definite so that we might give the answer. I think it can be done. We ought to have it clearly stated. Was Christ ever begotten, or not, or this thing, or that thing.

A. G. DANIELLS: Perhaps in another study we might have a study on the word begotten. I thought this morning when Brother Bollman spoke of it, if we could have five or ten minutes on that word, bring in the law of precise meaning in that interpretation, it would be well. But we shall have to drop it here this time. Now we will go on. Now let’s not get a bit nervous nor scared. Don’t let the conservatives think that something is going to happen, and the progressives get alarmed for fear it won’t happen. Let’s keep up this good spirit. Bring out what you have. Let us get all the light we have, believe what we can, and let the rest go. I don’t want to believe or be called upon to believe what I don’t believe, nor call upon anyone else to believe what I believe if he can’t. But let’s us press right toward the enlarged vision, the broader conception. While we will never comprehend it all, let’s get as near to it as we can. 

1889 HSDA News

World Church Completes First Stage of Reorganization

As we noted last month, things have been busy with the 1889 HSDA Church. On January 22 the second meeting of forty representatives gathered from the Philippines, France and French-speaking areas, and the United States and met online to finish the work of constructing the framework from which the body can efficiently work. A charter and a set of bylaws were discussed and approved. The world church name that was chosen is 1889 HSDA World Conference. The acronym HSDA stands for Historic Seventh-day Adventist. The acronym was chosen because of the trademarks the nominal Adventists have acquired and because of their use of the civil powers to enforce them.

The charter and bylaws are similar to those currently being used by the established conferences. Five officers were chosen at the January meeting. Pastor David Sims of the Philippines was asked to be the chairperson for the first year. Pastor Allen Stump of the United States was asked to be the vice-chairperson. Brother Olivier Dubois of Canada was asked to be the secretary. Sister Corisande Facorat of France was asked to be the treasurer, and Sister Onycha Holt of the United States was asked to be the auditor. These officers will be part of the working committee of the World Conference. In addition, four more people were chosen to serve as committee members. They are Pastor Martin Barlow of the United States, Pastor Jean-Christophe Bolotte of France, Jean-Luc Longlade of Martinique, and Samaritana Malinay of the Philippines.

Please keep this endeavor in prayer, and may God have mercy and rest his blessing upon Israel.

May camp meeting preparations continue

As noted last month, the Smyrna Church has hosted a camp meeting since 2000, and many have been blessed. This year the Smyrna Church is joining efforts with the other churches of 1889 HSDA-USA to host a camp meeting May 16–20, 2023, at a great location—Fall Creek Falls State Park near Spencer, Tennessee. Please mark these dates on your calendars and plan to attend!

The theme of the camp meeting is “Complete in Christ.” Some of the speakers for the main meetings are Pastor Martin Barlow, Todd Brown, Rob Chisum, Ralph Fisher, Gilbert Hernandez, Onycha Holt, Robert Motsinger, Pastor Daniel Mesa, Pastor Allen Stump, and Fay Ulett. We are also planning meetings for the youth.

The 1889 HSDA Conference has rented the Cane Creek camping area at the park. The facilities are older and rustic but should work well for us. Twenty cabins in three loops

are available and are centered around a large meeting building. The cabins hold six to eight people. There are not enough cabins for smaller families to each have a dedicated cabin, so the facilities will have to be shared; however, tent sites are available nearby in the park. RV sites are all full for the dates of the camp meeting. There is a motel very near called The Way Inn. Their website is <https://www.thewayinnspencertn.com>, and their phone number is (931) 946–2800.

The main meeting building has a large kitchen with a large room that will be used for dining and for the main meetings. No Wi-Fi is available, but cellular service with AT&T is available. We are not sure about Verizon. There is enough cellular service that we will be able to broadcast meetings using hotspots, and the meetings will be recorded and posted afterward.

There will be no cost for staying at the camp, but we would appreciate knowing how many plan to attend, so we can make our plans better. We will provide two meals a day on a donation basis. The food will be healthy, simple, and filling, and we will be glad to accept any volunteers who would like to help with kitchen duties and/or with cleanup.

Fall Creek Falls State Park is a beautiful place. There are several waterfalls, a large lake for boating, and many hiking trails. There is also a golf course very near the camp ground and is a helpful landmark to be able to locate the camp. The temperatures in mid-May usually range from between 65° and 75° F throughout the day. There are usually about ten days of rain at the park during the month of May, so please bring an umbrella in case we catch a few of those ten days.

We have enclosed a survey postcard that will help us have an idea on how many wish to attend. If you are coming, we encourage you to please fill it out and send it back to us.

The importance of camp meeting as a means of giving and receiving blessings should be considered by all:

Go to the camp meeting, even though you have to make a sacrifice to do so. Go with a will to work. And make every effort to induce your friends to go, not in your place, but to go with you, to stand on the Lord's side and obey His commandments. Help those who are interested to attend, if necessary providing them with food and lodging. Angels who are commissioned to minister to those who are heirs of salvation will accompany you. God will do great things for His people. He will bless every effort to honor His cause and advance His work. (Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 43.3)



Youth's Corner – Kidnapped in Ecuador!

A Story of Faith, Surrender, Forgiveness, and Trust in God, Part 4

By Sheri Yohe

By this time, I had found the courage to make more noise, first singing a little louder and then quoting Scripture out loud. Strength started to enter my body, so I could stand, hit the door with the heel of my foot, and yell through the crack in the door “Ayudame, por favor. Abra la puerta, por favor.” (“Help me, please. Open the door, please.”). Each time I prayed, “God, carry my weak voice to the right ears, not the wrong ears!”

I continued to pray fervently that God would carry my voice over the noise of the construction and to the right person. I prayed that God would send someone close who would hear me. As I listened to the construction noise, I realized there were predictable times when the noise was not as loud. That’s when I screamed for help. I shouted and banged on the door for a long, long time. I was so tired, but my life depended on someone hearing my cries for help, so I continued to yell.

Finally, at about 11:00 a.m. (twelve hours after my abduction), a man’s questioning voice spoke to me from outside the door. He simply said, “Hola?”

“Hola!” I replied. “Ayudame, por favor. Abra la puerta, por favor.”

I didn’t know how to say kidnapped in Spanish, so I explained to him that bad men had taken me from my bed in Vilcabamba the night before and locked me in here.

The man flipped a light switch on, which was located outside the room, and asked me if I had light. I said, “Yes, I have light” and thanked him over and over. It was so wonderful to have light after being in the dark room for so long. The light itself signified my rescue! I was found! The bad men would not return to kill me. Help was right outside the door! Good people knew where I was. I began to cry in relief. I remember being overwhelmed with emotion and trembling from head to toe. This is exactly what I had been earnestly praying for. Someone had heard my voice!

It took several minutes to unlock the door. From the other side of the door, the man’s voice returned a few times encouraging me to be patient. They had to find the key to unlock the door. Finally, I heard the key in the lock, and the door opened.

With my head tipped back so I could peek under the duct tape covering my eyes, I could see about ten strong construction workers and a woman standing outside the door.

They looked surprised, but their eyes and expressions were full of compassion.

The woman said over and over it was a miracle that she heard me and sent the man to check it out—just what I asked God to do, to allow the right person to hear my voice over the construction noise! Her office was located up the hill from the storage room I was locked in. I totally agreed with her—it was a miracle!

One worker cut the duct tape off my head, needing to pull it loose from my hair. He apologized for the hair he was ripping from my head, but I assured him it was not a problem! I was free! The man used the same scissors to cut the zip tie that held my wrists together behind my back. He had to push the scissors under the imbedded zip ties on my wrists, making me wince in pain, but at last my wrists were free. I opened and closed my hands many times trying to restore circulation. My hands were full of pinpricks for quite a while after the circulation began to flow again.

The woman who had heard my cries for help put a plastic cup of water in my hand. I was so thirsty! Still in my pajamas and bare feet, they asked me where my shoes were. I told them I didn’t have any because the men took me from my bed.

One construction worker started to pick me up, and I warned him that I was wet with urine from the waist down. He said that wasn’t important, then he picked me up and carried me uphill along a loose board path to the construction office.

They quickly moved me to a warm, interior place—a conference room with a bathroom and a small shower, where I was able to clean myself up. The shower felt wonderful. They brought me some clean sweat pants, warm socks, a red wool poncho, and flip flops, all gathered from the construction workers.

What a blessing the red poncho turned out to be. I kept the wool poncho wrapped around me for the next two days for warmth and for modesty to hide my pajama top. After the quick shower, the kind construction workers set a plate of rice, chicken, and potatoes in front of me.

They urged me to eat, insisting I must eat for health. I ate a few bites of the potatoes and rice, but, being a vegetarian, I took the large piece of chicken and discreetly dropped it

in the wastebasket. They were so sweet that I didn't want to offend them by refusing their kind hospitality.

The workers scurried around me. I urgently told them that Allen was still with the kidnappers! The construction workers said Allen was the owner of the construction project. I thought we were talking about two different people, but they produced a flyer from Allen's clinic. The flyer had his picture on it. It was the same person.

The police arrive

The Red Cross arrived first and started to give me a physical examination. Then police and special detectives came, and I begged them to please call the Vilcabamba police and have them go to our house to check on Don. One female detective questioned me about Allen and seemed to be confirming her suspicions. I wondered why she would suspect Allen. He was our friend! He would never hurt my husband or me. Would he?

As we walked from the construction office to the police car, I looked around the construction site and realized we were beside a large apartment complex. It was the Rosenthal! Allen lives in this apartment building. I pointed to the second floor and told the police officer beside me, "That's Allen's apartment, 2B" He acknowledged what I said. Then I looked up and saw Karol walking toward me. Allen had told us that their relationship had broken up in February and that she had returned to her family in the U.S. I hadn't seen Karol in more than five months and didn't know that she was in Ecuador. What was she doing here?

I exclaimed, "But Allen has been with us in Vilcabamba the last five days!" She told me she knew Allen was with us and had been talking with him by cell phone. She was waiting for him to return to Cuenca.

The female detective who had been questioning me in the construction office walked up and asked who this was. I told the detective this was Allen's girlfriend, but Karol corrected me saying she was Allen's *esposa* (wife). That was a surprise to me! We had spent a significant amount of time with him over the past six weeks when he had accompanied our grandchildren and me on sightseeing trips around Ecuador, and he hadn't mentioned anything about marrying Karol!

The police led me away from Karol as the detective continued to question Karol. I was taken to a small police station, where they let me email Don. All of this was surreal! I was safe. I was in police custody. No one would hurt me. I was alive! All these thoughts made it hard to focus on the task of figuring out how to pull up my email, enter my password, and send a message to Don. I also didn't have my reading glasses, and the police computer was a true dinosaur! The keys were sticking, and the keyboard was

outdated. I took several deep breaths, calmed my frustration, focused on being thankful to be alive and safe, and worked through the computer process. To my surprise Don emailed right back—Don who does not know how to use email! He was okay and was surrounded by many detectives and neighbors who were helping him. I soon realized that my dear friend was with him and was helping him monitor his email, hoping I would make contact with them.



Sheri after rescue

What relief washed over me! We had both survived. He was all right and had friends there to help him. Tears again stung my eyes, but I determined to hold them back. I needed to get home. I needed to make transportation arrangements.

The police assured me they were making arrangements to take me back to Vilcabamba, but it would take several hours to arrange the transportation. I released a deep sigh. I could be patient. Don was all right.

Soon the police led me to an unmarked police car and transported me to a larger police station in Cuenca, near the airport.

As I walked into the second police station, I saw Karol sitting on the couch in the waiting room. I walked over and sat next to her. I felt sorry for her. Allen was still missing. She must be terrified for her husband. She asked me what was going on. She said the police had told her that anything she said could be used against her in a court of law. I answered that I didn't know what was happening. Right then, one of the detectives motioned for me to come into a side office, and I knew he wasn't happy that I had been talking with Karol, by the stern look on his face. He closed the door behind me, and, leaning over the desk toward me, very close to my face, he said . . .

Next Month: The real truth about Allen



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Editor Allen Stump—editor@smyrna.org
Associate Editor Onycha Holt—onycha@smyrna.org