

KEEPING THE FAITH

An IICM Syllabus on Adventist Doctrines

YRE101 SDA Bible Doctrines

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SECTION I:

GENERAL INTRODUCTORY MATERIAL

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DOCTRINES OF THE ADVENTIST FAITH

UNIT 1—INTRODUCTION

1a Introduction to DAF: What Is It?

1a.1 Purpose of the course—Why should we study Adventist doctrines?

**to know about doctrines??

**to know about Adventism??

**to know about faith??

**to know why there is such a thing as *the Adventist faith*??]

Perhaps the following list of one dozen benefits to be derived from taking this course may provide a good answer. Benefits are both spiritual and intellectual, and are all founded, as you will find, on the Word of God:

1a.2 Spiritual benefits of the course

1a.2.1 First of all, a study of doctrine shows that God, though infinite, does have an organized way about him--we can know specific facts about God (Ro 1:18, 19). There is a finite number of means through which human beings acquire new knowledge, hardly more than four: These are intuition, instruction, research, and revelation. Sometimes we work on hunches, unproved impressions that something is correct. We act on those impressions and prove ourselves right. This is intuition. But intuition cannot reveal God to humanity.

Then there is instruction: In instruction, one subject passes knowledge on to another. But though our words sometimes suggest more than we intend, it is clear that no one may pass on knowledge in this way if he does not yet possess it. No person can instruct any other about the person, nature, and character of God until she herself has first learned of God.

As for research, we may readily observe how unsuccessful science has been in discovering God despite its vast array of investigative activities and methodologies. Our response may well be Zophar's rhetorical question: "Can you, by searching, find out God?" (Job 11:6). Neither intuition, instruction, nor research can discover God for us.

It is only by God's own revelation of Himself that we, human beings, may know about God.

1a.2.2 A study of doctrine also develops and increases our appreciation for the propositional character of truth. 'Propositional' means that we know because God tells us specific things; He gives us data. Our awareness of God is more than a vague or generalized sense of spiritual reality—an encounter with something different and awe inspiring. Many

texts of Scripture demonstrate how specific and personal God is about His self revelation (Jb 38:1-3; 40:6, 7; 42:1-4 Gal 1:11, 15, 16; Eph 3:1-5)

1a.2.3 Studying doctrine shows the appropriateness, indeed, the necessity of establishing our faith upon the Word of God as distinct from habit [people just do it!], on the one hand, and the novelty of brain titillation [neat idea] on the other (Is 8:20; Ps 119:105; Ro 10:17)

1a.2.4 Studying doctrine facilitates growth in faith as we discover the firm, biblical basis of doctrines which we may once have thought were mere human traditions. Learning from God is learning to trust is learning to obey (Ps 25:4, 5; Ps 19:7-9), according to the standard of His Word (Rev 12:17; 19:10; Isa 8:20—according to the Spirit of prophecy)

1a.2.5 Since studying doctrine is studying about God, we see through such study that Jesus is the center [meaning & purpose] & source of all genuine biblical teaching. We realize as never before that reality, whether material or spiritual, transcends party trivia; our existence has deep and long term purpose (Jn 14:6; Rev 4:11; Ro 11:36; Jn 5:39)
2 SM 87, par 1: The truth for this time is broad in its outlines, far reaching, embracing many doctrines; but these doctrines are not detached items, which mean little; they are united by golden threads, forming a complete whole, **with Christ as the living center**. The truths we present from the Bible are as firm and immovable as the throne of God.

1a.2.6 Proper doctrinal study presents truth as i) revealed, as ii) factual, and as iii) an integrated whole. Far from being a series of ideas on a number of different things, saving truth is systematic and harmonious, not atomic or self-contradictory

i) Truth as revealed—see benefits 1, 2

ii) Truth as factual—Ps 119:142, 160

iii) Truth as integrated—Lu 24:15-27; Col 1:15-20

Evangelism, page 223, paragraph 1 [from *Review and Herald*, Nov. 27, 1883]: Our faith in reference to the messages of the first, second, and third angels was correct. The great waymarks we have passed are immovable. Although the hosts of hell may try to tear them from their foundation, and triumph in the thought that they have succeeded, yet they do not succeed. These pillars of truth stand firm as the eternal hills, unmoved by all the efforts of men combined with those of Satan and his host. We can learn much, and should be constantly searching the Scriptures to see if these things are so. God's people are now to have their eyes fixed on the heavenly sanctuary, where the final ministration of our great High Priest in the work of the judgment is going forward,—where He is interceding for His people.

1a.2.7 Sound doctrinal study develops Christ centered thinking, believing, and behaving (Ro 12:1, 2; Phil 2:5-8)

1a.2.8 Authentic doctrinal study deepens our commitment to creating opportunities for sharing with others the truth about Jesus (2 Co 5:14)

1a.3 Intellectual benefits of the course

- 1a.3.1 A study of biblical doctrines emphasizes the distinction between learning through empiricism and learning through revelation. While we value knowledge, and respect all truth, we understand that experimental science and theoretical constructs do not lead to salvation, for salvation is a supernatural reality. Therefore, doctrine that leads to salvation must be anchored in God, and cannot be contradicted by anti-supernaturalistic thinking, argument, and hypothesis (Job 11:7-9; Heb 11:6; 1 Jn 5:4)
- 1a.3.2 As surely as all biblical doctrine is centered in Jesus Christ, so definitely does the whole of God's salvation program relate to the single overarching theme of cosmic conflict--the mysterious challenge of evil forces to the justice of divine government--and the vindication of God's loving character as the expected result of this conflict--1 Jn 4:8; Rice, p. 14, "How God Reigns", par. 1.
- 1a.3.3 Again, a focus on Jesus as the center and axis of all Bible doctrine leads the student to probe the meaning of the sanctuary doctrine which expresses and encompasses all that His anointed ministry accomplishes on behalf of those He died to save.
- 1a.3.4 Our pursuit of Bible based doctrinal study better qualifies us to identify differences between SDA & non-SDA understandings on such questions as the Sabbath, the human soul, the second advent, stewardship, and the Spirit of Prophecy, even is a course of study as brief as this one is.

1a.4 Course texts

Anderson, J. N. D. *Christianity & World Religions* (Downer's Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1984), pp. 82-111 [divergent concepts of salvation among the world's prominent religions].

Beach, Walter Raymond. *The Creed That Changed the World* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1971), pp. 79-88, 107-127, 138-155, 168-188; [70 pp.].

Douglass, Herbert E. *Messenger of the Lord*, (Nampa ID: Pacific Press, 1988), pp. 2-51 [chs. 1-4], 68-93 [chs. 7, 8], 108-123 [ch.11], 134-179 [chs. 13-16]

Ministerial Assn., General Conference of SDA, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrines* (Hagerstown, MD: R&H, 1988), chaps.11, 12, 15-17, 19, 20, 22-27 [194 pp.].

Rice, Richard. *Reign of God*, 2nd ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1997), chaps. 9, 10, 12-16 [191 pp.].

White, Ellen G. *Selected Messages* bk. 3, (Washington D.C.: R& H, 1980), sec. 2: “Principles of Inspiration”[chs. 4-11], pp. 27-86 [60 pp.].

NB: Principal course text is **the Bible**. Use a non-paraphrastic Bible version which speaks today’s English. E.g, NASB, NIV, RSV, NRSV, God’s Word, TEV [Good News Bible]. Popular versions which were not prepared as academic study Bibles are discouraged [CEV, KJV, TLB, Clear Word].

1b Introduction to Doctrine: What Is It?

See Fowler, John, *Adventist Review*, 3-23-00, pp. 24–27: “Do We Need the 27 Fundamentals?”—check AR online @ <http://www.adventist.org/rhp/pdf/2000/1512-2000.pdf>
OR go to homepage: <http://adventistreview.org/> & click on GET PAST ISSUES

1b.1 Defining the term

According to Fowler, “A doctrine is a statement one makes and holds to be true” (“Do We Need the 27 Fundamentals?”, AR, 3-23-00, pp. 24-27; p. 24).

The English word “doctrine” comes from a Latin word which means “I teach.”¹ Can you think of any related terms built on this root “doc” which illustrate its significance?

Ans: two examples:

- a) “Document”—both as noun and verb. Especially as verb, it emphasizes validation.
- b) “Doctor”—which today often means “physician”. But “doc” isn’t related to healing. It’s related to teaching. That’s why the university is full of people with “doctorates”—they are supposed to be people who have learned enough to be experts, to teach in their fields

1b.2 Doctrine in the OT

The Hebrew term translated “doctrine”² in the KJV, appears 9 times in the OT. In this section we emphasize five nuances of the word:

- a) Dt 32:2--first usage in Scripture: doctrine is equivalent to **1) word spoken**.³ Therefore it is oral, verbal. Cf Isa 28:9, which shows that it is a thing heard⁴, and the question is asked: To whom will God explain it?
- b) Jb 11:4—refers to Job’s arguments; therefore, the **2) idea conveyed**, or his **points & his 3) rhetoric**

¹ “I teach” = *doceo* [pronounced do-**kay**-o]

²*leqah* [pronounced **leh**-ka]

³I say “equivalent to” because the term translated “doctrine”(*leqah*) in Dt 32:2 is paired with or parallel to the term *imraty*, which means “my word”.

⁴ Thing heard in Isa 28:9 = *shemu‘a*, from the word which gives us the **Shema**⁴ [pronounced shi-**ma**]—great foundation statement of Judaism as well as Christianity and Islam, found in Deut 6:4

c) Isa 29:24--faultfinders will learn doctrine (*leqah*)--in this sense doctrine is **4) a concept grasped**. Because Isa 29:24 is a restoration promise, we can conclude that doctrine(*leqah*) here is good.

The four senses of the term just cited are all examples of a positive usage. But the word is not in itself a moral expression, as Proverbs demonstrates: The word we are discussing appears in *Proverbs* 6 times, some of which are quite in tune with what we have already found. E.g., Pro 1:5 advises, 'Listen to the wise man [*hakam*] and you'll increase *leqah*. This does seem to suggest a positive sense.⁵ But

e) Pro 7:21 refers to the seducer's gifts of persuasion.⁶ Obviously, this is not an example of good doctrine. Which is to say, doctrine is not necessarily good. Just having doctrine is not enough; just believing something as long as you believe is not enough, as illustrated by the story of the sophisticate who believed the same thing as his church.

Summarizing the OT position: *Doctrine* is

- 1)** what I say (Dt; Jb); **2)** what I mean **3)** what you get, the concept grasped (Isa)
4) how I argue, my way of making the point (Jb; Prov) **5)** either good or bad

1b.3 Doctrine in the NT

In the NT 2 terms predominate

- a) The one which appears most frequently in the Gospels and John's writings emphasizes the thing taught⁷ (Mt 7:28 & 22:33 & Mk 1:22 & Lk 4:32; Mt 16:12, Jn 7:16, etc., 2 Jn, Rev)
- b) The other emphasizes more the act of teaching⁸ (Eph 4:14; 1 Ti 1:10, and through 2 Ti, Tit, except 2 Ti 4:2 which uses *didache*)

1b.4 An Example of Doctrine

Doctrine requires some sense of formulation, system, logic, persuasiveness--note the

constant association of "wise man" with doctrine in the book of Proverbs. Can we get along

⁵See also 4:2, where "my instruction" (*toraty*) is paired with "good doctrine" (*leqah tob*); and 9:9--'teach the righteous and he will increase *leqah*.'

⁶Interestingly enough for moderns, the seducer in this verse, and usually in *Proverbs*, is a woman. Pro 16:21, 23 also highlights the dimension of persuasiveness: 'sweetness of speech increases *leqah*.'

⁷ *didache* [pronounced dee-dah-kay]

⁸ *didaskalia* [pronounced dee-das-ka-lee-ah]

without doctrine? Not really. Sometimes we figure doctrine is an arbitrary thing. And sometimes it seems to be arbitrarily taught. Doctrines can often be quite contradictory:

E.g., [taken from Fowler article]:

God is mind

No, God is virtue—ultimate good, source of ethics, morality, esthetics

No, God is nature [pantheistic]

No, God is nothing [atheistic]

God is love, a personal being committed to sharing His love.

These contradictions and arbitrariness are unfortunate. Particularly because of what they seem to say about God. What do they say about God? That perhaps He is confused That it may not necessarily be possible to know about Him with any certainty At the very least they suggest that everyone does not have it right. We could then give up in despair and never get it right ourselves. Or we could commit ourselves to our own search, accompanying our commitment to searching with a resolve to sincerely live by what we do learn to be correct about God.

1b.5 Which Doctrines Shall We Study, & Why? [see Rice, pp. 10, 11]

The class on God and Human Life has already introduced us to a number of doctrines which Seventh-day Adventists hold in common with the Christian world in general. Along with the convictions which Christians share in general, there are those which some groups hold which distinguish them from other groups. Not all Christians believe that at communion we actually eat Christ's flesh [whether through transubstantiation or consubstantiation], or that our will plays no part in our eternal destiny. Nor are all Christians Anabaptists.

This class is dedicated to studying those doctrines which express distinctive Adventist understandings of the good news of salvation in Jesus.

1b.6 Gulley, Norman, *Ministry*, vol. 70 (3–97), pp. 24–27: “Toward a Christ-centered Expression of Our Faith”

Some questions to ponder while studying Gulley’s article:

- a) What three problems does Gulley claim need to be confronted with regard to the expression of SDA beliefs?
 - i)
 - ii)
 - iii)

- b) As Gulley shows, many Bible students have become trapped by an either/or dichotomy in their study of truth. What does he say is the nature of this dichotomy?

- c) What is the standard six part formulation of Christian theology [you learned it in **GHL**]?
 - i)
 - ii)
 - iii)
 - iv)
 - v)
 - vi)

- d) What is Gulley’s proposed six part formulation of Christian theology?
 - i)
 - ii)
 - iii)
 - iv)
 - v)
 - vi)

- e) How does it differ from the norm?

- f) Why? What is Gulley’s argument?

- g) Do you agree with Gulley? Why or why not?

UNITS 2, 3:

DOCTRINES WE SHALL STUDY

2. Cosmic Conflict

3. From Beginning to End

- 3.1 All About Souls: Creation & Fall, Death and Resurrection
- 3.2 Freedom to Rest: Sabbath Serenity
- 3.3 Doctrine of the Sanctuary
- 3.4 Bride and More: Metaphors of the Church
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- 3.6 A Gift of Guidance: SDA & The Spirit of Prophecy
- 3.7 How It All Will End: The Second Advent and Beyond

UNIT 2–COSMIC CONFLICT

- 2a.1** **Lazich, Daniel**, *Adventist Review*, 2-22-00, pp. 22-24: “In Defense of God” online @ <http://www.adventist.org/rhp/pdf/2000/1508-2000.pdf>
Lazich’s article supports the intentional cosmos concept, making more intellectually accessible, as well as more existentially significant, the concept of cosmic conflict
- 2a.2** **Ralph Blodgett**, *These Times*, 2-20-78, pp. 2-5: “The True Story Behind Star Wars.” To be read whether you remember the movie perfectly or never heard of it.

2b **Star Wars for Real**; *Reign of God*, pp. 148-50; *Beliefs*, pp. 99-105

PP33⁹: What God is all about:

"God is love." 1 John 4:16. His nature, His law, is love. It ever has been; it ever will be—**cf 1 Jn 4:8**.

Every manifestation of creative power is an expression of infinite love.

PP33: What Star Wars is all about?

The history of the great conflict between good and evil, from the time it first began in heaven to the final overthrow of rebellion and the total eradication of sin, is also a demonstration of *God's unchanging love*.

PP34: Love & law in God’s program

The law of love being the *foundation of the government of God*, the happiness of all intelligent beings depends upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness.

PP35-36: The challenger-- called Lucifer [Latin for “lightbearer”, taken from his description in Isa 14:12]

Lucifer's disposition to serve himself instead of his Creator aroused a feeling of apprehension when observed by those who considered that the [p. 36] glory of God should be supreme—**cf Ro 11:36; Rev 4:11, vs Isa 14:12-15; Eze 28:12-19**.

⁹PP stands for the book *The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets*, by Ellen G. White. Available online at the Ellen G. White website. Other initials include **GC**, *The Story of the Great Controversy Between Christ & Satan*; **SR**, *The Story of Redemption*.

In heavenly council the angels pleaded with Lucifer. The Son of God presented before him the greatness, the goodness, and the justice of the Creator, and the sacred, unchanging nature of His law—**cf Ro 2:4; 1 Tim 2:3, 4; 2 Pe 3:9**. God Himself had established the order of heaven; and in departing from it, Lucifer would dishonor his Maker and bring ruin upon himself. But the warning, given in infinite love and mercy, only aroused a spirit of resistance. Lucifer allowed his jealousy of Christ to prevail, and became the more determined.

On Isa 14, Eze 28

Isa 14:12-15—Reference to the light bearer, son of the morning (*hêl_l ben shaar*, v. 12), has often been linked to and compared with a Ugaritic epic which relates the birth of twins, Shaar & Shalim, to the supreme Canaanite deity El (See J. C. L. Gibson, “Shaar & Shalim”, in *Canaanite Myths & Legends* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1977), pp. 123-127, particularly ll. 30-54; see also pp. 28, 29).

Eze 28:12-19—Ezekiel’s lament is sometimes taken as a mythical version of the fall of a Tyrian king (Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37: A New Translation With Introduction & Commentary*, Anchor Bible Series 22A (NY: Doubleday, 1997), pp. 579-593).

Why these are unlikely--The identification with Canaanite royalty fails to give adequate account of the breadth and density of the prophetic account. It provides no credible explanation for any of the following three elements of the passage:

#1) the being’s unparalleled physical excellence--this creature originally bore “the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty” (28:12)

#2) the pristine setting which he initially occupies (“Eden, the garden of God”; v. 13; “anointed cherub . . . on the holy mountain of God”; v. 14); see **Ex 25:22** for explanation of significance of “covering cherub”.

#3) the moral irreproachability which characterized him before he fell/became corrupted (“blameless in your ways from the day you were created”, v. 15).

PP36: The challenge

To dispute the supremacy of the Son of God, thus impeaching the wisdom and love of the Creator, had become the purpose of this prince of angels. To this object he was about to bend the energies of that master mind, which, next to Christ's, was first among the hosts of God.

PP34: How come God lets Lucifer?

God desires from all His creatures the service of love--service that springs from an appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in a forced obedience; and

to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service—**cf Ro 12:1, 2; 1 Tim 2:4**

PP36: What God does first

He who would have the will of all His creatures free, left none unguarded to the bewildering sophistry by which rebellion would seek to justify itself. Before the great contest should open, all were to have a clear presentation of His will, whose wisdom and goodness were the spring of all their joy—**cf Gen 2:15-17**

PP39: How God tries with the rebels

A compassionate Creator, in yearning pity for Lucifer and his followers, was seeking to draw them back from the abyss of ruin into which they were about to plunge.

PP37: How Lucifer responds

Leaving his place in the immediate presence of the Father, Lucifer went forth to diffuse the spirit of discontent among the angels. He worked with mysterious secrecy, and for a time concealed his real purpose under an appearance of reverence for God.

PP38

While secretly fomenting discord and rebellion, he with consummate craft caused it to appear as his sole purpose to promote loyalty and to preserve harmony and peace.

PP 39-40: How the conflict proceeds

Lucifer pointed to the long-suffering of God as an evidence of his own superiority, an indication that the King of the universe would yet accede to his terms. If the angels would stand firmly with him, he declared, they could yet gain all that [p. 40] they desired—**cf Eccl 8:11**.

NB: p. 38: “. . . angels who were loyal and true maintained the wisdom and justice of the divine decree and endeavored to reconcile this disaffected being to the will of God.” **vs p. 40:** “Rejecting with disdain the arguments and entreaties of the loyal angels, he denounced them as *deluded slaves*.”

And [still p. 40]: Still the loyal angels urged him and his sympathizers to submit to God; and they set before them the inevitable result should they refuse: He who had created them could overthrow their power and signally punish their rebellious daring. No angel could successfully oppose the law of God, which was as sacred as Himself. They warned all to close their ears against Lucifer's deceptive reasoning, and urged him and his followers to seek the presence of God without delay and confess the error of questioning His wisdom and authority.

Many were disposed to heed this counsel, to repent of their disaffection, and seek to be again received into favor with the Father and His Son. But Lucifer had another deception ready. The mighty revolter now declared that the angels who had united with him had gone too far to return—**Note who decides that return is impossible!** [see **Is 59:1, 2; Jer 31:3**].¹⁰ The break was Lucifer's decision, and led to his being cast out: 2 Pe 2:4.

NB: It was too late for Lucifer who by now had established himself as the adversary [meaning of the name Satan]. But it was not too late for the angels; God was committed to keeping everybody possible together in glory: “. . . had they heeded the warning they might have broken away. . . . But pride, love for their leader, and the desire for unrestricted freedom, were permitted to bear sway, . . .” (p. 41).

GC492: The break, bearing in mind that “It is impossible to explain the origin of sin so as to give a reason for its existence.”

SR17 The loyal angels hastened speedily to the Son of God and acquainted Him with what was taking place among the angels. They found the Father in conference with His beloved Son, to determine the means by which, for the best good of the loyal angels, the assumed authority of Satan could be forever put down. The great God . . . would give the rebellious an equal chance to measure strength and might with His own Son and His loyal angels. In this battle every angel would choose his own side and be manifested to all. It would not have been safe to suffer any who united with Satan in his rebellion to continue to occupy heaven. They had learned the lesson of genuine rebellion against the unchangeable law of God, and this is incurable--alludes to original casting out of heaven (Rev 12:7-9)

SR19 Then there was war in heaven. The Son of God, the Prince of heaven, and His loyal angels engaged in conflict with the archrebel and those who united with him. The Son of God and true, loyal angels prevailed; and Satan and his sympathizers were expelled from heaven [**1st casting out**].

¹⁰ Cf *The Story of Redemption*, pp. 16-17: Many of Lucifer's sympathizers were inclined to heed the counsel of the loyal angels and repent of their dissatisfaction and be again received to the confidence of the Father and His dear Son. The mighty revolter then declared that he was acquainted with God's law, and if he should submit to servile obedience, his honor would be taken from him. No more would he be intrusted with his exalted mission. **He told them that** [17] **himself and they also had now gone too far to go back**, and he would brave the consequences, for to bow in servile worship to the Son of God he never would; that **God would not forgive**, and now they must assert their liberty and **gain by force** the position and authority which was not willingly accorded to them

GC493 Sin is an intruder, for whose presence no reason can be given. It is mysterious, unaccountable; to excuse it is to defend it. Could excuse for it be found, or cause be shown for its existence, it would cease to be sin. Our only definition of sin is that given in the word of God; it is "the transgression of the law;" it is the outworking of a principle at war with the great law of love which is the foundation of the divine government—see now **Ro 3:23; 14:23; 1 Jn 3:4; 5:17**.

GC498: How it works out

In His dealing with sin, God could employ only righteousness and truth. Satan could use what God could not-- flattery and deceit

GC499 The working out of Satan's rule, its effects upon both men and angels, would show what must be the fruit of setting aside the divine authority. It would testify that with the existence of God's government and His law is bound up the well-being of all the creatures He has made. Thus the history of this terrible experiment of rebellion was to be a perpetual safeguard to all holy intelligences, to prevent them from being deceived as to the nature of transgression, to save them from committing sin and suffering its punishments.

GC501: What happens next

Nothing could so effectually have uprooted Satan from the affections of the heavenly angels and the whole loyal universe as did his cruel warfare upon the world's Redeemer. The daring blasphemy of his demand that Christ should pay him homage,¹¹ his presumptuous boldness in bearing Him to the mountain summit and the pinnacle of the temple,¹² the malicious intent betrayed in urging Him to cast Himself down from the dizzy height,¹³ the unsleeping malice that hunted Him from place to place, inspiring the hearts of priests and people to reject His love, and at the last to cry, "Crucify Him! crucify Him!--all this excited the amazement and indignation of the universe.

Question: How many specific elements of diabolical activity can you identify in the preceding paragraph?

GC502 Now the guilt of Satan stood forth without excuse. He had revealed his true character as a liar and a murderer.

¹¹See Mt 4:8-10; Lk 4:5-8.

¹²See Mt 4:5-7; Lk 4:9-12.

¹³White's commentary shows two distinct evils in this one temptation—presumptuous boldness, and malicious intent.

Satan's lying charges against the divine character and government appeared in their true light [2nd casting out–Rev 12:7-9-11]

GC502-503: What that happening means

God had manifested His abhorrence of the principles of rebellion. All heaven saw His justice revealed, both in the condemnation of Satan and in the redemption of man. Lucifer had declared that if the law of God was changeless, and its penalty could not be remitted, every transgressor must be forever debarred from the Creator's favor. He had claimed that the sinful race were placed beyond redemption and were therefore his rightful prey. But *the death of Christ was an argument in man's behalf that could not be overthrown*. The [p. 503] penalty of the law fell upon Him who was equal with God, and man was free to accept the righteousness of Christ and by a life of penitence and humiliation to triumph, as the Son of God had triumphed, over the power of Satan. Thus God is just and yet the justifier of all who believe in Jesus.

But it was not merely to accomplish the redemption of man that Christ came to the earth to suffer and to die. He came to "magnify the law" and to "make it honorable." Not alone that the inhabitants of this world might regard the law as it should be regarded; but it was to demonstrate to all the worlds of the universe that God's law is unchangeable. Could its claims have been set aside, then the Son of God need not have yielded up His life to atone for its transgression. The death of Christ proves it immutable. And the sacrifice to which infinite love impelled the Father and the Son, that sinners might be redeemed, demonstrates to all the universe--what nothing less than this plan of atonement could have sufficed to do--that justice and mercy are the foundation of the law and government of God.

UNIT 3—FROM BEGINNING TO END

3.1: All About Souls: Creation & Fall, Death & Resurrection

We have learned from our study of Cosmic Conflict that we are not now the kind of creatures God ideally means for us to be. We have read Isa 59:1, 2 & Ro 3:23 and GC 499: “The working out of Satan's rule, its effects upon both men and angels, would show what must be the fruit of setting aside the divine authority. It would testify that with the existence of God's government and His law is bound up the well-being of all the creatures He has made.”

Originally

What was it like in the beginning? Gen 1:26, 27; 2:7-9, 15-25—in short, it was honor for humanity, and holy pride for God, and ecstasy and thrill and joy for all. It was life in its best dimensions, life in bright and full abundance. As John says of Jesus as Creator, “in Him was life and the life was the light of humanity” (1:4).

But Satan’s rebellion changed all that for everyone who yielded to his deception and fell under his control. And while he has been just as assertive with his lies on earth as he was in heaven, God provides human beings with all the guidance we need to recognize the difference between Satan’s deceptions and God’s truth.

Lies for Angels, Lies for Humans

‘Heavenly lies’ Satan’s line with the angels contrasts somewhat with his line for humans.

What were some of his motivations? **Answer:** “Disposition to serve himself” (Isa 14:12-14; PP35), “jealousy of Christ” (PP36), objection to God’s law and heaven’s order (PP36), especially for angels (PP37; when they wouldn’t follow him “he denounced them as deluded slaves”—PP40), “desire for supremacy” (Is 14:14; PP37). What were some of his approaches? Commitment to remove dissatisfaction, reconcile disaffected angels, promote loyalty, preserve harmony and peace (PP38), defence of violated rights (PP40), promise of better government, including freedom for all (PP40), objectivity (“he himself stood uncommitted”, PP41).

Results What were the results? **Answer:** War: “In this battle every angel would choose his own side and be manifested to all” (SR17); expulsion: “. . . he was cast out of heaven (PP42); “It would not have been safe to suffer any who united with Satan in his rebellion to continue to occupy heaven” (SR17).

Did Satan’s word come true? Did he give his followers total freedom? Did he take God’s place on the throne of the Universe? NO.

‘Edenic lies’ What were his Edenic strategies? **Answer:** Provoking “irreverent curiosity” (PP55), claim to be holy (PP55). What about his ‘edenic lies’? **Answer:** Gen 3:4, 5—eternal life (v. 4), likeness to God (v. 5), new knowledge (PP55), “ideas of progression” (PP55).

Results Did his words come true? Because of the subtlety of these Edenic lies, we shall proceed to a careful reexamination of the context of their utterance, and the consequences of believing them. These are the facts:

A. God’s life is underived and endless

1 Tim 1:17--The immortal king. The Greek word for “immortal” has two elements. One means “spoil, ruin”¹⁴; the other is what is called the alpha privative, meaning that it negates the sense of the word it is attached to [E.g. “theist” and “atheist”; “symmetrical” and “asymmetrical”]. So God cannot and does not spoil or grow old or become corrupt.

1 Tim 6:16--Who only has immortality.¹⁵ The same principle of two elements as in 1 Tim 1:17—death + alpha privative. So God does not and cannot die.

B Human life is conditional

Gen 2:7-17 makes it clear that, for humanity, living depended on certain behavior: “If you eat of this tree you will die” This is called a “conditional sentence” because it involves a certain requirement or condition. E.g., a parent may say to her teenager “You may borrow the car on condition that you complete your homework first.” And, for human beings God-given life and **immortality** are ours **on condition** that we follow the

¹⁴ *Φθείρω*-- anciently applied to destruction of a house, seduction of a virgin, decrepitude of old age, etc.

¹⁵ *θάνατος* (death) >> *θνήσκω* (I die) + alpha privative = *αθανασία*, deathlessness

guidelines for living. Our conditional immortality is to be distinguished from God's unconditional immortality

C. Therefore Satan lied when he promised life apart from God's guidelines

Gn 2 is the specific and immediate context for interpreting Gen 3:4, and for recognizing its implications—Satan tells Eve 'You are independent; you are not created with conditional immortality; you have unconditional immortality!' He had already lied to himself about being like God (Cf Gen 3:5 & Isa 14:14). Now he lied to the woman by denying that life, for her, just as for him, is dependent on God. The appeal is subtle and powerful. It offers the creature new freedom, "ideas of progression" (PP55). But despite much sci fi imagination and all the special effects the movies show, no computer, however wonderful, will ever be able to transform itself into an intellectual, emotional, conscientious, and volitional human being. Just as surely, human beings will never be able to transform themselves into autonomous entities with self-sustaining life.

Sadly enough, many who understand this are nevertheless willing to believe in the idea of souls, human and/or animal, whose existence is continuous and independent of the bodies which they sometimes inhabit. This idea provokes the curse of God because it seeks to turn Satan's 'edenic lie' into truth, while turning the truth of God into a lie (Isa 5:20). Some scholars have specifically undertaken to show that this satanic lie of undying souls is both scientific and Christian. In September 1998, born again Christian, Dr. Michael Sabom published a new book about his studies on the theme of near-death experiences. Many of his clients tell of deceased loved ones who sent them back to the land of the living. For Dr. Sabom, this shows that the dead are not really dead. He finds that his patients' encounters also help in their recovery. Interestingly enough, it also strengthens them in whatever faith they previously held, be it Buddhist, Christian, or New Age.

D. Note this sequence of lies and consequences

Gn 3:4--if you disobey God's instructions in Gn 2:16, 17 you will not die
But, Ro 5:12-- disobeying God's instructions is sin (3:23; 14:23; 1 Jn 3:4;
5:17—4 definitions of sin)
And, Ro 6:23--Logical, automatic consequence is death

Note also the following with regard to God's instructions and Satan's expectations:

1: Gen 2:17 meant irrevocable doom rather than instant death (PP60, par. 2). "In the day you eat . . . you shall surely die" meant that once disobedience led you to partake of that fruit, the doom of death was inescapable.

2: Satan had a plan—He saw the seduction of Adam & Eve as his victory over Jesus: "When he tempted and overcame Adam and Eve, he thought that he had gained possession of this world" (PP69). His plan was as follows: **a)** induced disobedience, **b)** continued use of the tree of life, and as a result **c)** life forever in misery (PP60, par. 3). Perhaps this is why he could say "You won't really die." He himself was anxious to believe. He thought he had control of the tree as part of his control of the world. But was he correct? NO. First the fallen pair were expelled from the garden like he had been from heaven (Gen 3:22-24). After expulsion they used to go to the gate of the garden to worship, until, at the flood, the garden of Eden was withdrawn from the earth (PP62). So much for Satan's promise of eternal life.

3: Satan didn't only bring death on Adam & Eve: "Under the curse of sin, all nature was to witness to man of the character and results of rebellion against God" (PP59). "As Adam & Eve witnessed, in drooping flower and falling leaf, the first signs of decay, [they] mourned more deeply than men now mourn over their dead. The death of the frail, delicate flowers was indeed a cause of sorrow" (PP62); cf. Ro 8:19-22

Animals also suffer--3:21; and that innocent animal represented Jesus—Jn 1:29. And as angels explained to them that Jesus would pay for their transgression "they saw, as they had never seen before, the guilt of sin, and its dire results" (PP66). They begged for the punishment on themselves and descendants, but understood that only the life of Jesus, their Creator, could atone for them (PP66)

E. Satan and God should not be confused; neither should death and life

Satan's word is the opposite of God's Word, and death is the opposite of life:

Gn 2:7 Before creation man was dust of the ground

Gn 2:7 At creation, dust from the earth [**X**] was inspired with God's breath [**Y**] and so became a living person: Clearly, **X+Y = living person**. These are the only components the Bible says go into making a living person: dust of the ground, and the breath of life.

Long ago, in the King James Version of the English Bible, Gen 2:7 was translated to say that man became "a living soul." But as we have shown, the word "soul" has produced a lot of confusion, with people attributing to it an imperishable status, independent of the "dust of the

ground” it may at times inhabit. Because of this it is thoroughly encouraging to note that the major English translations now consistently translate Gen 2:7 to say that man became “a living being”(NIV, NASB Update, NRSV). This alone should go a long way to dispense with the error of undying souls, for it shows that when God imparts the breath of life to a physical body it becomes alive. Then, when that breath of life is gone from a body, human or animal—and it makes no difference which, that creature is now dead (Ps 146:4; Eccl 12:7): Man and beast die the same way, says Solomon (Eccl 3:19), “all have the same breath” [[NIV, NASB Update]. Or, as Taylor’s Living Bible paraphrase puts it, “Both breathe the same air, and both die.” Thus **X** separated from **Y** is nothing but dust; **Y** separated from **X** is nothing but breath.

Use of the term “spirit” has also contributed to the invention of undying souls. This is mainly because the same word in Hebrew means both ‘breath’ or ‘wind’, and ‘spirit’. Thus, when we hear of the spirit going back to God (Eccl 12:7) we need to understand that the word there¹⁶ is the word for wind or ‘breath’. Then when we note that the text says it goes back to God who gave it, we remember what it is God gave at creation, viz. “breath of life.” In speaking of death, Eccl 12:7 describes the reversal of what happens in Gen 2:7. In Genesis, God puts breath into dust; in Ecclesiastes, breath leaves dust. In Genesis the gift of breath makes man a living being; in Ecclesiastes, the loss of breath leaves man a dead being.

¹⁶Hebrew רוּחַ.

F. Satan's Continuing Deceptions:

The Bible gives Satan quite a variety of names. Before his rebellion he is the Light Bearer—Lucifer; in abandoning the light God's presence to establish his own kingdom he becomes the ruler of darkness; his opposition to God and accusations against His law and government earn him the name Satan (adversary, opponent, enemy, accuser); and because his accusations slander the divine character he is called the devil.¹⁷ Having used the serpent for his deception in the garden of Eden, he also, by metonymy, now bears that label, including its most monstrous, awesome, and awful manifestation, dragon. Another metaphor, king of beasts, is also used to depict his menace and cruelty (Rev 12:7-9; 1 Pe 5:8).

Within the variety of his identities, his role as deceiver plays a most prominent part. In fact Rev 12:9 states that he is the deceiver of the whole world. And of all his deceptions, the lie on immortality is one of the most powerful:

GC561: Satan has long been preparing for his final effort to deceive the world. The foundation of his work was laid by the assurance given to Eve in Eden: "Ye shall not surely die." "In the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Genesis 3:4, 5. Little by little he has prepared the way for his masterpiece of deception in the development of spiritualism. He has not yet reached the full accomplishment of his designs; but it will be reached in the last remnant of time.

It is also one of the two most crucial: "Through the two great errors, the immortality of the soul and Sunday sacredness, Satan will bring the people under his deceptions" (GC588). Angels who joined his rebellion, spirits of devils working miracles (Rev 16:14), may appear as departed relatives, may give wisdom and insight to political authorities, and may advise students of Scripture of "correct" interpretations which set aside the plain teaching of God's Word: "Because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false" (2 Thes 2:10, 11). And men and women who long for life more than they long for God will be sucked in and swept away by the powerful deception whose end is the death they wish to escape (Pro 14:12; 16:25).

¹⁷Greek διάβολος—slandorous, backbiting; as noun—slanderer, the slanderer, the devil.

G. God's Way to Immortality

Ro 6:23--sin brings death but God gives life through Jesus Christ

Jn 3:16--God does this for love

Jn 1:12--for everyone who takes advantage

Eph 2:8, 9--it's called *grace* [a foreign word!]; we apprehend it by faith (Heb 11:6)

Ro 12:3--God gives faith to everyone

1 Co 15:12-22--resurrection a basic element of this redemption

1 Co 15:23; 1 Thes 4:13-18--will take place at Christ's coming

1 Co 15:51-57--resurrection at his coming will give us immortality

Jn 6:40, 47, 54; 1 Jn 5:13--Note that the moment we choose to believe in Jesus as Savior from sin, we receive eternal life--a quality thing. But immortality, the endless enjoyment of a life of eternal quality--the kind God lives--will not be ours until the resurrection. First we shall go to heaven to live and reign with Christ for 1,000 years (Rev 20:4, 5). Then, when the earth is purified of sin and the holy city, New Jerusalem, is established here on this planet, then we shall live for ever the life God always wanted His children to enjoy.

Notice what Jesus says in Jn 8:44: "he was a murderer from the beginning." Why? He killed Adam & Eve! And everybody else since: Ro 5:12; 6:23. So that no matter what his strategy has been, whether in heaven or on earth, the purpose has been to counteract God's wisdom and justice, and the result has been disastrous. No wonder, then, that in his incarnation and earthly ministry Jesus, in Jn 10:10, so clearly contrasts Satan's murderous intent and accomplishments with His own purpose: "The thief's purpose is to steal, kill and destroy. My purpose is to give life in all its fullness" (Taylor's Living Bible paraphrase).

This passage [Jn 10:10] expresses the stark and irreconcilable difference between Satan and God in terms of purpose and activity, and, by implication, character:

	SATAN	GOD
purpose	cruelty and misery	life in all its fullness
activity	mayhem, murder, suffering, death	creation, redemption
character	evil	love

The contrast also helps us to appreciate two related and vital truths: For one thing it explains why Satan's assault on the incarnate Christ was so fierce and unrelenting. For another, it shows how this Bible teaching on death and the soul finds its best and clearest explication in the person of Jesus Christ. We shall address both of these.

First, a comment on Satan's fury against Christ: In our study of the doctrine of cosmic conflict, we reviewed some of the evidence on Satan's "cruel warfare upon the world's Redeemer." In a quotation from GC501 we noted at least four elements of that vicious assault:

(1) his blasphemous and potentially humiliating demand

that Christ should pay him homage, (2) his presumptuous boldness in bearing Him to the mountain summit and the pinnacle of the temple, (3) the malicious intent betrayed in urging Him to cast Himself down from the dizzy height, (and 4) the unsleeping malice that hunted Him from place to place, inspiring the hearts of priests and people to reject His love, and at the last to cry, "Crucify Him! crucify Him!"

Satan hatred for Christ on earth is the inevitable consequence of his rebellion in heaven against God's principles of love. For he knew that whatever may be his pretenses of power and control upon earth, whatever his lies on the benefits of self-serving, Jesus, the embodiment of God's beauty, would expose them all for the worthless fraud they are:

Unselfishness, the principle of God's kingdom, is the principle that Satan hates; its very existence he denies. . . To disprove Satan's claim is the work of Christ and of all who bear His name.

It was to give in His own life an illustration of unselfishness that Jesus came in the form of humanity" (Ed 154).

Thus, Satan was fully aware that the simple beauty of Jesus' life would be enough to give the lie to all the claims he had made against God and in defense of himself both in heaven and on earth. He could not rest at ease while Jesus "went about doing good and healing all who were

oppressed by [him] the devil, [because] God was with Him” (Acts 10:38). Satan knew that as human and angelic eyes observed Jesus’ life, His meek and humble conduct would heap ever greater shame on the bigoted pride of Satan and his followers. He knew that Jesus’ self-denial made perpetual mockery of the greed that drove him, and the lust for self-aggrandizement he had inspired in fallen humanity. He knew that the quietness of Jesus’ self-sacrifice denigrated the noise of his own pomposity; and that the power of Jesus’ ministry of service to the least of these proved the farce of all his own notions of ambition to ascend, all the schemes to provoke self-adulation to which he was continually stimulating Adam’s descendants.

And the contrast of Jn 10:10 also shows how every Bible doctrine, including its teaching on death, finds its best and clearest explication in the person of Jesus Christ. It shows that no logical stretch can responsibly attach death to God’s first purpose for humanity or any of creation. Perhaps because grace much more abounds wherever sin abounds (Ro 5:20), or because of the divine genius to bring good even out of despicable evil, or because of the world conquering perspective of faith (1 Jn 5:4), some have become confused into thinking that death is a heavenly blessing. But Jesus explicitly announces in Jn 10:10, and Satan’s attacks on Him unmistakably demonstrate, that death is not a blessing, and does not come from God. Death is an intolerable evil. Rejoicing in the fact of the resurrection Paul pontificates: “The last enemy to be destroyed is death” (1 Co 15:26, NRSV). . We know death is an evil curse because that is what Scripture says (Gal 3:13; cf. Dt 21:22, 23). In the paradox of Acts 2:23, 24, we see that death is an evil curse because the devil used it to try to rid the universe of God’s Son **and, at the same time**, because God and His Son were willing to bear it so we could be saved from it: ‘You nailed

Him to the cross,’ denounces Peter, ‘and put Him to death by the hands of godless men. But God had a plan that foreknew your evil deeds. And God raised Him up again.’

Again, we know death to be an evil curse because Jesus took death away from us so we might have life instead—“life in all its fullness.” “He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His” (DA25). We know death is an evil curse because Jesus’ determination to destroy the one who holds the power of death led Him to make the ultimate sacrifice (Heb 2:14). And by means of His painful sacrifice, He has now freed all who wish to be freed, from tyrannizing fear of that same miserable end (v. 15). Looking to Jesus makes it clear that death is evil, death is of the devil, that it is meant for our blight; also, that God, in Christ Jesus, gives us present freedom from fear of death, and future freedom from death itself when that enemy has been destroyed.

In conclusion we may state the following major Christocentric, Christological implication of the biblical teaching on death and the soul: Both by creation in Eden and by the redemption wrought through His incarnation and passion, Jesus exposes the loving character of a life giving God in irreconcilable contrast with the devil’s chaotic and deadly malice (Gen 2:17; 1 Co 15:22; Rev 5:1-9, 10-14; 12:10, 11).

3.2 Freedom to Rest: Sabbath Serenity [a study on The Bible Sabbath]
Assigned reading: *Reign of God*, ch. 16; *Beliefs*, ch. 19

Q. Why study the Sabbath doctrine? So many Christians share belief in the Sabbath

A. Because we may sound alike but mean different things.

Gen 2:1-3: The English word **Sabbath**, as well as its cognates in so many other languages, derives from a term that means “cease,” “stop,” “be at standstill.”¹⁸ It is worth remarking that in some languages the 7th day [Sp. *sábado*, I. *sabato*] bears an explicit biblical grounding drawn from the Hebrew term, and is the only day of the week that does. The verbal form of this word appears in Gn 8:22 where God promises that the round of the seasons will not cease as long as earth itself continues. The nominal form of this word appears more than one hundred times in the Old Testament.¹⁹ Another significant term built on the basic root, *shabbat*, is the term *shabbaton*, which signifies “restfulness,”²⁰ and appears 11 times, 8 in Leviticus and 3 in Exodus, as follows:

Ex 16:23; 31:15; 35:32–7th day Sabbath
Lev 16:31; 23:32– Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement)
Lev 23:3–the 7th day Sabbath
Lev 23:24 –the Feast of Trumpets
Lev 23:39 [2x]–the Feast of Sukkot [also known as Booths, or Tabernacles]
Lev 25:4, 5–the Sabbatical year

Linked together into a single phrase, ‘shabbat shabbaton’ or ‘shabbaton shabbat’, the terms

appear in the following cases:

shabbat shabbaton

¹⁸Hebrew שָׁבַט--*shabbat*

¹⁹104 times according to *The New International Dictionary of OT Theology & Exegesis* (NIDOTTE) 4:1157. Abraham Even-Shoshan’s *New Concordance of the OT* finds it 111 times.

²⁰*Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar* (GKC) 86f, p. 240, points out that nouns ending *an* or *on* express adjectival ideas. Eg., *qadmon*--eastern, from *qedem*--east; *acharon*--posterior, from *achar*--behind.

Lev 16:31; 23:32--Yom Kippur
Lev 25:4, 5--the Sabbatical year
Ex 31:15; 35:2; Lev 23:3--the 7th day Sabbath

shabbaton shabbat
Ex 16:23--the 7th day Sabbath

It is apparent that while the 7th day of the week is the basic Sabbath (Ex 20:9), other sabbatical institutions such as the sabbatical year, and the year of jubilee (25:8-10) are built up from this basic understanding. In combination, *shabbat+shabbaton* represents an intensification of Sabbath significance. That being so, the frequency of the combination in connection with the 7th day Sabbath,²¹ underlines the insistence with which the Bible marks off a specific day, the seventh day of the week, as the day of 'restful ceasing'. These facts do not present the Sabbath as a matter of some individual's personal arrangement or one among multiple options, but rather as a unique requirement, a divine treasure which God wishes us to cherish. Indeed, Rice's text (p. 410) describes the Sabbath as the most vivid manifestation of the reign of God. Can this be shown to be so?

Answer: Yes. The Sabbath is

1. a monument to the boundlessness of our Creator's authority--there exists only one reason to keep holy the seventh day of the week: because the Creator of everything says so. Thus God's word transcends all other authority. He freely controls all creation [including the farmer's livestock--Ex 20:10], all other constituted authority, and all human reason and argument. In the existence of Sabbath sacredness He declares His arbitrary and absolute supremacy. We see from the outset how basic Sabbath observance is to our devotion to Jesus Christ as Lord of creation (Jn 1:1-3; Heb 1:1-3). "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,'" He asks, "and do not do what I say?" (Lk 6:46)
2. a proof of the equality of all humanity before God: Even before the commandment mentions that livestock must rest, it orders rest to son and daughter, male and female slave (Ex 20:10). Thus the Sabbath disrupts entrenched discriminations

²¹4 out of 7 passages.

and master/servant dichotomies. Much of Jesus' earthly activity related directly to this sense of Sabbath fairness (Mt 12:9-13)

3. a witness to the nature of God's reign—it shows **how** God ideally exercises Lordship-- through service to his creation--our rest on Sabbath shows we understand that God is Lord not by being served but by being the one who serves (Mt 20:25-28)
4. a symbol of the peace God's reign brings--we do not simply cease to beat up on each other; rather, we are all one, in harmony, totally reconciled to each other (meaning of *shalom*, as in the greeting “*Shabbat shalom*”)
5. a statement of God's agency in establishment of his reign on earth--Mk 2:28: We know God is working through the Sabbath to establish his reign among humanity because Jesus, who is in charge of the kingdom (Jn 5:19-27; 11:25, 26), specifies that the Sabbath, of which He is Creator and Lord, is for humanity's benefit. As we accept the benefit of Sabbath keeping we show how His kingdom is expanding, and thus help God establish His reign among us.
6. a reminder of the church's role in the establishment and advance of God's kingdom on earth. Lk 4:16 presents Jesus' own custom of regular Sabbath worship. Then, in the book of Acts, we see how men chosen by God to do his work (13:1-3), go out to disseminate the gospel by sustaining the same practice of consistent Sabbath worship and proclamation, whether in the synagogue, or in any other place deemed convenient for gathering (13:14, 15, 43, 44; 16:13; 17:1-3; 18:1-4, 11). Jesus even gave his culminative revelation to John on a Sabbath day: Rev 1:10; cf. Mk 2:28; and

AA581: It was on the Sabbath that the Lord of glory appeared to the exiled apostle. The Sabbath was as sacredly observed by John on Patmos as when he was preaching to the people in the towns and cities of Judea. He claimed as his own the precious promises that had been given regarding that day. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day," John writes, . . .

7. an experience of
 - i) sacredness over secularity--by its reality of holy time (Ex 20:8). Because the Sabbath is time, it cannot be manipulated like wood and stone. Some fear that history's calendar manipulations have affected the Sabbath, but this is quite impossible. The month of February is constantly being manipulated. But no one thinks that it affects the Sabbath or other weekdays. When the Julian calendar was changed to the Gregorian in 1582, Wednesday Oct 4 was followed by Thursday October 15. The week, including the Sabbath, was unaffected. In the Sabbath, God chose a symbol available to everyone. The world has its fill of statues, charms, icons, fetishes, shrines, crucifixes, etc. But nothing matches the Sabbath for total accessibility. For

the poor, it is absolutely “costless.” For the hurried and distracted it is “unmissable”; for the absentminded it is “unloseable.” Especially in a world lacking a sense of the sacred, everyone needs the experience of the Sabbath

- ii) humility over the human conceit of being in charge (Mt 11:28). On Sabbath, we could hardly do better than praise and adore the God who gives us freedom to be without having to worry about work, school, anything
- iii) assurance and faith in God, over the despair of having to do it all oneself. The privilege of trusting rest in God is the perfect antidote to the tyrannies of money shortage, tight schedules, piled up assignments, and other such features of overwhelming responsibility (Ex 20:9-11)
- iv) disinterested benevolence over the culture of self-gratification. Jesus’ ideas of Sabbath excitement directly contradict the weekend idea of ‘thank God it’s Friday’ so we can go out and get drunk or wasted or whatever, then take a day to recuperate. Jesus greets the Sabbath as a time for doing good to others. For Him, the Sabbath principle is the principle of service (Mt 12:1-12-13)
- v) spirituality over legalism. Legalism is not possible in real Sabbath keeping. The commandment simply does not allow for individualistic indulgence. Only in genuine relationships with God, our fellow humanity, dumb animals, can we really observe Ex 20:8-11. Isa 58 brings out this relational character of the Sabbath. While vv. 13, 14, speak eloquently of God’s promises to Sabbath keepers, we miss their point if we do not see these verses as the climax of a major treatise on conscientious social responsibility. In the Bible God links Sabbath to day to day care for the hungry, homeless, naked, and otherwise needy of society
- vi) health & healing over the blightedness of sin cursed earth. The Sabbath is Edenic (Gn 2:1-3); so it keeps us focused on a time when everything was right. Jesus never lost an opportunity to sharpen focus on this fact of Sabbath blessedness (Mt 12:0-13; Mk 3:1-5; Lk 4:16-21; Jn 9:1-14-41) We can believe in ideals because we believe in the Sabbath. As our next point shows, such belief is no mere fantasy, since the Bible Sabbath points us to
- vii) restoration over mortality and finitude--by its linkage with eternity (Isa 66:22, 23). Jesus’ Sabbath healings make this point emphatically
- viii) belonging over isolation & disorientation--by its statement of ownership (Ex 20:9--Sabbath of the LORD your God. We belong, and to heaven at that, not to ascending accidents by ape or amoeba. We belong to the one whose identity is marked by the Sabbath commandment--His name [YHWH], his relation to us [your God], the scope of His earthly authority [humanity, the dumb creation], His possession by creation [heaven, earth, sea, all their contents]. The 4th commandment is God’s seal [name, title, territory]. **When observing it becomes a national legal and political issue**, God describes those who observe it as having His seal in their foreheads, while those who reject it bear the mark of the

beast (Rev 7:1-3, 14:1-5 vs 13: 1-16, 17). That seal in our foreheads is one of many metaphors of total surrender to the claims of Jesus, the Lamb who shed His blood to buy us back from hell and wash us clean from sin and claim us as His sheep who will follow Him everywhere through eternity (Rev 7:13-17). “The metaphors do not fit,” someone may say. Well, they all occur in the same chapter (Rev 7)—being sealed in our foreheads, washed in the Lamb’s blood, living in His tent, following Him around Jesus is not confused. He knows we are His. He wants to announce it every way possible. And we are not confused either. We know who we belong to: The Sabbath is our most conspicuous chance to show how flushed we are with pride and overflowing with joy about belonging to Jesus

Question: What does the Bible mean when it says “God blessed the seventh day” (Gen 2:3)?

Answer: There are 256 occurrences in Hebrew, and 5 in Aramaic, of the verb meaning “bless.”²² Of these, 4 Aramaic, and 249 Hebrew references mean just that: “bless.” In the other cases, one of the Aramaic occurrences is actually a homonym meaning “kneel,” and 7 Hebrew references are actually euphemisms for “curse,” as for example when Satan tells God Job will curse Him to His face, or Job’s wife says “Curse God and die.”

As a preliminary statement, it must be stressed that nothing was more important to peoples in the Ancient Near East than securing the blessing of God in one’s life or nation. All religious or superstitious peoples (in other words, virtually the entire ancient world, along with most of the world to this day) have actively sought the blessing of a specific deity or spirit, believing that this blessing will make them fertile, or prosper them, protect them, deliver them, heal them, preserve them, empower them, exalt them, favor them, or, possibly, bring about all the above. The blessing is thought of as tangible, its effects perceivable and, at times, measurable. The more powerful the deity, the more important the blessing.²³ When President George W. Bush was going to run for the White House he received the laying on of hands. When

²²Even-Shoshan. NIDOTTE finds 327 occurrences in Hebrew.

²³NIDOTTE 1:758.

the US Women’s Olympic hockey team felt they were facing disaster in Australia in 2000, they all received a special bath. People are forever looking for good sources of blessing.

In the creation account we encounter blessing pronouncements according to the following sequence:

Focus of blessing	Time of blessing	Reference
first animate life created	fifth day of creation week	Gen 1:22
humanity	sixth day of creation week	Gen 1:28
the Sabbath	seventh day of creation week	Gen 2:3

The creation story/activity shows an upward progression from formless chaos on day 1, to humanity, entrusted with responsibility over the earth, on day 6. There also seems to be a parallel progression in the blessings God pronounces during creation week. The first of these is upon water creatures created on the fifth day, the second upon humanity as ruler of these forms and, indeed, over all creation; the climactic final blessing of three rests, unlike the previous two, upon a day rather than upon animate creation. It is highly doubtful that these three blessings rest upon three superior elements of creation.²⁴ All of God’s creation was perfect, and we should not impose upon it the categories of rebellious minds and fallen natures. So that such blessings as are pronounced are to be seen as something other than marking the superiority of the blessed, and the inferiority of the unblessed. More likely, the blessings lead toward the climax of creation week, crowned by the final one, the Sabbath blessing.

If we ask ourselves what the three blessings show, we might respond by noting that the three blessings mark off four categories of creation:

²⁴We would be forced to conclude that earth and trees, grass and flowers, sun and lions, lambs and birds are all inferior to whales and shrimp, sharks and sea lions.

- 1) the inanimate--recipient of no blessing
- 2) the animate--recipient of the first blessing
- 3) the human--recipient of the second blessing
- 4) the Sabbath--recipient of the third blessing

These four categories show how God's three blessing pronouncements heighten the wonder of the creation drama as we climb toward its glorious zenith in the creation of the Sabbath. Further, the Sabbath is not so named in Gen 2:1-3.²⁵ It is identified as the 7th day. As such it follows 6 days which have received no blessing. The specialness of the 7th day from the dawn of earth's history is beyond question for every believer in a six day fiat creation. And the biblical Sabbath doctrine stands independent of the existence of the nation of Israel, or the permanence or abolition of 10 commandment law at the cross. The Sabbath's origins and validity are quite unrelated to nationality, dispensation, or sin. What we think and say about any of these cannot reduce in any particular the validity of Sabbath rest. They can only increase it: E.g.

- Dt 5:12-15--The Israelites, as ex-slaves, were to find deeper meaning to the liberating function of rest as afforded by the Sabbath;
- Eze 20:20--the Sabbath would also serve as safeguard against the idolatry of previous generations [particularly the wilderness generation];
- Eze 20:12--The Sabbath would be symbolic of God's sanctifying work on behalf of his people
- Lk 4:16--The Sabbath would celebrate our commitment to follow the example of our Savior and Lord
- Lk 23:54-56--The Sabbath would declare our allegiance to Jesus even in time of deepest pain, in the most awkward of circumstances, the time of His death. Incidentally, these women's devotion to Jesus also helps clarify the NT attitude to the first day of the week. Sabbath sacredness led them to rest on the seventh day according to His law; Sunday commonplaceness allowed them to go to anoint Him on the first day of the week (Lk 24:1)
- Ex 31:13-17--The Sabbath would demonstrate our proper ordering of priorities even in relation to other activities Jesus Himself has required. God inserts a Sabbath keeping reminder here to make clear that building the sanctuary was not to be a reason for disregarding the Sabbath. In Jn 1:14 we find an allusion to the sanctuary building story of Ex 25-40. In Exodus God says, 'Make me a tent so I

²⁵Though the root שבת appears twice.

can live among you' (25:8). And Jn 1:14 shows what God meant when it says Jesus came and "tented" among us. That tent in the wilderness was Jesus OT house among His people. But He didn't want anybody to get distracted from obedience because of building a tent for Him. It will never be true that loyalty to Jesus will produce disobedience to His commandments, particularly the Sabbath commandment

Lev 23:32--The Sabbath would preserve our link with perfect beginnings, God's original way of ordering things. These words on the observance of the Day of Atonement show that thousands of years after creation week God has not changed His way of measuring the day. Lev 23:32 echoes Gen 1:5-31 where the day is consistently measured from evening through morning. The Day of Atonement, and every other day, sacred or secular, commonplace or commemorative, must take its pattern from the days of earth's first week. The way Jesus created us in the beginning is the way He always meant for us to be. Eden tells us how. And one day Eden will be restored. The Sabbath is our link to how Jesus made us, what He's doing for us, and what He'll restore us to one day soon. It's not just a theory. It's an experience

Major Christocentric, Christological implication:

Bible Sabbath keeping is for the Christian, and Bible Christianity means Sabbath rest. Jesus Christ so thoroughly identifies Himself with the 7th day Sabbath through creation, daily providence, redemption and eschatology, that it is impossible to keep the Sabbath of Scripture while rejecting Jesus, or to accept Him while spurning His Edenic and salvific benediction of Sabbath keeping.

3.3: Doctrine of the Sanctuary [Strange As a Bleeding God]—*Reign of God*, ch. 13; *Beliefs*, ch. 23 [doctrine of the sanctuary; see Ps 7 on the attitude of the redeemed to judgment]

3.3.1 Introduction to Sanctuary doctrine

3.3.1a Poem: Anderson, *Christianity & World Religions*, p. 109 (from *Jesus of the Scars & Other Poems*)

The other gods were strong; but Thou wast weak;
They rode, but Thou didst stumble to a throne;
But to our wounds only God's wounds can speak;
And not a god has wounds, but Thou alone.

3.3.1b Comment

This bleeding God of Christianity provokes to wonder the countless myriads of the book of *Revelation* (5:3-6-9-14). Equally, he is the heart and hero of the book of *Hebrews* (9:11, 12). Contrary to the view of the great reformer Martin Luther, the book of *Hebrews*, as well as the book of *Revelation*, are totally Christ-centered and Christ-exalting. This becomes particularly clear, in *Hebrews*, if we consider the series of contrasts the book features.

3.3.1c Definition of terms [alphabetical listing]

antitype: the full expression of a reality expressed in a symbol called a *type*

covenant: agreement, pact, testament, either between equals, or between superior and inferior, greater and lesser, suzerain and vassal. In the case of God and His people, whether literal Israel or the church, the covenant is between greater and lesser, Lord and servant.

Day of Atonement: 10th day of 7th month of Jewish religious year (Tishri); most solemn day of entire year—day of judgment; only day when High priest entered sanctuary's Most Holy Place, to make atonement for the sanctuary, for himself, his household, and all Israel.

feast: refers to any of many special days in ancient Israel's religious calendar, particularly the following 7-part sequence:

- i) Passover—14th day of 1st month (Nisan, Adar)
- ii) Unleavened Bread—from 15th of 1st month, for 7 days

- iii) Wavesheaf–16th [on the day after the Sabbath–Lev 23:11]
- iv) Firstfruits–fifty days after Wavesheaf; also called Harvest [Ex 23:16], Pentecost [Acts 2:1]
- v) Trumpets–1st day of 7th month–according to Jewish tradition, the start of “Terrible Days” or “Ten Penitential Days” of self examination, anticipation of, and preparation for Day of Atonement. Also start of civil year, called Rosh Hashshanah [rosh ha-sha-**nah**]
- vi) Day of Atonement [q.v.]
- vii) Tabernacles, Booths, Ingathering, Sukkot [soo-**kote**]--15th of 7th month, for 8 days [Lev 23:34-36]–climactic and exultant end of feast cycle, commemorating forty years of tent dwelling wilderness sojourn, and celebrating the end of harvest and the joy of acceptance after the Day of Atonement

holy place: first of two compartments of tabernacle/sanctuary built in the wilderness as per divine instructions (Ex 25:8); contained table of Bread of the Presence/Shewbread, 7 branched candlestick, altar of incense

investigative judgment: phase of legal process which involves enquiry into the circumstances of an issue; such investigation naturally precedes other stages such as verdict and its execution; Scripture identifies Oct 22, 1844 as the beginning of the investigative judgment in God’s salvation program

LXX: Septuagint–a Greek Bible version and the earliest translation of the Hebrew Bible [also called the Old Testament]; done during the third century B.C. and onwards. The LXX was the version in use during the time of Christ and the apostles

most holy place: second sanctuary compartment containing ark of the covenant holding God’s hand-written copy of the 10 commandments; the ark was covered by mercy seat and hovered over by two angels [cherubim] of beaten gold; the light of God’s glory was visible between the cherubim above the mercy seat (Ex 25:10-22; Num 7:89; 1 Sam 4:4; Dt 10:5; 1 Kgs 8:9)

priest minister for the people on God’s behalf, particularly in an intercessory role; God appointed Aaron and his descendants to be Israel’s priests (Ex 28:1)

sanctuary: sacred tent which God requested be built as His home among the tents of Israel, His people (Ex 25:8); was the center of a program of rituals which illustrated God’s way of reconciling us to Himself through Jesus’ atoning sacrifice and ministry

scapegoat--'Azazel': one of two goats involved in Day of Atonement ritual—one of these was the Lord's goat, and the other said to be for Azazel; this second one bore all Israel's iniquities away "to a solitary land" (Lev 16:22) after the priest had finished cleansing the sanctuary, making atonement for the entire encampment (Lev 16:20)

veil: usually used to refer to heavy curtain separating holy place from most holy place; also used less precisely, in *Hebrews*, to refer to the tabernacle's entry curtain (cf. Heb 9:3, where "second veil" implies a first)

3.3.2 Contrasts in Hebrews

The author of *Hebrews* observes a number of similarities between the Mosaic types and their heavenly antitypes. E.g., he notes that the heavenly sanctuary has its earthly reflexion in many areas: there are earthly and heavenly sanctuaries, priesthoods, and ministrations; both earthly and heavenly priests need to be appointed [5:4-6]; there are also both earthly and heavenly fathers [12:5-11; cf. 5:7-9]. Again, just as with Christ's death outside the city, the remains of sacrificial animals were disposed of outside the camp [13:11, 12].

Along with these similarities Paul also highlights a host of contrasts. And we may better understand the book's message about Christ's ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary, if we pause to consider some of the following contrasts. For as we do so we see that Paul's consistent purpose is to orient his audience toward the superiority of the heavenly reality whose glorious center and focus is Christ.

List of Contrasts:

- I. Angels vs Christ (1:1-14)
- II. Fallen humanity vs Christ (2:1-18)
- III. Moses vs Christ (3:1-6)
- IV. Record of rebellion vs appeal to obedience (3:7-4:13; 10:19-13:22)
- V. Human vs Heavenly High Priest (4:14-16; 5:1-10; 6:20; 8:1, 4-6; 9:24)
- VI. Temporal vs Eternal Priesthood (5:5, 6; 6:13-20; 7:17-28)
- VII. Abrahamic-Levitical vs Melchizedek Priesthood (5:1-10; 6:16-7:28)

- VIII. Immature vs Mature Discipleship (5:11-6:12)
- IX. Old vs New Covenant (7:11-22, 28; 8:6-13; 9:1-10:30; 12:18-29; 13:20)
- X. Earthly vs Heavenly Sanctuary (8:2-5; 9:1, 2, 24; 10:19-22)
- XI. Earthly vs Heavenly Ministration (5:1-3, 9; 7:26, 27; 8:1-9:15, 22-28; 10:1-31; 12:~~23~~~~24~~;13)
- XII. Earthly vs Heavenly Father (12:5-11)
- XIII. Mt Sinai vs Mt. Zion (12:18-29)

Nine of these thirteen contrasts exalt Christ's superiority, priesthood and ministry, while three others encourage believers to respond correctly to revealed truth in keeping with the privilege of the better and eternal covenant. Such appropriate response will permit our heavenly Father, subject of the thirteenth contrast, to accomplish His work of holiness in us. And this will, in fact, permit God to succeed in the purpose which led to the institution of the earthly sanctuary (Ex 25:8; 19:6; Lev 19:2; Deut 23:14).

3.3.4 Sanctuary References in *Hebrews*

The main term for "sanctuary" in *Hebrews* is *hagion* [*to hagion*—singular form with definite article; *ta hagia*—plural form]. Students of the book have sometimes disagreed on whether a given reference is to the sanctuary's holy place [first apartment], or to the most holy place [second apartment], or even to the entire structure without distinction as to which section of the building. However, there are some good clues as to correct interpretation. One consistent usage is the absence of the definite article. On the three occasions in the book when the term is written without the definite article, the author's reference is unmistakably specific:

- Heb 9:2 refers to the holy place
- Heb 9:3 refers to the most holy place
- Heb 9:24 refers to the "handmade" or earthly structure in its entirety

This specificity contrasts with the more frequent general reference to entire structure by use of the plural *hagia*. Thus Heb 9:8, 12 which speak of Christ's entry into the sanctuary after His death, are referring, not to a specific compartment of the structure, but to the heavenly entity in

general. The contrast is not between holy and most holy places, but between the ministry on earth, which Christ's sacrifice brought to an end, and the ministry in heaven, inaugurated because of that same sacrifice.

3.3.5 Implications for SDA Sanctuary Doctrine

The foregoing remarks help clarify SDA understandings of the doctrine of the sanctuary. Based on our study of the earthly sanctuary types and ceremonies, we believe that the Day of Atonement ritual (Lev 16), in context of Daniel's explanations (8:14; 9:24-27), points to Jesus beginning a specific phase of judgment in the second compartment of the heavenly sanctuary on Oct 22, 1844. According to what the angel Gabriel told Daniel, this was the time when this event, also called the cleansing of the sanctuary, would take place.

Against this understanding, some have argued that *Hebrews* teaches (9:8, 12) that Jesus' entry into heaven at His ascension is equivalent to the earthly high priest's entry into the sanctuary's most holy place. They therefore conclude that no special phase of heavenly sanctuary judgment began in heaven on Oct 22, 1844, and that any such interpretations of Scripture are mistaken. However, the author's inclination to speak of the sanctuary in general, rather than of some particular section or type of ritual, shows that in *Hebrews* he is dealing on a grand scale with the truth about Christ's ministry. His statements in 9:8, 12 are not distinguishing between different compartments of the earthly or heavenly sanctuary. These statements in fact follow a general pattern established by the LXX, of referring to the entire structure through use of the plural *hagia* [holies]. Thus Paul is simply saying that Jesus has now entered the holies, i.e., the heavenly sanctuary, as earthly priests once entered the earthly

sanctuary with blood. The teaching of *Hebrews* does not in fact contradict any detail of the lessons of *Leviticus* and their applications in *Daniel & Revelation*.

Here are some summary statements on Paul's work in *Hebrews*:

1. His references to the sanctuary are patterned on LXX usage.
2. LXX plural usage usually denotes the entire tabernacle
3. Heb 9:8, 12 [pl usage] most likely refer to the entire tabernacle—a general heavenly reality rather than a specific apartment of it.
4. In reference to the sanctuary [*hagion, hagia*], absence of the article signifies specificity
5. The purpose of the book of Hebrews is to teach through many contrasts and comparisons the absolute necessity and total availability of a sacrifice better than all the rituals of the earthly sanctuary system, because "it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (Heb 10:4): As Frank B. Holbrook states [*The Atoning Priesthood of Jesus Christ*; ATS publications; R&H, 1996, pp. 27, 28]:

No shedding of animal blood could ever atone for moral sin. *Only* the "better" sacrifice, the better blood of Jesus Christ, could purge human sin and guilt (Heb 9:23). Again, we must underscore the point: not even the blood of the Day of Atonement sacrifice--the apex of the rites--could atone for human sin. Only "the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, [could] purify [the] . . . conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (Heb 9:14). It is the "better" sacrifice/blood of Christ that is being *contrasted* with the insufficiency of animal blood to purge sin.

Hebrews shows again how Jesus Christ answered the sin problem in a way no one else, and no animal sacrifices could. Instead of multiple sacrifices, Jesus died *once for all time* to save all the sinners who would believe, and to atone for all the sins of the world. His sacrifice is the only effective sacrifice ever offered. "He has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. . . . so Christ, [has] . . . been offered once to bear the sins of many" (Heb 9:26-28). "But when Christ had offered for all time *a single sacrifice for sins*, he sat down at the right hand of God" (Heb 10:12).

Paul's allusions to the Old Testament are to help his readers see the connection between their religious practice and God's salvation program. He seeks to help them see that the sacrificial system *in itself*--even with its climactic rite of the Day of Atonement--is useless to atone for and to expiate human sin. [Emphasis original; texts from RSV]

The sanctuary was a system which taught "This is not the real system." And the book of Hebrews is but a book of comparisons and contrasts: Between "the symbols by which God presented the plan of salvation to His chosen people in OT times and the reality of Christ's ministry on behalf of sinners since the cross" [7SDABC, p. 390].

3.3.6 Final Judgment As an Aspect of Sanctuary Doctrine

3.3.6.1 The Day of Atonement was

- a) unique in occurrence--Lev 16:29 [10th day of 7th mth], as contrasted with morning & evening sacrifice (a daily/continual service--Num 28:3, 4)
- b) solemn in character and demand--Lev 16:29-31 [humble your souls]
- c) universal in relevance--vv. 29, 32, 33--native, alien, priest, people
- d) culminative in nature & impact--came at the climax of the religious year, followed only by Sukkot [Tabernacles/Ingathering]

3.3.6.2 The sanctuary and all its services were typical of something else. See

- a) Heb 8:1-5

- b) rabbinical references:

- i) *Midrash Rabbah. Numbers*, repr. ed. [London: Soncino Press, 1961], vol. 1, chap. 4 sec. 13, p. 110: "The [position of the terrestrial] Sanctuary corresponds with that of the heavenly Sanctuary and the [position of the] ark with that of the heavenly Throne" [brackets in original].

- ii) Leon Nemoy, ed., *The Midrash on Psalms*, trans William G. Braude [New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1959], Ps. 30, sec. 1, p. 386]: "There is no difference of opinion that the sanctuary below is the counterpart of the sanctuary above."

On these refs., see *Beliefs*, ch. 23, n. 3, p. 328.

- c) Ellen G. White quotations:

- 6T392, Par 2:** That God who walked with Enoch was our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He was the light of the world then just as He is now. . . . Noah and Enoch were Christians. *The gospel is given in precept in Leviticus.*

3.3.6.3 The day of Atonement is

- a) a day of judgment--Lev 16:29-31; 23:27-29 [humble your souls or be cut off]
- b) concerned with what has gone on all through the year--Lev 16:19--cleansing from impurities of Israel accumulated through the year (4:1-21 for sins of priest or whole congregation; 6:26 & 4:22-35 for ruler or one of the people; see 10:17, 18 re Aaron's exception after sons' death)

3.3.6.4 The antitypical day of Atonement

- a) is predicted in Dan 7:9, 10, 13, 14.
- b) began Oct 22, 1844
- c) will end soon--GC 490:

Solemn are the scenes connected with the closing work of the atonement. Momentous are the interests involved therein. The judgment is now passing in the sanctuary above. For many years this work has been in progress. Soon--none know how soon--it will pass to the cases of the living. In the awful presence of God our lives are to come up in review. At this time above all others it behooves every soul to heed the Savior's admonition: "Watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is." Mark 13:33. "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." Revelation 3:3.

3.3.6.5 God's judgment is

- a) an exciting thing for Bible saints--Ps 7:6, 8 [1st part]; 96:12, 13
- b) a fair thing for biblical authors--Ps 7:3-5, 8-11; 96:10; 97:2
- c) done by Jesus--Jn 5:22, 26, 27
- d) in favor of the saints--Dan 7:22; Mt 10:32, 33
- e) followed by a party--Dan 7:26, 27 [cf. Sukkot; Rev 20:15; 21:1-7/8]

This quotation on the final feast of the Jewish religious year variously known as Tabernacles, Booths, Ingathering, or Sukkot [soo-kote], shows how God's redemption program will end with a party, just as the feast of Sukkot climaxed the annual cycle of Jewish religious engagements:

PP 541 *The Feast of Tabernacles* was not only commemorative but typical. It not only pointed back to the wilderness sojourn, but, as the feast of harvest, it celebrated the ingathering of the fruits of the earth, and ***pointed forward to the great day of final ingathering, when the Lord of the harvest shall send forth His reapers to gather the tares together in bundles for the fire, and to gather the wheat into His garner.*** At that time the wicked will all be destroyed. They will become "as though they had not been." Obadiah 16. And every voice in the whole universe will unite in joyful praise to God. Says the revelator, "Every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and

power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever." Revelation 5:13.

It is clear that as Sukkot was the last feast of the Jewish religious year its gathering of joy is symbolic of what will happen at the climax of God's salvation program for humanity. Another quotation from Ellen White's book *Great Controversy* eloquently brings out the beauty of that longed for end:

GC 678 The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love.

3.4: Bride & More: Metaphors of the Church—*Reign of God*, ch. 9; *Beliefs*, chs. 11, 12 [doctrine of the church]

Question: Everybody has a church already. What's special about church?

Answer: We may live together. But it doesn't mean we're married. We may sound alike but mean different things.

Summary of doctrinal significance:

Yes we are his body, but we who?

Read *Beliefs*, chs. 11, 12, pp. 134-169

Rice, *Reign of God*, ch. 9, pp. 205-219 [col 1], "The Church: The Reign of God As Christian Community"

Also recommended:

Beach, pp. 138-148, "The Holy Catholic Church"

Beach, pp. 149-155, "The Communion of Saints"

3.4.1 The Church a NT Phenomenon

Jesus' statement in Mt 16:18 about building His church seems to look to the future—"I will build my church" (cf. 1 Co 3:11). This does not of course mean that nothing existed at that point. But it does suggest that the story of the church lay in the future, a view which finds support in this quotation from DA 291: Speaking of the ordination of the 12 apostles reported in Mk 3:13-19 and Lk 6:12-16, Ellen White comments that "The first step was now to be taken in the organization of the church that after Christ's departure was to be His representative on earth." As His representative on earth it would represent Him when He was no longer Himself present on earth.

So the church would be Christ's representative. But what does "church" mean?

**Gk term for church is *ekklesia*

1. Etymologically, it may be explained in terms of its elements

A) *ek* = out

B) *klesis* = calling, invitation, e.g., "the calling of G", Ro 11:29; "the hope of his calling", Eph 1:18

2. How is the term applied?
 - A) to a crowd in an Ephesian theater--Acts 19:32, 41 [”assembly”]
 - B) to an official gathering--Acts 19:29 [”the lawful assembly”]
 - C) to a church meeting--1 Co 11:18
 - D) to any group of Christian worshippers--1 Co 4:17; Ro 16:1
 - E) to the body of Christ, recipient of his spiritual gifts--1 Co 12:28; Col 1:18

3. What do we make out to be the significance of these 5 applications?

That the concept of church need not be considered inherently virtuous. Some examples of ekklesia are quite scandalous, cantankerous, disorderly. Hence the need for the modifier “Christ’s” along with the substantive “church”. Christ’s church, then, is those whom God summons forth, and who accept the invitation to come out.

4. Come out from where?
 - A) Babylon--Rev 18:1-4 [cf. 14:8-12]
 - B) Unbelievers’ company--2 Co 6:14-18

NB: Those who come out make up God’s people [”my church”, Mt 16:18; “my people”, Rev 18:4; “my children”, 2 Co 6:18]. **BUT** “people of God” is not a NT concept: In fact, 2 Co 6:16-18 is largely OT--Ex 19:5; Lev 26:12; Jer 32:38; Eze 20:34, 41; 37:27

3.4.2 God’s OT Church

[cf. Acts 7:38: the *ekklesia* in the wilderness]

- A) Abraham’s time:
 - i) Eliezer of Damascus--Gen 15:1, 2
 - ii) Hagar the Egyptian--16:1
- B) At the time of the Exodus:
 - i) Israelites--Ex 12:40, 41
 - ii) All kinds of people--Ex 12:37-41
- C) In the desert
 - i) Egyptians--Num 11:4 (Jamieson, Fausset, Brown)
 - ii) Unspecified aliens--Dt 29:10, 11
- D) At the conquest--Gibeonites--Jos 9
- E) During the monarchy:
 - i) Ammonite--2 Sam 23:8a, 37
 - ii) Hittite--2 Sam 23:8a, 39
 - iii) Amorite, Perizzite, etc.,--2 Chron 8:7-9
- F) After the exile: Neh 13:3

NB: *God’s OT people were at no time exclusively definable, yet were always distinctive--seed of Abraham; children of Israel*

3.4.3 God's NT Church

- A) Nucleus of apostles--Mt 10:1-4; Mk 3:14-19; Lk 6:12-16; Eph 2:20
- B) Pentecost--Acts 2:1-6-11 (esp. v. 10--proselytes = Gentile converts to Judaism)
- C) Cornelius--Acts 10-11:18
- D) Paul's ministry--Acts 13:42-46-47, 48. In this passage Paul is quoting Isa 49:6. The reference to "the nations" in the OT is the same as "the Gentiles" in the NT)²⁶
- E) Endowments of G's church--1 Co 12:28
- F) Reason for gifts--Eph 4:11-16
- G) God's ideal church--Eph 5:25-27; Rev 12:17; 14:12; 19:6-8

3.4.4 A Table of Metaphors

In the following table we list some biblical metaphors of God's church commenting on the significance of each one for a fuller understanding of this mysterious extension of the life and person of Christ

METAPHOR	REFERENCE	SIGNIFICANCE
a) body	1 Co 12	diversity, unity, integration
b) temple	1 Co 3:9-16; 1 Pe 2:5	monumental structure, physical entity
c) bride	Eph 5	purity, commitment, love
d) city	Gal 4:19-31	center of culture, government, power, glory
e) family	Eph 1:5; Ro 8:14	belonging, rights of heirship, mutuality, support; also individual responsibility, vulnerability
f) pillar, foundation	1 Tim 3:15	authority, knowledge
g) army	2 Tim 2:3, 4; Eph 6:10-17	division of labor in service of a common purpose
h) vine	Isa 5: Mt 21:33; Jn 15	dependence

²⁶As the apostle to the Gentiles, Paul is often singled out as something of the inventor of gospel inclusiveness. But his arguments in Gal 3:28, 29; Ro 2:28, 29; 9:6-9; Gal 3:16, are not new or revolutionary. They are based on prior revelation--Ro 9:25, 26 quotes Ho 1:8-10; and Ro 9:27-29 quotes Isa 10:20-22; 1:9.

A summary statement of the major Christocentric, Christological implication of the doctrine of the church might read as follows:

The doctrine of the church is as joined to our salvation as the body is connected to its head. For Christ, who is the Savior of us all, calls Himself our Head, and the church, His body. It is true that His visible body on earth must be distinguished from the total number of faithful followers of truth. This is because only God reads human hearts, and thus only He knows who is sincere or otherwise. That being said, we may distinguish Christ's body on earth through its cooperation with the head, i.e., through its institutional adherence to the eternal principles of divine government laid out for earth in Eden. This cooperating group is the company that will celebrate with Him at the marriage supper when Christ, the head and the groom, is joined to his body, and his bride, the church.

3.5 Taking Total Care: Stewardship From Eden to Eden

3.5.1 Question: Who is a steward? **Answer:** 1 Co 4:1, 2: In this passage, the term “steward” translates the Greek word *oikonomos*. That word, in turn, is formed by combining two smaller ones>>*oikos*, meaning “house,” and *nemo*, meaning “arrange.”

3.5.2 Question: What does he do? The words just discussed indicate that the steward is one who runs a house or business.

3.5.2a Lk 12:42: A faithful, sensible steward runs his master’s house faithfully, sensibly

3.5.2b Lk 16:1-7: An unfaithful steward is a squanderer, schemer

3.5.2c Lk 16:8-13: Jesus wants us to be singleminded schemers **about his business**

3.5.3 Question: In context of this Jesus Business, what are we in charge of?

3.5.3a 1 Co 6:19, 20: our body

3.5.3b Eph 4:7-11: spiritual gifts

3.5.3c 1 Co 4:7: everything

Square brackets in the following quotation are brief comments which may sharpen our awareness of what is meant by “all that we have”:

COL 328: The special gifts of the Spirit are not the only talents represented in the parable [of Mt 25:14-30]. It includes all gifts and endowments, whether original or acquired [wit, sex appeal, ball handling, bulging biceps, dramatic skills], natural or spiritual. All are to be employed in X’s service. In becoming His disciples, we surrender ourselves to Him with all that we are and have. These gifts He returns to us purified and ennobled, to be used for His glory in blessing our fellow men.”

3.5.4 Question: How does the steward live out her stewardship?

A) 1 Co 10:31--Whatever you do, do for G’s glory

B) 1 Co 9:27--Paul kept his body under strict discipline. **BUT**

C) Jn 11: 18, 19--Jesus lived so freely that He was called a party animal

SO WHAT?

D) Mt 11:19, last part--Wisdom is vindicated by its actions

E) 1 Co 6:12; 10:23-29--Lawfulness must be balanced against appropriateness

F) 1 Co 10:33; 9:19-22--Our goal is the salvation of as many as possible

On tithing, see *Reign of God*, pp. 300-301; *Beliefs*, ch. 20

3.6 A Gift of Guidance: Seventh-day Adventism & The Spirit of Prophecy

3.6.1 Question: Doesn't everyone who believes in biblical inspiration belief in the spirit of prophecy?

Answer: Yes. But Ellen White?

Herbert E. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord*, pp. 2-51 [chs. 1-4], 68-93 [chs. 7, 8], 108-123 [ch.11], 134-179 [chs. 13-16]

Ellen G. White, *3SM*, sec. 2: "Principles of Inspiration"[chs. 4-11], pp. 27-86

3.6.2 The Prophetic Table

name	episode	Scriptural authority
Jacob	birthright: Gn 25:28-34; ch. 27 genetic engineering: Gn 30:37-43	48:13ff 49:1ff
Moses	murder: Ex 2:11, 12 anger, disobedience: Num 20:7-12	Dt 34:10-12 Dt 18:15-18 Acts 3:18-26; 7:37
Miriam	racism, jealousy: Num 12:1-15	Ex 15:20, 21; Mi 6:4
Nathan	blunder: 2 Sam 7:1-4	2 Sam 7:11-13
David	adultery, murder: 2 Sam 11 polygamy: 2 Sam 12:7, 8; 3:2-5; 5:13 spite: 2 Sam 6:14-16, 20-23 willful disobedience: 2 Sam 24:1-4, 15	23:1-2
John, the Baptist	despair: Lk 7:11-17, 18-20	Lk 7:24-28
Ezekiel	failed prediction? Eze 26:1- <u>7</u> -14; 29:17- <u>18</u> -20	nb: Mainland Tyre completely destroyed by 573 [after 13 yr seige]. Island Tyre accepted Babylon's overlordship. God simply does not worry as much as I think He should

3.6.3 What is the purpose of the Spirit of Prophecy?

The following answer is drawn from the book *Selected Messages*, vol. 3 [3SM]

- A) "to lead men and women to the greater light." [p. 30, par. 4]
- B) "to leave men and women without excuse" [p. 31]
- C) "to call . . . attention . . . to . . . principles" [p. 31]

- D) “not as a new revelation, but
 - a) that He may set before us the plain lessons of His Word
 - b) that errors may be corrected
 - c) that the right way may be pointed out
 - d) that every soul may be without excuse.” [p. 31]
- E) “to correct specious errors and to specify what is truth.” [p. 32, par 2]
- F) as a complement to prayer and Bible study [p. 38, par 2]

Apparently, the purpose of the spirit of prophecy is not to exalt or enhance the reputation of any given individual. As Herbert Douglass says, “The authority of revelation is in the message, not in the messenger.” (*Messenger of the Lord*, p. 26. col. 1). “. . . the content transcends the container. The prophetic *message* is self-authenticating; the *messenger* is appreciated but not canonized.” (p. 31, col. 2; author’s emphasis)

3.6.3 4 groups of biblical prophets

- A) those who wrote Bible books—Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc
- B) those who wrote extra-biblical books—Nathan & Gad (1 Chr 29:29), Shemaiah (2 Chr 12:15), etc.
- C) those of whom little or no writing is reported, but whose ministry is well represented in biblical books—Elijah [possible letter to Jehoram—2 Chr 21:12-15], Elisha, etc.
- D) those whose message is not preserved—Saul’s companions (1 Sam 10:1-5, **10, 11**), Obadiah’s protégés (1 Kgs 18:4, 13), Phillip’s daughters (Acts 21:9)

3.6.4 Douglass on revelation & inspiration

Revelation in the revelation/inspiration process emphasizes the divine act that discloses information. Seventh-day Adventists believe that this divinely revealed message, or content, is infallible and authoritative. . . .

Inspiration refers to the process by which God fits a person to be His messenger. This kind of inspiration is different from the colloquial use of the word when we describe some insightful poet or gifted singer as being “inspired” [p. 16, col. 2]. See also Raoul Dederen, “The Revelation-Inspiration Phenomenon According to the Bible Writers,” Frank Holbrook & Leo Van Dolson, *Issues in Revelation & Inspiration*, ATS Occasional Papers, vol 1, Berrien Springs, MI: ATS Publications, 1992; pp 9-29]

3.6.5 6 Attitudes to EGW Through the Years [identified by Arthur Patrick, in his paper “Re-visioning the Role of Ellen white for SDA Beyond 2000,” presented at the national meeting of the Adventist Society for Religious Studies, San Francisco, Nov. 1997)

- 1. Reversionist**—establishing the past as normative for the present—where “this is how it once used to be” meant “this is how it ought to be now”

2. **Rejectionist**—distancing from the past as unreliable or irrelevant—where “this is how it once was” meant “that will no longer work”
3. **Transformationist**—reassessing Adventism in general, and EGW in particular—where nothing was sure; everything needed to be renegotiated, particularly our understanding of EGW
4. **Encyclopedia of faith and practice**--1915-1970 [because of conflicts between Fundamentalism & Modernism]—where everything was proved or disproved by recourse to her writings
5. **“Great Bereavement”**—1970-1982—because of much new information without proper interpretation—where some concluded that their faith in her had been misplaced
6. **Diversity**--1982 to present—where differing attitudes prevail from total faith in her ministry to deep skepticism of any notion of divine authority for her and her work

Current Challenge: “One of the great challenges which the church faces at the dawn of the 21st century is to understand the attitude of the present generation of young Adventists, including those who have grown up estranged from the church’s mother.” [p. 31].

3.6.6 8 areas of great profit—Patrick also identifies 8 constructive emphases in EGW’s work:

1 The link between cosmology and eschatology	5 The primacy of Scripture
2 The connection between health and religion	6 The dynamic nature of Adventism
3 The “Great Controversy” theme	7 The winsomeness of God
4 The interpretation of history	7 The ultimacy of Jesus Christ

3.6.7 In Ellen White’s Own Words: The “How” of the Spirit of Prophecy

1. Through angelic guidance & explanation: angels’ words always put in quotation marks [3SM 49, last line]
2. Through depiction of scenes [3SM 41, 42—these are people you are visiting . . . ; cf 1SM27, “shown faces I had never seen”]
3. Through being made present but unnoticed [3SM 43, last par., p. 47, par 2: Cf Eze 8:3, 9-11]
4. Through symbols [p. 42: you were represented as a general on a horse . . .]
5. Like a flash of lightning [sometimes reminding of previous revelation, whether while actually making presentations, or when ready to record]
6. In contrasting depictions of God’s ideal and man’s substitute [p. 45, “Contrasting Scenes”]
7. In improved understanding over time [p. 46: “Will my brethren say that Sister White has been so dull a scholar that her judgment in this direction is no better than before she entered Christ’s school, to be trained and disciplined for a special work? Am I no more

intelligent in regard to the duties and perils of God's people than are those before whom these things have never been presented?" 5T 686]

8. In distinction from common material: houses & lands, trades & business, autobiography without assistance of journals, letters to children, inviting Bro C. to come to Australia [cf 1SM 39; re memory, 1 Co 1:13-16; re humanity, James 5:17]
9. Unmanipulated by human influence [3SM 63, didn't read certain letters, articles]
10. Concerning infallibility—1SM 22, 23, 37
11. Concerning details of minor consequence—p. 38
12. Concerning dependence upon sources—pp. 26, 27, "Integrity of the Testimonies"

Good counsel: "Those who have helped souls to feel at liberty to specify what is of God in the Testimonies and what are the uninspired words of Sister White, will find that they were helping the devil in his work of deception." [3SM. 70, par 4].

These Scriptures are also all instructive: Jn 5:39; Ex 3:1-5; 2 Tim 3:15; 1 Tim 4:1; 11 Jn 4:1; Is 8:20

3.7 How It All Will End: The Second Advent and Beyond

See *Beliefs*, pp. 332-347; *Reign of God*, p. 331 [a study of the 2nd coming in close relation to the sanctuary doctrine]; pp. 342-345 [in relation to an outline of final events]

Question **Why does He have to come back?**

Answers:

Why did He come the first time? Why did He die? And anyhow, didn't He say He'd come back? Besides, what are we called Adventists for? Needless to say, the Adventist community has no reason for its name, existence, or orientation toward the future, if Jesus is not coming back. Thankfully, there is a wondrous overabundance of compelling evidences and convincing arguments for His sure and soon return:

3.7.1 He keeps His promises and He promised to return

His own words in Jn 14:1-3 are underlined by the words of His accompanying host when He was transported to glory out of the company of the watching disciples (Acts 1:11). Even before He came the first time He had been advising His followers of this dramatic end of history. His death and resurrection alone did not accomplish what Enoch and the psalmist predict and expect (see Jude 14, 15; Ps 50:3-6). His message to us through Daniel would fail if He did not come back. For we expect Him, in the midst of secular jostlings for power, to set up His unmoveable kingdom (Dan 2:44, 45). We expect Him back because He promised; and He always keeps His word.

3.7.2 The resurrection shows He will

Paul has baldly stated that "If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied" (1 Co 15:19). But there is an event which assures us of hope beyond this life and the grave that marks its end. That event is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because of His

resurrection we are no longer prisoners of human logic or natural and manmade disaster. Because of the miracle of Jesus' resurrection, we can see beyond these boundaries and horrors to a time when death and its author will be both destroyed (Heb 2:14; 1 Co 15:26); to a time when Jesus will swallow up death in victory, when, in one magnificent instant, He will liberate us forever from this corruptible flesh and blood, and exchange our mortality for endless living. His own resurrection to life in an immortal body is our guarantee (Isa 25:8; 1 Co 15:51-54; Phil 3:20, 21). The resurrection shows that He will come again.

3.7.3 This world needs Him to return

“The whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth” (Ro 8:22). Creation knows there must be something better. Everything in creation used to be very good (Gen 1:31). And creation knows it's going to be so again. We were not created to kill each other or be destroyed by angry and uncontrolled unleashings of earth's power; we were not born to ruin creation, or watch humans and animals starve to death despite our best efforts. We are not made for war. There is better. And Jesus has got that better. And He means to give it to us. “Look up” He says, beyond the wars and threats of war, beyond local and international violence and degraded private and public morals, beyond the endemic fear, the economic exploitation, political manipulation, and criminal and religious deceptions; “straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near” (Lk 21:28). He is coming back to remake this world. He is coming to make new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells (2 Pe 3:13). He will do such a masterful job of filling our minds with the wonderful new world, that the other one will never come back to our minds (Isa 65:17). He is coming back because this world needs Him to.

3.7.4 He must come for His children

When His people struggled in Egypt He came down to Moses and said “I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt So I have come down to deliver them” (Ex 3:7, 8). He has not forgot His people now anymore than He forgot His children in Egypt. He is coming back for His children. His assurance is gentle and unquestioned: “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom” (Lk 12:32). We soon shall sit with Him in His throne just as He sits with His Father on His throne (Rev 3:21).

3.7.5 The signs of His return are unmistakable

The accurate fulfilment of signs in the elements—sun, moon, stars (Lk 21:25; Mt 24:29; Mk 13:24, 25; see *Beliefs*, p. 339ff) has given us clear, long warning. Nor do we need any more supporting testimony than earth’s natural disasters, the advance of immorality, and the now palpable pervasiveness of fear. Nevertheless, the developments in today’s religious world are among the most astonishing proofs that God’s Word is sure, and Jesus’ coming is near. As I write the Episcopal church is learning to relate to the presence in its ranks of an openly homosexual bishop. And the Roman Catholic church is both admired internationally for its moral authority, and assailed by multitudinous lawsuits brought against its leadership in the USA on grounds of sexual abuse. If we will not now sound God’s summons with all the urgency of our souls to come out of fallen Babylon (Rev 14:6-12; 18:1-4), then we shall be responsible for those who perish in its collapse because we could have helped them and did not. God forbid that this should be our curse.

3.7.6 The scoffers need to be enlightened

Scoffers' most powerful argument against the doctrine of the second coming is, at root, a very simple and basic one: the fact that despite generations of expectations and proclamations, this predicted coming has not taken place (2 Pe 3:4). Significantly, though, this scoffing reasoning was predicted when the coming was. So that the scoffing has quite the contrary significance to that which its speakers intend. The intent of their mockery is to demonstrate the unreliability of the prediction. But given that their scoffing is part of the prediction, their voices only serve to confirm the certainty of that which they doubt. Sadly, too, the light will dawn for many scoffers when it is too late to do anything but run from its glare. Then intelligent human beings will beg for some natural disaster to befall them and thus save them from facing Jesus at His coming (Rev 6:15-17). But dumb rocks do not hear scoffers' voices. They do stand under Jesus' control. So nothing the scoffers then say will protect them from having to face the wrath of the Lamb whom they long ridiculed and abused in the person of His earthly followers.

3.7.7 His coming brings the sanctuary doctrine to its natural climax

Right now, in the heavenly sanctuary (see unit 3.3), God is carrying forward His preparations for the final party (see 3.3.6.5) which will climax His salvation program on earth. He is making robes of righteousness available for those who wish to be dressed in grace and thus be fit to join the celebrations. The message of *Hebrews* is that Christ's sacrifice for our sins will surely be followed by His appearance, a second time, not now to take care of sin, but to receive to Himself those who eagerly wait for Him (9:28). Thus, the second coming of Christ is a natural climax of the sanctuary doctrine, the end of God's long running project to rid the universe of sinners, sin, and Satan. The day that is coming will burn then up root and branch (Mal 4:1. 2). First our Lord will descend from heaven to wake the righteous dead and translate them to glory

along with the faithful living (1 The 4:13-18). His appearance will destroy wicked humanity (2 Thes 2:8; Rev 19:19-21), leaving Satan to reflect for a while on the chaos his rebellion has caused to God's creation (Rev 20:1-3, 7). During that period of one thousand years (the millenium), the righteous in heaven will live and reign with Christ, and participate in a review of the record of God's judgments (Rev 20:4-6; 1 Co 6:3).

The most panoramic scenes in the history of the universe will come at the end of the millenium. Every human being who ever existed, from Adam to the last born, will be present to witness as God transfers His capital city from its present position to its new location on planet Earth. The wicked will be awakened to see the final realization of that which they once doubted; Satan and his hosts will be present to observe the restoration of what their rebellion once ruined; God's faithful angels and redeemed humanity will be there to acknowledge the absolute reliability of the records already reviewed in heaven's books. For they will see that no matter how many chances they are given, Satan and his followers will never choose peaceful cooperation with divine government. Instead, controlled by pride, and compelled as ever by greed, they will choose to attack God, His people, and His holy city, as they see it descend (Rev 21:7-15). That attack will be their last act of rebellion. The lake of fire which consumes them will also purify the entire earth. Then God's sinless metropolis will come to rest on earth in a brand new venue created when Jesus' feet touch the Mount of Olives and it splits in two to form a vast new plain from where, in His city, the Lor will be king over all the earth; in that day the Lord will be the only one, and His name the only one" (Zech 14:3, 4, 8, 9).

Major Christocentric, Christological implication:

Christ's glorious return to be reunited with His friends on earth confirms and completes everything He has already done as Master of creation and Savior of repentant sinners. By it He

ensures that sin will not cheat us of what Adam and Eve first enjoyed. Because He, and He alone, is Lord and Savior of all creation, He can, and only He, restore to perfection what He Himself first perfected in the beginning. And perfect restoration absolutely includes His personal, physical coming back to be with us. Just as original perfection meant sharing regular and intimate companionship with Him, so will restoration be complete when that union is again established with no wedge of separation between us, and we can walk together as we once did in the beauty of Eden. No angel messenger or other proxy, no arrangement of faith can accomplish this. Only the person of Jesus, in a restored garden idyll can realize it. Jesus Himself must do it. And He will.

Realistically, our celebration of reunion with our God will naturally involve the elimination of the last traces of creaturely rebellion against the rule of a God of long forbearing love. Then, once again as in the beginning, “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Hab 2:14).
