

Lessons from the Old Testament

Lesson 7—Jeremiah 31:27–37

“The New Covenant”

Jeremiah 31:27–37

The blessings of the new covenant are grounded purely on mercy in forgiving unrighteousness and sins. The Lord specifies, I will do thus and thus unto all who turn to Me, forsaking the evil and choosing the good. “I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” (Hebrews 8:12). All who humble their hearts, confessing their sins, will find mercy and grace and assurance. (TMK 299.2)

Has God, in showing mercy to the sinner, ceased to be just? Has He dishonored His holy law, and will He henceforth pass over the violation of it? God is true. He changes not. The conditions of salvation are ever the same. Life, eternal life, is for all who will obey God's law. Perfect obedience, revealed in thought, word, and deed, is as essential now as when the lawyer asked Christ, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said to him, "What is written in the law? how readest thou? ... this do, and thou shalt live" (Luke 10:25–28). (TMK 299.3)

Under the new covenant the conditions by which eternal life may be gained are the same as under the old—perfect obedience. Under the old covenant there were many offences of a daring, presumptuous character for which there was no atonement specified by law. In the new and better covenant Christ has fulfilled the law for the transgressors of law if they receive Him by faith as a personal Saviour.... Mercy and forgiveness are the reward of all who come to Christ trusting in His merits to take away their sins. In the better covenant we are cleansed from sin by the blood of Christ.... The sinner is helpless to atone for one sin. The power is in Christ's free gift, a promise appreciated by those only who are sensible of their sins and who forsake their sins and cast their helpless souls upon Christ, the sin-pardoning Saviour. He will put into their hearts His perfect law, which is "holy, and just, and good" (Romans 7:12), the law of God's own nature.

(TMK 299.4)

As the Bible presents two laws, one changeless and eternal, the other provisional and temporary, so there are two covenants. The covenant of grace was first made with man in Eden, when after the Fall there was given a divine promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. To all men this covenant offered pardon and the assisting grace of God for future obedience through faith in Christ. It also promised them eternal life on condition of fidelity to God's law. Thus the patriarchs received the hope of salvation. (*PP* 370.2)

This same covenant was renewed to Abraham in the promise, “In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” Genesis 22:18. This promise pointed to Christ. So Abraham understood it (see Galatians 3:8, 16), and he trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of sins. It was this faith that was accounted unto him for righteousness. The covenant with Abraham also maintained the authority of God’s law. The Lord appeared unto Abraham, and said, “I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be thou perfect.” Genesis 17:1. The testimony of God concerning His faithful servant was, “Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.” Genesis 26:5. And the Lord declared to him, “I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee.” Genesis 17:7. (PP 370.3)

Though this covenant was made with Adam and renewed to Abraham, it could not be ratified until the death of Christ. It had existed by the promise of God since the first intimation of redemption had been given; it had been accepted by faith; yet when ratified by Christ, it is called a *new* covenant. The law of God was the basis of this covenant, which was simply an arrangement for bringing men again into harmony with the divine will, placing them where they could obey God's law. (*PP* 370.4)

Another compact—called in Scripture the “old” covenant—was formed between God and Israel at Sinai, and was then ratified by the blood of a sacrifice. The Abrahamic covenant was ratified by the blood of Christ, and it is called the “second,” or “new,” covenant, because the blood by which it was sealed was shed after the blood of the first covenant. (*PP* 371.1)

Jeremiah 31:27–37

Ezekiel 11:19–20

Jeremiah 17:1

Jeremiah 16:12

Ezekiel 18:14–19

Exodus 20:5

Visiting the iniquity. How Exodus can be reconciled with Ezekiel 18 has troubled some people, but a distinction should be understood between the natural results of a sinful course of action and the punishment inflicted because of it. God does not penalize one individual for the wrong deeds of another. Each man stands before God, responsible only for his own acts. At the same time let us remember the laws of heredity. God does not interfere with these laws so as to protect one generation from the misdeeds of its parents. It is only through these laws of heredity that divine justice visits the iniquity of one generation upon the next.

“Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me.” It is inevitable that children should suffer from the consequences of parental wrongdoing, but they are not punished for the parents’ guilt, except as they participate in their sins. It is usually the case, however, that children walk in the steps of their parents. By inheritance and example the sons become partakers of the father’s sin. Wrong tendencies, perverted appetites, and debased morals, as well as physical disease and degeneracy, are transmitted as a legacy from father to son, to the third and fourth generation. This fearful truth should have a solemn power to restrain men from following a course of sin. (*PP* 306.3)

Jeremiah 31:27–37

Ezekiel 11:19–20

Jeremiah 17:1

Jeremiah 16:12

Ezekiel 18:14–19

Exodus 20:5

Ezekiel 18:20–21, 26–27

Ezekiel 36:26–27



Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, *and* the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts *is* his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, *then* the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD. (Jeremiah 31:35–37)

If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And *at what* instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant *it*; If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them. (Jeremiah 18:8–10)



Jeremiah lived at Anathoth about 21 miles northeast of Jerusalem. His father was Hilkiah, but not Hilkiah the high priest who discovered the book of the law we read about in 2 Kings 22:8. Jeremiah's father is designated as "of the priests" and not "*the* priest" or "*the* high priest." (SDA BC, slight edits)

Soon after God called Jeremiah to be his prophet, he sent him to preach in Jerusalem. He did not stay in Jerusalem, but conducted a preaching tour through the cities of Judah. Upon his return to Anathoth his fellow townsmen formed a plot to take his life. To escape these persecutions he seems to have transferred his residence to Jerusalem. Here another attempt was made on his life. His bold prediction in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim that the Temple would become like Shiloh, angered the priests, false prophets, and people in Jerusalem, and they demanded that Jeremiah be put to death. However, the princes arose to his defense.

(Ibid.)

Later, when Nebuchadnezzar's army withdrew from the final siege of Jerusalem for a time to meet the threat posed by the approach of the king of Egypt, Jeremiah was arrested when he attempted to go to Anathoth. The prophet was accused of deserting to the Chaldeans and was again beaten and imprisoned. In fact he nearly lost his life in the miry dungeon of Malchiah, but was rescued by Ebed-melech the Ethiopian. However, Zedekiah apparently kept him in prison, where he remained until Jerusalem fell. (Ibid.)

After the destruction of Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar gave the prophet his freedom and allowed him the choice of remaining in Palestine or accompanying the captives to Babylon. Jeremiah chose to remain with the remnant in Palestine, under their newly appointed governor, Gedaliah. After the murder of Gedaliah, a remnant of the Jews under Johanan fled to Egypt, contrary to Jeremiah's advice, and took the prophet with them. There at Tahpanhes, Jeremiah predicted the invasion of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar and gave his last message of warning to the Jews who had fled there. It was apparently in Egypt that Jeremiah died. (Ibid.)

Historical Setting.—During the early days of Jeremiah's ministry three great powers, Assyria, Egypt, and Babylon, were struggling for supremacy. Assyria had reached its peak, and was now on the decline. Egypt had thrown off the Assyrian yoke and was endeavoring to regain its former dominance, and the rise to power of the Neo-Babylonian Empire began, and Babylon eventually replaced Assyria as a world empire.

Jeremiah during the last 40 years of Judah's existence as a kingdom, bore messages of reform and revival to five kings: Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah. It was during Zedekiah's reign that Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem. (Ibid.)

Isaiah ministered primarily to Judah during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah and **Jeremiah** during the reigns of Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah.

Jeremiah began his ministry about a century after Isaiah and warned of the fall of Jerusalem, which occurred in 586 BC to Babylon.

Isaiah focused on the Assyrian invasion of the northern kingdom, and Jeremiah dealt with the final days of Judah before the Babylonian captivity.

Jeremiah's contemporaries included Zephaniah, Habakkuk, and Nahum. Isaiah's were Hosea, Amos, Micah, and Jonah.

[https://www.biblechronologytimeline.com/
biblechronologytimeline7.html](https://www.biblechronologytimeline.com/biblechronologytimeline7.html)

How Judah Treated Their Own People

Nebuchadnezzar's invasion filled King Zedekiah and all Jerusalem with apprehension and terror. In a desperate attempt to gain the favor of God, the king and the people joined in a solemn covenant with Him promising to free all Hebrew slaves in Jerusalem. But when Nebuchadnezzar temporarily lifted the siege because of the threat of Pharaoh's army, the covenant was forgotten and the freed men were cruelly re-enslaved. Jeremiah was seized and imprisoned as a traitor. Soon, however, the siege was resumed. The Jews fought desperately to save the city and themselves from the fate that threatened them. The city held out for 30 months. But in July 586 BC, the Babylonians made a breach in the walls. With a small bodyguard Zedekiah managed to escape, but he was overtaken and captured near Jericho. Jerusalem was sacked and burned, and nearly all of the remaining Jews taken into captivity. (*SDA BC*, slight edits)

The book of Jeremiah is long and is filled with history, prophecy, the treatment of Jeremiah by the people, the treatment of the people for their own children, the treatment of God by the people, and God's responses to their actions. It also contains beautiful expressions of truth, such as:

The Beauty of Jeremiah

Jeremiah 1:5–8; Jeremiah 6:16; Jeremiah 8:7, 20

Jeremiah 9:23–24; Jeremiah 10:10

Jeremiah 12:5; Jeremiah 13:20 last part; 13:23

Jeremiah 15:20–21; Jeremiah 17:7–10

Jeremiah 23:5–6; Jeremiah 29:11–13

Jeremiah 31:3, 33; Jeremiah 32:17, 27; Jeremiah 33:3

Lamentations 3:22–23, 26

The Determination of Jeremiah

Jeremiah 20:8 last part through verse 11–
The LORD is with me.

Jeremiah 19:5–Burned their sons as burnt
offerings to Baal

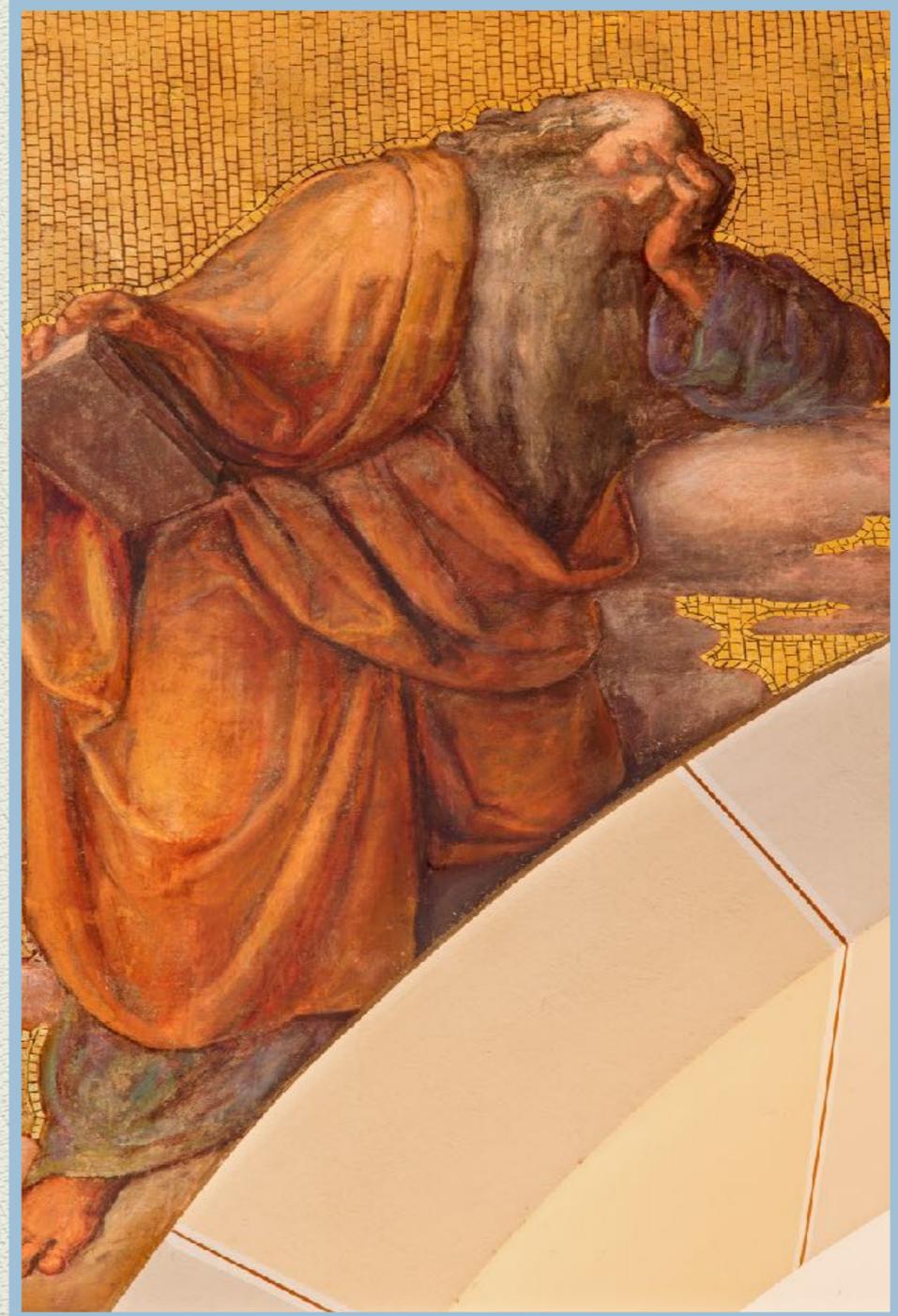
Jeremiah 32:29, 35–Offered incense on the roofs
of their houses to Baal and drink offerings to other
gods and caused their sons and daughters to pass
through the fire to Molech



Jeremiah 14:8–16

The Weeping Prophet

Therefore thou shalt say
this word unto them;
Let mine eyes run down
with tears night and
day, and let them not
cease: For the virgin
daughter of my people
is broken with a great
breach, with a very
grievous blow.
(Jeremiah 14:17)





Ezekiel 9:4

The angels of God do his bidding, holding back the winds of the earth, that the winds should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree, until the servants of God should be sealed in their foreheads. The mighty angel is seen ascending from the East (or sun rising). This mightiest of angels has in his hand the seal of the living God, or of him who alone can give life, who can inscribe upon the foreheads the mark or inscription, to whom shall be granted immortality, eternal life. It is the voice of this highest angel that had authority to command the four angels to keep in check the four winds until this work was performed, and until he should give the summons to let them loose. (*PH077 23.3*)

Those that overcome the world, the flesh, and the Devil, will be the favored ones who shall receive the seal of the living God. Those whose hands are not clean, whose hearts are not pure, will not have the seal of the living God. Those who are planning sin and acting it, will be passed by. Only those who, in their attitude before God, are filling the position of those who are repenting and confessing their sins in the great antitypical day of atonement, will be recognized and marked as worthy of God's protection. The names of those who are steadfastly looking and waiting and watching for the appearing of their Saviour,—more earnestly and wishfully than they who wait for the morning,—will be numbered with those who are sealed.

(PH077 24.1)

Those who, while having all the light of truth flashing upon their souls, should have works corresponding to their avowed faith, but are allured by sin, setting up idols in their hearts, corrupting their souls before God, and polluting those who unite with them in sin, will have their names blotted out of the Book of Life, and be left in midnight darkness, having no oil in their vessels with their lamps. “Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.”

(PH077 24.1)

This sealing of the servants of God is the same that was shown to Ezekiel in vision. John also had been a witness of this most startling revelation. He saw the sea and the waves roaring, and men's hearts failing them for fear. He beheld the earth moved, and the mountains carried into the midst of the sea (which is literally transpiring), the water thereof roaring and troubled, and the mountains shaking with the swelling thereof. He was shown plagues, pestilence, famine, and death performing their terrible mission. (*PH077 25.1*)

The same angel who visited Sodom is sounding the note of warning, "Escape for thy life." The bottles of God's wrath cannot be poured out to destroy the wicked and their works, until all the people of God have been judged, and the cases of the living as well as the dead are decided. And even after the saints are sealed with the seal of the living God, his elect will have trials individually. Personal afflictions will come; but the furnace is closely watched by an eye that will not suffer the gold to be consumed. The indelible mark of God is upon them. God can plead that his own name is written there. The Lord has shut them in. Their destination is inscribed—"GOD, NEW JERUSALEM." They are God's property, his possession.

(PH077 25.2)

Gabriel occupies the position from which Lucifer fell (DA 693; GC 493), and stands next in honor and rank to Christ Himself (DA 98, 99, 234; Dan. 10:21). It was Gabriel who appeared to Daniel (Dan. 8:16; 9:21) to announce the coming of “the Messiah the Prince” (Dan. 9:25). In NT times he appeared to Zacharias (Luke 1:19), to Mary (vs. 26, 27), and probably it was he who appeared to Joseph (see on Matt. 1:20). It was Gabriel who strengthened Christ in Gethsemane (DA 693), who intervened between Him and the mob (DA 694), and who opened the tomb and bade the Saviour come forth (DA 779, 780). Gabriel was also one of the two angels who accompanied Christ through life (DA 793) and appeared to the disciples on Olivet as Christ ascended to heaven (DA 832; cf. 780). It was Gabriel who appeared to John on Patmos (DA 99; see on Rev. 1:1) and who spoke of himself as “thy fellowservant, and [the fellowservant] of thy brethren the prophets” (Rev. 22:9). (*SDA BC on Luke 1:19*)

- ◆ ...the mighty angel who stands in God's presence, occupying the position from which Satan fell, came to the side of Christ. (*DA* 693.3)
- ◆ Sin originated with him who, next to Christ, had been most honored of God and who stood highest in power and glory among the inhabitants of heaven. Before his fall, Lucifer was first of the covering cherubs, holy and undefiled. (*GC* 493.3)
- ◆ Luke 1:19, 26; Daniel 8:16, 9:21
- ◆ It was Gabriel, the angel next in rank to the Son of God, who came with the divine message to Daniel. It was Gabriel, "His angel," whom Christ sent to open the future to the beloved John; and a blessing is pronounced on those who read and hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things written therein. Revelation 1:3. (*DA* 234.2)

◆ In this awful crisis, when everything was at stake, when the mysterious cup trembled in the hand of the sufferer, the heavens opened, a light shone forth amid the stormy darkness of the crisis hour, and the mighty angel who stands in God's presence, occupying the position from which Satan fell, came to the side of Christ. The angel came not to take the cup from Christ's hand, but to strengthen Him to drink it, with the assurance of the Father's love. He came to give power to the divine-human suppliant. He pointed Him to the open heavens, telling Him of the souls that would be saved as the result of His sufferings. He assured Him that His Father is greater and more powerful than Satan, that His death would result in the utter discomfiture of Satan, and that the kingdom of this world would be given to the saints of the Most High. He told Him that He would see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied, for He would see a multitude of the human race saved, eternally saved. (*DA* 693.3)

- ◆ The sleeping disciples had been suddenly awakened by the light surrounding the Saviour. They saw the angel bending over their prostrate Master. They saw him lift the Saviour's head upon his bosom, and point toward heaven. They heard his voice, like sweetest music, speaking words of comfort and hope. (*DA* 693.3)
- ◆ No traces of His recent agony were visible as Jesus stepped forth to meet His betrayer. Standing in advance of His disciples He said, "Whom seek ye?" They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus replied, "I am He." As these words were spoken, the angel who had lately ministered to Jesus moved between Him and the mob. A divine light illuminated the Saviour's face, and a dovelike form overshadowed Him. In the presence of this divine glory, the murderous throng could not stand for a moment. They staggered back. Priests, elders, soldiers, and even Judas, fell as dead men to the ground. (*DA* 694.5)
- ◆ The angel withdrew, and the light faded away. Jesus had opportunity to escape, but He remained, calm and self-possessed. As one glorified He stood in the midst of that hardened band, now prostrate and helpless at His feet. The disciples looked on, silent with wonder and awe. (*DA* 694.6)

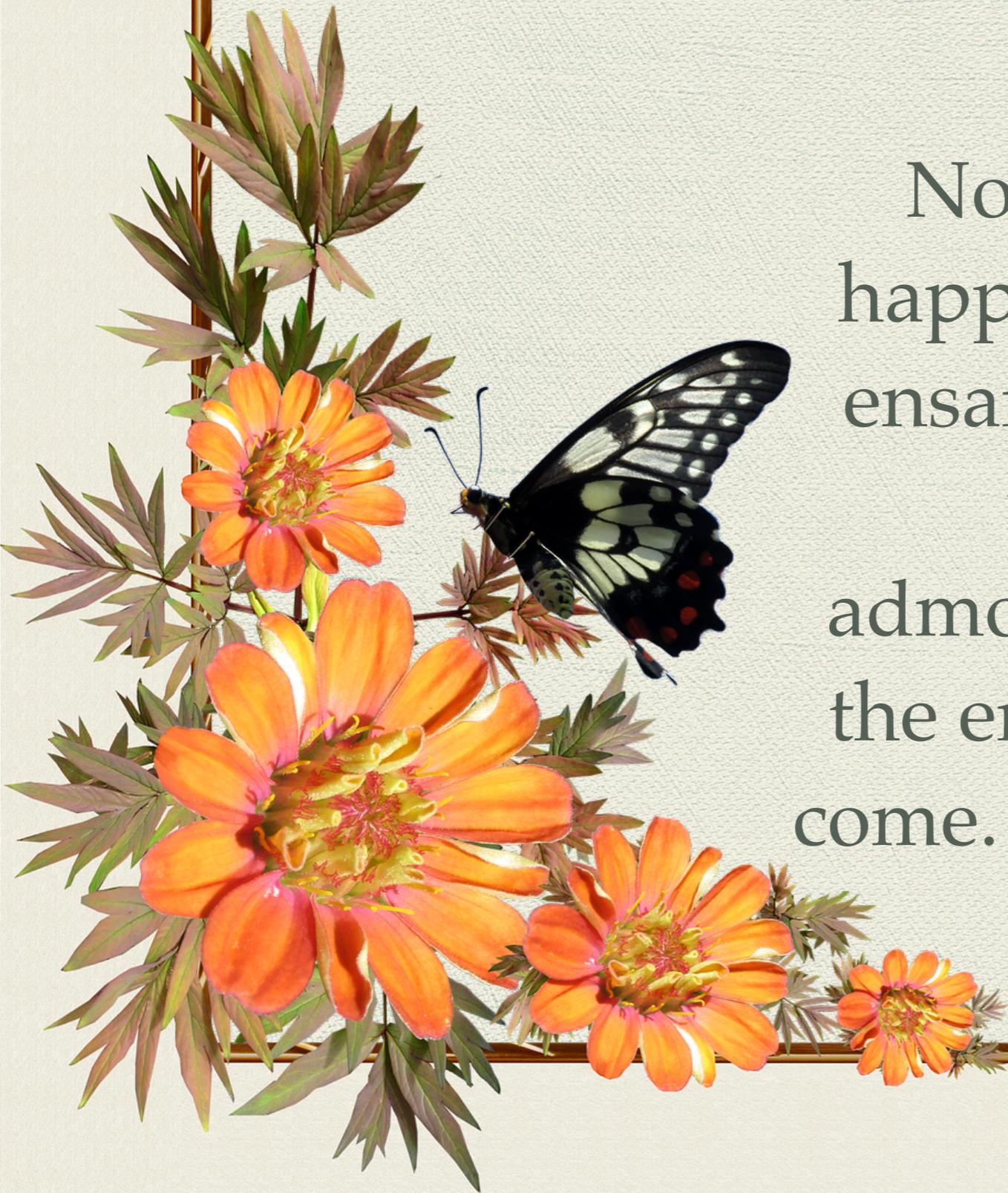
- ◆ The night of the first day of the week had worn slowly away. The darkest hour, just before daybreak, had come. Christ was still a prisoner in His narrow tomb. The great stone was in its place; the Roman seal was unbroken; the Roman guards were keeping their watch. And there were unseen watchers. Hosts of evil angels were gathered about the place. Had it been possible, the prince of darkness with his apostate army would have kept forever sealed the tomb that held the Son of God. But a heavenly host surrounded the sepulcher. Angels that excel in strength were guarding the tomb, and waiting to welcome the Prince of life. (*DA 779.1*)“
- ◆ And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven.” Clothed with the panoply of God, this angel left the heavenly courts. The bright beams of God's glory went before him, and illuminated his pathway. “His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.” (*DA 779.2*)

◆ Now, priests and rulers, where is the power of your guard? Brave soldiers that have never been afraid of human power are now as captives taken without sword or spear. The face they look upon is not the face of mortal warrior; it is the face of the mightiest of the Lord's host. **This messenger** is he who fills the position from which Satan fell. It is he who on the hills of Bethlehem proclaimed Christ's birth. The earth trembles at his approach, the hosts of darkness flee, and as he rolls away the stone, heaven seems to come down to the earth. The soldiers see him removing the stone as he would a pebble, and hear him cry, Son of God, come forth; Thy Father calls Thee. They see Jesus come forth from the grave, and hear Him proclaim over the rent sepulcher, "I am the resurrection, and the life." As He comes forth in majesty and glory, the angel host bow low in adoration before the Redeemer, and welcome Him with songs of praise. (DA 779.3)

- ◆ While the disciples were still gazing upward, voices addressed them which sounded like richest music. They turned, and saw two angels in the form of men, who spoke to them, saying, “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.” (*DA 831.1*)
- ◆ These angels were of the company that had been waiting in a shining cloud to escort Jesus to His heavenly home. The most exalted of the angel throng, they were the two who had come to the tomb at Christ’s resurrection, and they had been with Him throughout His life on earth. With eager desire all heaven had waited for the end of His tarrying in a world marred by the curse of sin. The time had now come for the heavenly universe to receive their King. Did not the two angels long to join the throng that welcomed Jesus? But in sympathy and love for those whom He had left, they waited to give them comfort. “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” Hebrews 1:14. (*DA 832.1*)

- ◆ And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven. Man did eat angels' food: he sent them meat to the full. (Psalm 78:24–25)
- ◆ They became weary of the food prepared for them **by angels**, and sent them from Heaven. (*4aSG* 15.1)
- ◆ Some found fault with one thing, and some with another, as did the murmurers among the children of Israel when Moses was their leader. Some were censuring our course, saying that we were not as conservative as we ought to be; we did not seek to please the people as we might; we talked too plainly; we reprov'd too sharply. Some were talking in regard to Sister White's dress, picking at straws. Others were expressing dissatisfaction with the course that Brother White pursued, and remarks were passing from one to another, questioning their course and finding fault. **An angel** stood before these persons, unseen by them, busily writing their words in the book which is to be opened to the view of God and angels. (*3T* 312.3)

Now all these things
happened unto them for
ensamples: and they are
written for our
admonition, upon whom
the ends of the world are
come. (1 Corinthians 10:11)



- ◆ Offering our children to Molech
- ◆ Rebelling against the word of God
- ◆ Idolatry
- ◆ Imaginations far from God
- ◆ Love of ease and pleasure
- ◆ Part of Babylon