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ANCHOR SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

“Revelation’s Seven Seals: Studies in Revelation 4-8”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #1 – THE BATTLE IN THE GARDEN

Jesus Creator and Responsible for our Existence

John 1:1-3:

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ **All things were made through Him,** and without Him nothing was made that was made.”*

The Original King and Territory

Psalm 8:3-5: God **crowned Adam king** and representative of planet earth:

*“When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, ⁴ What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? ⁵ For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have **crowned him** with glory and honor. ⁶ You have made him to have **dominion** over the works of Your hands; you have put all things **under his feet**, ⁷ all sheep and oxen —Even the beasts of the field, ⁸ the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea that pass through the paths of the seas.”*

The law demands sinless perfection, if we fail, it sentences us to death

Luke 4:5-7: Satan **usurped** Adam's throne and territory:

*"Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the **kingdoms [territory]** of the world in a moment of time. ⁶ And the devil said to Him, "All this **authority [position]** I will give You, and their glory; for this **has been delivered to me**, and I give it to whomever I wish. ⁷ Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours."*

The Role of the Next of Kin

Leviticus 25:25: Only a next-of-kin can redeem the lost **possession**:

*'If one of your brethren becomes poor, and has sold some of **his possession**, and if his **redeeming relative** comes to **redeem** it, then he may **redeem** what his **brother** sold. . .*

Leviticus 25:47-49: Only a next-of-kin can redeem a person who has sold himself into slavery:

*'Now, if a sojourner or stranger close to you becomes rich, and one of your brethren who dwells by him becomes poor, and **sells himself** to the stranger or sojourner close to you, or to a member of the stranger's family, ⁴⁸ after he is sold he may be **redeemed again**. One of his **brothers** may redeem him; ⁴⁹ or his uncle or his uncle's son may **redeem** him; or anyone who is **near of kin** to him in his family may **redeem him**; or if he is able he may redeem himself."*

No One within the Human Race Could Redeem

Romans 3:10, 23: All humans sold themselves into slavery and sold their possession. A slave is in bondage and owns nothing:

"There is none righteous, no, not one . . . all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

Jesus had to become our Next-of-kin

John 1:14: Jesus bade farewell to the heavenly beings but promised: "In 33 years I will be back with victory in hand:

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Hebrews 2:14-16

"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

Revelation 22:16: It is not possible to be both your son's father and your son's son except in the case of Jesus:

Jesus is the Root and Offspring of David:

"I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star."

Jesus is the **Father** and **Son** of **Abraham** as well:

Matthew 1:1:

“The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.”

John 8:58: *“Before Abraham was, I AM.”*

The Two-Fold Mission of Jesus

The **sanctuary** begins **in the camp** where sinners live. Jesus had to live a perfect sinless life in ‘our camp’ to weave a robe of righteousness. After living a sinless life, He had to die to **pay the penalty** for sin. Only He **created all** could offer to take the place of all. Jesus is **responsible** for our existence but **not for our sin**:

Exodus 12:5, 6: The Passover lamb illustrates the **two-fold mission** of Jesus:

*“Your lamb shall be [1] **without blemish**, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. ⁶ Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel [2] **shall kill it** at twilight.”*

He felt **responsible** because He made us

I Peter 1:18-20: Jesus is the **unblemished Lamb** who **shed His blood**:

*“... knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹ but with the **precious blood** of Christ, as of a lamb **without blemish and without spot**. ²⁰ He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.”*

The Demons knew who He was and why He came

Mark 1:23, 24: The demons knew that their destruction was certain if they did not overcome Him:

"Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit and he cried out, ²⁴ saying, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!"

Satan's Mission and Four Methods

In order to win, Satan knew that he must **prevent Jesus** from living a **perfect life** or from **offering His life** as a sacrifice for sin. Jesus had to voluntarily offer **His life** as a ransom for sin (John 10:17, 18). Satan used **four methods** to accomplish his purpose and he was after Him **24/7/365**

Method #1: Satan attempted to **kill him** before He could voluntarily offer His life:

*"Again and again He **[Jesus]** would have been killed had it not been for the **heavenly angels** who attended Him and guarded His life **until the time** when the case of the Jews as a nation should be decided." RH, October 12, 1897*

Revelation 12:3, 4: Satan attempted to kill Jesus when He was **born:**

*"And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. ⁴ His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, **to devour her Child** as soon as He was born."*

Matthew 8:24: Satan attempted to drown Jesus when He was asleep in a boat. This was no ordinary storm; it was the worst that the disciples had ever seen (The Desire of Ages, p. 334):

“And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep.”

Luke 4:28-30: A mob attempted to throw Jesus off a cliff while preaching in the synagogue in Nazareth:

“So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath,²⁹ and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff.³⁰ Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way.”

John 8:58-59: Several times the Jews attempted to stone Him but He disappeared from their midst:

“Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.”⁵⁹ Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.”

“Again and again he would have been killed had it not been for the heavenly angels who attended him and guarded his life until the time when the case of the Jews as a nation should be decided. This human life must be kept by the power of God until his day of work was ended.” The Review and Herald, October 12, 1897

Method #2: Satan did his utmost to infect Jesus with the sin virus:

Matthew 4:3, 6, 9:

Three times Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness and three times Jesus answered him: “it is written.”

Hebrews 4:15:

*“For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was **in all points tempted as we are**, yet **without sin**.”*

Hebrews 7:26:

*“For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, **separate from sinners**, and has become higher than the heavens.”*

John 8:46:

Jesus challenged his hearers: “Which of you **convicts Me of sin?**”

I John 3:5:

*“And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and **in Him there is no sin**.”*

I Peter 2:21, 22:

*“For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: ²² “Who **committed no sin**, nor was deceit found in His mouth.”*

Method #3: Satan constantly offered Jesus an **easier way** to recover the kingdom than by going to the cross:

Matthew 4:8, 9: Satan offered Jesus the kingdoms of this world without having to go to Gethsemane and the cross:

*"Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the **kingdoms of the world** and their glory. ⁹ And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me."*

John 6:15: Jesus called Judas a 'devil'. Judas influenced the multitude to clamor for Jesus to become a temporal king:

*"Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to **make Him king**, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone."*

Matthew 16:22, 23: Satan used Peter to attempt to distract Jesus from the cross:

*"Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" ²³ However, He turned and said to Peter, "**Get behind Me, Satan!** You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."*

Matthew 17:4: Peter did not want Jesus to travel to Jerusalem so he suggested that they stay on the Mount of Transfiguration:

*"Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us **to be here**; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."*

John 12:20-24 with 12:31-33: Satan did his best to distract Jesus from the cross:

*"Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast. ²¹ Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." ²² Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn, Andrew and Philip told Jesus. ²³ But Jesus answered them, saying, "**The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.** ²⁴ Most assuredly, I say to you,*

unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain."

"Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. ³² And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself." ³³ This He said, signifying by what death He would die."

John 13:1, 2: Judas betrayed Jesus because he thought that He would deliver Himself from the hands of the religious leaders. When Jesus failed to do what Judas expected, he committed suicide:

*"Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. ² And supper being ended, **the devil** having already **put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot**, Simon's son, to betray Him."*

Method #4: Satan, without respite, did his best to **discourage** Jesus so that **He would leave** and allow the human race to perish. Satan influenced His own people to **reject** him and his own disciples to **forsake** Him so that He would go **back to heaven** to His Father in heaven.

Matthew 26:38: In the Garden of Gethsemane **Jesus was sorrowful** unto death:

*"Then He said to them, "My soul is **exceedingly sorrowful**, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me."*

Matthew 26:39, 42, 44: Satan led the disciples to **fall into a stupor** while **Jesus agonized** with the cup of His Father's wrath in His hand:

*"He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let **this cup** pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."*

⁴² Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if **this cup** cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done." ⁴⁴ So He left them, went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the **same words**."

*"The fate of humanity trembled in the balance. Christ might even now refuse to drink the cup apportioned to guilty man. It was not yet too late. He might wipe the bloody sweat from His brow, and leave man to perish in his iniquity. He might say, Let the transgressor receive the penalty of his sin, and **I will go back to My Father**."* DA, p. 692

John 18:11: His own Father gave him the cup of wrath. In the Garden, Satan tortured Jesus with the thought that He would never see His Father again. He feared that sin was so offensive to His Father that the separation would be eternal:

*"So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which **My Father has given Me**?"*

*"Satan with his fierce temptations wrung the heart of Jesus. The Savior could not see through the portals of the tomb. Hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave a conqueror, or tell Him of the Father's acceptance of the sacrifice. He feared that sin was so offensive to God that Their **separation was to be eternal**. Christ felt the anguish, which the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race. It was the sense of sin, bringing the Father's wrath upon Him as man's substitute that made the cup He drank so bitter, and broke the heart of the Son of God."* DA, p. 753

Hebrews 5:7: This text vividly describes the **agony of Jesus** in the Garden:

*". . . who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up **prayers** and **supplications**, with vehement **cries** and **tears** to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear."*

Luke 22:44: The anguish of Jesus was so great that He sweated great **drops of blood**:

*"And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like **great drops of blood** falling down to the ground."*

Matthew 26:56: The **disciples forsook Him** when they should have encouraged Him:

*"Then all the **disciples forsook** Him and fled."*

Matthew 26:73, 74: Satan worked upon Peter to deny Jesus **three times**:

*"And Peter remembered the word of Jesus who had said to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me **three times**." So he went out and wept bitterly."*

Luke 22:31, 32: Satan inspired Peter's threefold denial of Jesus:

*"And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, **Satan has asked for you**, that he may sift you as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren."*

Mark 14:65; 15:16-20: Satan led the mob to **beat Jesus** so that He would **retaliate or leave**:

*"Then some began to spit on Him, and to blindfold Him, and to **beat Him**, and to say to Him, "Prophecy!" And the officers **struck Him** with the palms of their hands."*

*"Then the soldiers led Him away into the hall called Praetorium, and they called together the whole garrison. ¹⁷ And they clothed Him with purple; and they twisted a crown of thorns, put it on His head, ¹⁸ and began to salute Him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" ¹⁹ Then they **struck Him** on the head with a reed and **spat on***

Him; and bowing the knee, they worshiped Him. ²⁰ And when they had **mocked Him**, they took the purple off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him."

Matthew 27:41-43: His enemies dared Him **to come down** from the cross:

*"Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, ⁴² "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, **let Him now come down** from the cross, and we will believe Him. ⁴³ He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'"*

John 8:29: During His ministry, Jesus affirmed that the **Father did not leave Him alone**:

*"And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not **left Me alone**, for I always do those things that please Him." ³⁰ As He spoke these words, many believed in Him."*

Matthew 27:46: On the cross, Jesus felt the **pangs of alienation** from His Father:

*"My God, My God, why have you **forsaken** Me?"*

Final Victory

John 19:30: When Jesus said on the cross 'it is finished' he had weaved a perfect robe of righteousness and paid the penalty for sin:

*"So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "**It is finished!**" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit."*

Luke 23:46: The **last thing** that Jesus did on the cross was to **commend His spirit** to the care of His Father:

*"And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, 'into Your hands I **commit My spirit.**" Having said this, He breathed His last."*

"He who died for the sins of the world was to remain in the tomb for the allotted time. He was in that stony prison house as a prisoner of divine justice, and he was responsible to the Judge of the universe. He was bearing the sins of the world, and his Father only could release him." The Youth's Instructor, May 2, 1901

Satan and his angels guarded the tomb and influenced the religious leaders to ask for a Roman guard. Satan knew that Jesus had predicted that He would resurrect the third day.

Matthew 18:1-6: The Father called Jesus out of the tomb:

*"Then the angel from heaven, with a voice that caused the earth to quake, cried out, "Thou Son of God, **Thy Father calls Thee!** Come forth." Death could hold dominion over Him no longer. Jesus arose from the dead, a **triumphant conqueror**. In solemn awe, the angelic host gazed upon the scene. And as Jesus came forth from the sepulcher, those shining angels prostrated themselves to the earth in worship, and hailed Him with **songs of victory and triumph**." EW, p. 182*

John 10:17, 18: Jesus came out with the life that was **within Himself** but only by authorization from His Father:

*"Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again.
¹⁸ No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. **This command I have received from My Father.**"*

Matthew 27:51-53: The **first fruits** came forth from the grave when Jesus resurrected:

"Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, ⁵² and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; ⁵³ and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many."

Revelation 12:10: All heaven sang when Jesus resurrected from the dead:

"Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven: "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night."

*"At the death of Jesus the earth was wrapped in profound darkness at midday; but at the resurrection the brightness of the angels illuminates the night, and the **inhabitants of heaven sing** with great joy and triumph: Thou hast vanquished Satan and the powers of darkness! Thou hast swallowed up death in victory! "And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God, day and night." The Present Truth, February 18, 1886*



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LESSON #2 – NOTES ON REVELATION 4

Two Points of Time and Two Thrones in Revelation 3:21

Revelation 3:21, makes a clear distinction between two thrones. The first throne is the Father’s (Revelation 4:1, 2). According to Revelation 5:5 when Jesus ascended to heaven He joined His Father at this throne (cf. Revelation 12:5; Hebrews 4:16; Hebrews 8:1; 12:2; 4:2; Acts 7:56; Romans 8:34). The second throne will belong to Jesus alone when He comes in His glorious kingdom (Revelation 11:18; 8:3-5; Matthew 19:28; 25:31; 19:4, 5; 20:11; 21:5)

The Bible sometimes depicts Jesus sitting and at other times as standing after His ascension. He stands before the Father because he serves as High Priest and He sits because he is King of the kingdom of grace. The book of Hebrews highlights His role as priest and Revelation His role as king.

Genesis 14:18 highlights this two-fold role of Jesus where Melchizedek is described as the king of Salem as well as priest of the Most High God. Psalms 110:1-4 echoes Genesis 14:18, describing Jesus sitting at the Father’s right hand as priest after the order of Melchizedek. Later, Zechariah 6:12, 13 describes this dual role of Jesus as king and priest. In 1 Corinthians 15:24-28

the apostle Paul portrays Jesus sitting with His Father until all His enemies are made His footstool.

The tense of the verbs in **Revelation 3:21** is important:

*“To him who **overcomes** [present, active, participle] I **will grant** [future, active, indicative] to sit with me on my throne, even as I **overcame** [past, active, indicative], and **sat down** [past, active, indicative] with my Father on his throne.”*

Jesus overcame and sat with His father on His throne and if we overcome, we will sit with Jesus on His throne.

After His resurrection, Jesus spent **40 days** on earth teaching his disciples and providing irrefutable proof of His resurrection (Acts 1:3). Jesus then gathered His disciples on the Mount of Olives to begin His journey back to heaven where He had promised to return upon His victory. Meanwhile, all heaven was preparing the heavenly throne room for the **return** of the victorious war hero. Thirty-three years earlier, He had promised that he would return victorious and now He was about to keep that promise.

Comments on Chapter 4

In Revelation 4, we find the preparation of the heavenly throne room for the arrival of the war hero. The **focus** on this chapter is solely upon God the Father as Creator:

Verse 1: A **door open** in heaven:

*“After these things I looked, and behold, a **door standing open** in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, ‘Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.’”*

Note: John sees a door that **stands open** in heaven. The text provides no evidence that the person who is sitting on the throne moved there from **some other location**. The person is simply there. The door obviously leads into **a building**—the heavenly sanctuary. However, which door? The heavenly sanctuary/temple has **two doors**—one leads to the holy place and the other to the most holy:

Verse 2: John saw a person sitting on a throne:

*“Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a **throne** set in heaven, and **One** sat on the throne.”*

Note: Notably, the text never identifies by name the person that is sitting on the throne but the context will clearly show that it is **God the Father**.

Verses 3: The **appearance** of the person on the throne:

*“And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a **rainbow** around the throne, in appearance like an emerald.”*

Note: The **glory of God** appears like a **jasper** stone (a reddish stone with black veins) and **sardius** stone (also reddish but with white veins). John was not actually beholding the person of God but rather the glory that surrounds Him. **Ellen White** had a similar experience:

*“I saw a throne, and on it sat the Father and the Son. I gazed on Jesus' countenance and admired His lovely person. The **Father's person I could not behold**, for a cloud of glorious light covered Him. I asked Jesus if His Father had a form like Himself. He said He had, but I could not behold it, for said He, “If you should once behold the glory of His person, **you would cease to exist**.” (*Early Writings*, p. 54)*

“I stated that a cloud of glorious light covered the Father and that His person could not be seen. I also stated that I saw the Father rise from the throne. The Father was enshrouded with a body of light and glory, so that I could not see His person; yet I knew that it was the Father and that from His person emanated this light and glory. When I saw this body of light and glory rise from the throne, I knew it was because the Father moved, therefore said, I saw the Father rise. The glory or excellency of His form I never saw; no one could behold it and live; yet the body of light and glory that enshrouded His person could be seen.” Early Writings, p. 92

Verse 4: The **twenty-four elders** surrounded the throne:

*“Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw **twenty-four elders** sitting, clothed in **white robes**; and they had **crowns of gold** on their heads.”*

Verse 5: The throne was in the **holy place** of the heavenly sanctuary:

*“And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. **Seven lamps of fire** were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.”*

Note: This throne (Revelation 4:2) was in the **holy place** for the following reasons:

- **Seven lamps** of fire were burning **before** the throne. The word for lamps here is *lampades*. The **Septuagint** (LXX) uses this word to describe the seven-branched candlestick in the holy place of the earthly sanctuary. Clearly, the events in Revelation 4 were occurring in the holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. The text interprets the seven lamps of fire that were before the throne as the seven Spirits of God, the number seven indicating fullness.

- In chapter 4, the seven spirits were standing before the heavenly throne—God had not yet sent them out into all the earth. However, in chapter 5, after Jesus arrived and the Father installed Him as the high priest God sent the Holy Spirit into all the earth. Clearly, the sending of the spirits represents the events that occurred on the **Day of Pentecost** (Revelation 5:6). The number seven indicates that the Holy Spirit **spoke to the seven churches** because each church ends by saying “*he who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*”

Ellen White explicitly identified the location as the holy place of the sanctuary:

*“The **holy places** of the sanctuary in heaven are represented by the **two apartments** in the sanctuary on earth. As in vision the apostle John was granted a view of the temple of God in heaven, he beheld there “**seven lamps of fire** burning before the throne.” Rev. 4:5. He saw an angel “having a **golden censer**; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.” Rev. 8:3. Here the prophet was permitted to behold **the first apartment** of the sanctuary in heaven; and he saw there the “seven lamps of fire” and the “golden altar,” represented by the golden candlestick and the altar of incense in the sanctuary on earth.” The Faith I Live By, p. 202*

- What was **before** the seven-branched candlestick in the earthly sanctuary? The geography of the sanctuary shows that it was the **table of showbread**. This table was on the **north** end of the holy place and God’s throne is in the **sides of the north** (Isaiah 14:12-14).
- There were **two stacks** of six cakes of bread on the table. This hints that there were **two people sitting** on the throne because at the ascension the Father and the Son shared the same throne (Revelation 3:21). The

Manna is symbol of the physical and spiritual provision that the Father and the Son make for their people (see John 6:32, 33).

- The Hebrew name given to the showbread—*lahem panim*—is important (I Samuel 21:6). The Hebrew word *panim* literally means “face” or “countenance”. Lamentations 4:16 and Proverbs 7:15 translate the word *panim* as “the face of the Lord.” 2 Samuel 17:11 translates the same word as ‘person’. Thus, the word ‘showbread’ means “the bread of the presence.”
- The table of showbread was the only article of furniture in the sanctuary that had **two crowns** surrounding the top side (Exodus 25:23-25; 37:11, 12 KJV). The height of the table was identical to the height of the Ark of the Covenant and the description of the table follows immediately after the description of the Ark. The Ark of the Covenant had only one crown (Exodus 25:11) and the Golden Altar also had one (Exodus 37:26).
- Revelation 5 is a continuation of the events that transpired in chapter 4. Revelation 5:8 describes the **altar of incense** as being **before** the throne and the altar of incense was in the holy place (Revelation 8:3-5).
- Revelation 6:6 describes a **scarcity of bread** during the period of the third horse because the wheat and barley were **extremely expensive**. A denarius was the daily wage of a common laborer and therefore, during this period, the laborer made only enough for one quart of wheat. According to the Roman historian **Cicero**, the price that John mentioned for wheat would have been 8 to 16 times higher than normal. It is clear that there was **famine for bread** in the land during the period of the third horse (more on this later). In the times of John, barley fed the very poor and the livestock. It is no coincidence that the next horse, the yellow one, is the horse of death. After famine comes death.

- **Ellen White** confirmed that the Father and the Son sat on the same throne in the holy place until 1844 and the Father and the Son moved to another throne in the most holy place:

*"I saw **a throne**, and on it sat the **Father and the Son**. I gazed on Jesus' countenance and admired His lovely person. The Father's person I could not behold, for a cloud of glorious light covered Him. I asked Jesus if His Father had a form like Himself. He said He had, but I could not behold it, for said He, 'If you should once behold the glory of His person, you would cease to exist'*

*I saw **the Father rise from the throne**, and in a flaming chariot go **into the holy of holies** within the veil, and **sit down**. Then **Jesus rose up from the throne**. . . Then a cloudy chariot, with wheels like flaming fire, surrounded by angels, came to where Jesus was. He stepped into the chariot and was borne **to the holiest, where the Father sat**." *Early Writings*, pp. 54, 55*

- The **lightning** proceeding from the throne (Revelation 4:5; Ezekiel 1:13, 14) represents **the speed** with which the **angels** perform God's work:

*"As **God's messengers** they go forth, like "the appearance of a flash of lightning," (Ezekiel 1:14), so dazzling their glory, and so swift their flight." *The Great Controversy*, p. 512*

*"The bright light going among the **living creatures** with the swiftness of lightning represents the speed with which this work will finally go forward to completion." *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 5, p. 754*

- The **thundering and voices** are those of the four living creatures who surround the throne of God. At this point in history they are preparing the reception room for the arrival of the war hero and praising the Father

who is sitting on the throne (Ezekiel 1:13, 14, 24; 3:12, 13; Psalm 104:7; Revelation 14:2; John 12:28, 29; Revelation 19:6).

Verses 6-8: The **Sea of glass** and the **four living creatures**:

*"The four living creatures, each having **six wings**, were **full of eyes** around and within and they **do not rest** day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"*

Note: While the 24 elders surround the throne, the four living beings are in the **midst of the throne** of the throne. **Isaiah 6:1-3** identifies these six-winged living beings as **Seraphim**:

*"In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. ² Above it stood seraphim; each one had **six wings**: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³ And one cried to another and said: "**Holy, holy, holy** is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!"*

This passage in Isaiah is the only place in the Bible where seraphim appear by name. However, both in Isaiah 6:1-3 and in Revelation 4, the living beings have **six wings** and sing "**holy, holy, holy.**"

Verses 9-11: The twenty-four elders and the seraphim praise the One who sits on the throne because **by His will** all things exist:

*"Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: ¹¹ "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for **You created all things**, and **by Your will** they exist and were created."*

A question comes up at this point. Does not the New Testament teach that Jesus created all things? Why then does Revelation 4 describe the Father as the creator? The text provides the answer to the question. The Father was the Architect of creation in the sense that He drew up the plans. On the other hand, Jesus was the Master Builder because He carried out the will of the Father by **implementing** the plans:

*“The Son of God had wrought **the Father's will** in the creation of all the hosts of heaven; and to Him, as well as to God, their homage and allegiance were due. Christ was still to exercise divine power, in the creation of the earth and its inhabitants. But in all this He would not seek power or exaltation for Himself contrary to God's plan, but would **exalt the Father's glory** and **execute His purposes** of beneficence and love.” PP, p. 36*

1Corinthians 8:6:

*“...yet for us there is one God, the Father, **of whom** are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, **through whom** are all things, and through whom we live.”*

Colossians 1:15, 16:

*“He [**Jesus**] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For **by Him** all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created **through Him** and for Him.”*

Hebrews 1:1-2:

*“**God**, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, ² has in these last days spoken to us **by His Son**, whom He has appointed heir of all things, **through whom** also He made the worlds.’*

Summary of Chapter 4

Several beings are present in chapter four among which are the four living beings, the twenty-four elders, God the Father and the Holy Spirit (the seven Spirits). Present there are also the seven lamps of fire and the altar of incense. However, the angelic hosts and Jesus Christ are missing. Where was the Son in chapter 4? Furthermore, where were the angelic hosts?

In her classic book *The Desire of Ages*, Ellen White provides the clear answer. I have added my own clarifying remarks in brackets:

“All heaven was waiting to welcome the Savior to the celestial courts. As He ascended, He led the way, and the multitude of captives set free at His resurrection followed. The heavenly host, with shouts and acclamations of praise and celestial song, attended the joyous train.

As they drew near to the city of God, the escorting angels give the challenge:

‘Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.’

Joyfully the waiting sentinels respond:

‘Who is this King of glory?’

This they say, not because they know not who He is, but because they would hear the answer of exalted praise:

‘The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle! Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.’

Again, the challenge is heard:

'Who is this King of glory?' for the angels never weary of hearing His name exalted.

The escorting angels make reply:

'The Lord of hosts; He is the King of glory.' Psalm 24:7-10.

*Then the portals of the city of God are opened wide, and the **angelic throng sweep through the gates** amid a burst of rapturous music.*

*There is the throne **[with God the Father on it]**, and around it the rainbow of promise. There are **cherubim and seraphim** **[the four living creatures]**. Assembled there are the **commanders** of the angel hosts, the **sons of God**, the **representatives of the unfallen worlds** **[the twenty-four elders]**. The heavenly council before which Lucifer had accused God and His Son, the **representatives of those sinless realms** over which Satan had thought to establish his dominion, -all are there to **welcome** the Redeemer. They are **eager to celebrate His triumph** and to glorify their King.*

*However, He waves them back. Not yet. He cannot now receive the coronet of glory and the royal robe. He **enters into the presence** of His **Father** **[now we now know that the Father sat on the throne]**. He points to His wounded head, the pierced side, the marred feet; He lifts His hands, bearing the print of nails **[He presents Himself as the Lamb slain]**. He points to the tokens of His triumph; He presents to God the wave sheaf, those raised with Him as **representatives** **[the down payment]** of that great multitude who shall come forth from the grave at His second coming. He **approaches the Father** **[Revelation 5:7]**, with whom there is joy over one sinner that repents; who rejoices over one with singing. Before the foundations of the earth were laid, the Father and the Son had united in a covenant to redeem man should Satan overcome him. They had clasped their hands in a solemn pledge that Christ should become the surety **[He would redeem the lost possession]** for the human race. This pledge Christ has fulfilled. When upon the cross He cried out, 'It is finished,' He addressed the Father. The*

compact had been fully carried out. Now He declares: Father, it is finished. I have done Thy will, O My God. I have completed the work of redemption. If Thy justice is satisfied, 'I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am.' John 19:30; 17:24

The voice of God is heard proclaiming that justice is satisfied. Satan is vanquished. Christ's toiling, struggling ones on earth are "accepted in the Beloved." Eph. 1:6. Before the heavenly angels and the representatives of unfallen worlds, they are declared justified. Where He is, there His church shall be [this is what the scroll reveals, who will inherit with Jesus]. "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Ps. 85:10. The Father's arms encircle His Son, and the word is given, "Let all the angels of God worship Him." Heb. 1:6.

With joy unutterable, rulers, principalities and powers acknowledge the supremacy of the Prince of life. The angel host prostrate themselves before Him, while the glad shout fills all the courts of heaven, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." Rev. 5:12.

*Songs of triumph mingle with the music from angel harps, until heaven seems to overflow with joy and praise. Love has conquered. The lost is found. Heaven **[she does not say that those in heaven, on earth and under the earth sang at this point in time]** rings with voices in lofty strains proclaiming, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever." Rev. 5:13." The Desire of Ages, pp. 833-835*



ANCHOR SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

“Revelation’s Seven Seals: Studies in Revelation 4-8”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #3 – NOTES ON REVELATION 5

The central theme of this chapter is the arrival of Jesus from the battlefield after He has gained the victory over Satan on earth.

Revelation 5: A Judgment Scene?

Some have noted that Revelation 4-5 bears a close resemblance to Daniel 7. This is true. However, there are also **significant differences**. Daniel 7:9 tells us that **thrones** were set in place but Revelation 4:2 simply states that the thrones were there. Daniel 7:10 explains that **books** (plural) were opened while Revelation 5:1 refers to a book (singular) that was sealed. Daniel 7 describes Jesus as the **Son of Man** (7:13) while in Revelation 5:6 describes Him as a slain **Lamb**. Revelation does not portray Jesus as the Lion until he has finished breaking the seals and opened the scroll.

Some have thought that Revelation 4 and 5 describe the beginning of the investigative judgment in heaven in 1844. The problem with this idea is that there is **no judgment language** in chapters 4 and 5. The language of the songs in Revelation 4 centers upon the Father as Creator and in chapter 5, the emphasis falls upon Jesus as Redeemer. Revelation 19:1, 2 tells us that all

heaven will sing the judgment song after God has judged and punished the great harlot who shed the blood of the saints.

Never in judgment scenes do we find jubilatory singing such as we find in chapters 4 and 5. During judgment scenes, there is generally silence in heaven. For instance, in Daniel 7 there is no singing when the judgment sits and God opens the books. Furthermore, during the judgment scene in Revelation 20:11-15 there is silence in heaven and on earth. In addition, Revelation 5 mentions only **one book** (singular) which Jesus does not open until all seven seals have been broken and Jesus breaks the final seal at the second coming (Revelation 8:1; 1T 60; GC 641). The opening of the **books** (plural) does not take place until the post-millennial judgment (Revelation 20:11-15).

During the period of the fifth seal the judgment has not yet occurred. We know this because the souls under the altar are crying out for God to judge and avenge their blood. Clearly, the judgment must transpire after the fifth seal, not before. In fact, we will see that the pre-advent judgment process did not begin until the after the signs in the sun, moon and stars in Revelation 6:12, 13. Furthermore, the judgment execution will not take place until we get to chapter 19:1, 2.

Revelation 5 portrays Jesus as a slain lamb who has resurrected from the dead. He comes fresh from the battlefield to the presence of the Father. The tense of the verb “had been slain” describes an action that began in the past, but whose results remain in the present. Ellen White explains:

*“Christ is our mediator and officiating high priest in the presence of the Father. He was shown to John as a lamb that had been slain, **as in** the very act of pouring out his blood in the sinner's behalf.” Gospel Workers, p. 13*

In contrast, Revelation 6:16, 17; 14:14-20 and Daniel 7:13, 14 describe Jesus as the Lion or Son of Man who comes to claim His kingdom. Thus Daniel 7 and Revelation 4, 5 describe different historical contexts where the same beings are present.

A Verse-by-Verse Study

Verses 1, 2:

"And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll [biblión] written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?"

Note: The word "worthy" means "qualified." The person who breaks the seals and opens the scroll must meet certain qualifications. Here are some examples of the word 'worthy' elsewhere in the New Testament:

- Matthew 10:10: The worker is worthy of his salary
- Luke 12:48: Did not commit things worthy of stripes
- Luke 15:19: The prodigal son acted in an unworthy manner
- Revelation 16:6: The wicked who drink blood have earned the right to do so
- Acts 26:31: Paul committed nothing worthy of death

Verse 3:

"And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it."

Note: The worthy person could open the book and read its contents until all seven seals had been broken. A crisis of universal proportions ensued because there was no one in heaven, on earth or under the earth who was qualified to break the seals, open the book and read its contents. John was not so much concerned with the breaking of the seals as he was with the contents of the scroll. John's tears were not tears of curiosity; they were tears of desperation and supreme agony. The book contained information of life and death

importance and yet there was no one who was worthy to break the seals and open the book. Not Moses, not Elijah, not Enoch. Not the representatives of the worlds, not the cherubim and seraphim, not the angels, not even the Father Himself was qualified to break the seals and open the scroll.

Verse 4:

*"So I **wept** much, because no one was found **worthy** to open and read the scroll, or to look at it."*

Note: The Greek word 'wept' is very intense. Luke 8:52 uses it to describe the weeping over the death of Jairus' daughter. Luke 22:62 uses the word to describe Peter's weeping after he denied Jesus the third time and Luke 19:41 describes Jesus weeping over Jerusalem. Revelation 18:9, 11, 15, 19 describes the weeping and wailing of the merchants of the earth when the economy of Babylon collapses.

Verse 5:

*"But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has **prevailed** [past, "**has overcome**" John 16:33 refers to the overcoming of Jesus] to open [future tense] the scroll and to loose [future tense] its seven seals."*

Note: In ancient Israel, kings came from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:9, 10) and Jesus is the Root and Offspring of David and the Lion of the Tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5; 22:16). Jesus, who is now the saving Lamb, will become a Lion when He finally opens the scroll. In this context Revelation 6:16, 17 is significant because these verses paradoxically describe the Lamb as a **wrathful** Lamb. That is to say, the Lamb has taken over the characteristics of the Lion. The slain Lamb comes on the clouds of heaven as the Son of Man to execute judgment.

Jesus will open the scroll when He takes over the kingdom. The following statements from Ellen White are significant:

*"The Savior is presented before John under the symbols of "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" and of "a Lamb as it had been slain." (Revelation 5:5, 6) These symbols represent the union of omnipotent power and self-sacrificing love. The Lion of Judah, so terrible **to the rejectors** of His grace, will be the Lamb of God **to the obedient and faithful**. The pillar of fire that speaks terror and wrath to the transgressor of God's law is a token of light and mercy and deliverance to those who have kept His commandments. The arm strong to **smite** the rebellious will be strong to **deliver** the loyal. Everyone who is faithful will be saved." Acts of the Apostles, p. 589*

"As the Lion of Judah, Christ will defend his chosen ones and bring them off victorious, because they accepted him as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." The Home Missionary, November 1, 1893

As previously noted, the book of Hebrews emphasizes the priestly role of Jesus while the book of Revelation underlines His role as King.

We must understand Revelation 5:5 in the context of Revelation 3:21. In fact, Revelation 5:5 expands upon the last part of verse 21. After Jesus overcame, John saw him break the seals one by one and finally open the scroll. He was qualified to do this because He overcame.

Verse 6:

*"And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders **stood** a Lamb as though it had been slain, having **seven horns** and **seven eyes** which are the seven Spirits of God; **sent out** into all the earth."*

Note: When John saw the Lamb, the wounds on His body were still fresh. He had just come from the battlefield and had the wounds to prove it. He was standing in the midst of the throne because kings and priests stood at their anointing.

The seven horns are actually the glorious rays of the sun that shine forth from the Lamb's crown representing His almighty power as king of the kingdom of grace (see Habakkuk 3:4 where the KJV states that 'horns' will come out of the hand of Jesus when He returns because there is the hiding of His power. In CS, p. 349 and GC, p. 674 Ellen White explains that the horns are the **beams of glory** that will shine forth from the marks of the crucifixion on the body of Jesus).

The seven eyes represent the seven spirits that stood before the throne before the arrival of Jesus. The Father sent the Spirit to the earth on the day of Pentecost after Christ's inauguration, (2 Chr. 16:9; Prov. 15:3; Zech. 4:10).

*"Christ's ascension to heaven was the signal that His followers were to receive the promised blessing. For this, they were to wait before they entered upon their work. When Christ passed within the heavenly gates, He was **enthroned** amidst the **adoration of the angels**. As soon as this ceremony was completed, the **Holy Spirit descended** upon the disciples in rich currents, and Christ was indeed glorified, even with the glory that He had with the Father from all eternity. The Pentecostal outpouring was Heaven's communication that the Redeemer's **inauguration** was accomplished. According to His promise **He [the Father] had sent the Holy Spirit** from heaven to His followers, as a token that He had, as **Priest and King**, received **all authority** in heaven and on earth, and was the **Anointed One** over His people." Acts of the Apostles, p. 38.*

Verse 7:

*"Then He **came** and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne."*

Note: The text tells us that Jesus ‘came’ to the Father so He must not have been there before. Up to this point, there have been no songs in chapter 5. All the beings that were present for the reception of the War Hero waited in suspense to see if someone was worthy or qualified to break the seals and open the scroll.

Verse 8:

*“Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures [**the cherubim and seraphim**] and the twenty-four elders [**the representatives of the sinless worlds of the universe**] fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.”*

Note: Verse 8 tells us that the seraphim and the 24 elders play an intercessory role. We begin to discern that the 24 elders are angelic in nature. Regarding this, Ellen White wrote:

“Angels offer the smoke of the fragrant incense for the praying saints.”
Counsels to Teachers, p. 110

Verses 9-14:

*“And they sang a **new song**, saying: “You are worthy [**qualified**] to take the scroll and to open its seals; for You **were [past]** slain, and **have redeemed [past]** us [**people**] to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and **have made [past]** us [**them**] kings and priests to our God; and we [**they**] **shall [future]** reign on the earth.” Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many **angels around the throne [they stand on the outer circle of the throne, the creatures and the elders]**, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: “Worthy is the Lamb who **was [past]** slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!” And every creature that is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: “Blessing*

and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!" Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever."

Note:

The mighty angel's two-fold question will now receive an answer. **Who** is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll and **why**? The Lamb can do it **because** he overcame and shed his blood to redeem or buy back the inheritance that Adam lost. The word 'redeem' in Revelation 5:9 means 'to buy something back by paying a price'. It translates the Greek word *hagorazo* (Matthew 13:46; I Corinthians 6:20; II Peter 2:1). Another related word, *lutroo* (I Peter 1:19), has a similar meaning and is the precise equivalent of *go'el* ('redeem') in the Old Testament (Leviticus 25:48). It is like buying an item back from a pawnshop.

This passage explains the reason why Jesus, and only Jesus, was qualified to break the seals and open the scroll: Because He shed his blood. The book of Hebrews, instead of using the word "worthy" to explain why Jesus is qualified, employs the expression "*and having been made perfect.*" (Hebrews 2:10; 5:8, 9)

Up to this point in Revelation 5, the angelic hosts have been absent from the scene but now John sees ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of them singing praises to the Lamb. Where were they before and where did they come from? The answer is that they arrived with Jesus at His ascension. In contrast with chapter 4, all the anthems that the heavenly beings sing center on redemption

The Sealed Book

Of course, the big question is this: What does the sealed book contain and why would it be so catastrophic for the book to remain sealed?

While the book is sealed, no one can read its contents. An analogous case is the sealed book of Daniel 12:4 where the angel tells John to seal the little book until the time of the end. No one could understand the contents of the book until the time came to remove the seal.

We find some valuable background information in the book of Jeremiah where we find a description of a title deed. The picture is thus: Adam forfeited the title deed to the world, Satan claimed it, and only the Redeemer (*go'el*) could redeem it (buy it back). The scroll contains the entire sweep of the history of salvation. When the Lion of the Tribe of Judah finally opens the book, the universe will see that only Jesus and His followers have the legal right to the possession that Adam lost.

Several scholars have weighed in on the contents of the scroll:

"In order to protect the contents of legal documents (such as deeds of sale, contracts, wills, and letters), a seal impression was normally made with a signet or ring at the end of the written document. The sealing thus functioned in place of a signature, indicating authenticity, validity, authority, ratification, or protection of the document. In order to protect the contents against an inappropriate disclosure, the document would be tied with threads, and then the seal was impressed at the knots on bullae (a blob of clay, wax, or some other soft material) which kept the papyrus scroll folded (Job 38:14). An unbroken impression would indicate that the sealed document had not been opened. Only the owner could break the seals and disclose the contents." Ranko Stefanovic, Revelation of Jesus Christ, p. 197

*"Archeologists have brought to light many documents sealed with two to seven or more seals. For instance, Roman law dictated that a **will or testament** had to be sealed with a minimum of seven seals of witnesses in order to render its contents valid, although some evidence shows that more than seven seals were used on occasion. . . Like any sealed scroll of the time, the scroll of Revelation 5 appears rolled up, tied with a cord, and sealed along the outside edge with seals of wax*

affixed at the knots. As such, it could not be opened and its contents disclosed **until all of the seven seals were broken**. The breaking of all seven seals is preliminary and preparatory to the actual opening of the scroll and the disclosure of its contents.” Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, p. 197, 198

“**A will**, according to the *Praetorian Testament*, in Roman Law bore the seven seals of the seven witnesses on the threads that secured the tablets or parchment (see Smith, *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*, p. 1117). Such a Testament could not be carried into execution till all the seven seals were loosed.” R. H. Charles, *International Critical Commentary*, volume 1, p. 137

“The central item, the seven-sealed scroll, portrays a **will or testament**, for that is precisely what such a seven-sealed document was in Roman law in John’s day. We find, then, that the picture we have in the subdivision of Revelation from 4:1 to 8:1 is a **court scene** in which a will or testament is to be opened. In the context of Revelation, this **will or testament** would be a **title deed**, as it were, to man’s lost inheritance—an inheritance which has been repurchased by Christ, the Lamb. Thus, the scroll is a book of destiny. The opening of it means inheritance in God’s kingdom; its remaining closed means forfeiture. No wonder John wept when he thought no one could open the scroll.” Kenneth Strand, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation*, p. 55

In two important quotations, Ellen White concurs with these scholars and adds some valuable information:

“There in His open hand lay the book, the **roll of the history** of God’s providences, the prophetic **history** of nations and the church. Herein was contained the divine utterances, His authority, His commandments, His laws, the whole symbolic counsel of the Eternal, and the **history of all ruling powers in the nations**. In symbolic language was contained in that roll the influence of every nation, tongue, and people from the **beginning of earth’s history to its close**.” *Manuscript Releases*, volume 9, p. 7

*“Thus the Jewish leaders made their choice. Their **decision was registered** in the book that John saw in the hand of Him that sat upon the throne, the book that no man could open. In all its **vindictiveness** this decision **will appear** before them in the day when this **book is unsealed** by the Lion of the tribe of Judah.” Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 294*

Several important points emerge from this last statement. Ellen White is writing this around the year 1900. It is clear that at that point the scroll was **still sealed**. Furthermore, in order for those who cried out, “release unto us Barabbas”, to see the consequences of the decision they made in the past, they must resurrect. This means that the scroll will remain sealed until they resurrect in the second resurrection after the millennium.

Ellen White gives this vivid description of the opening of the sealed book after the millennium:

*“Above the throne is revealed the cross; and like a **panoramic view [in high definition]** appear the scenes of Adam’s temptation and fall, and the **successive steps in the great plan of redemption**. The Savior’s lowly birth; His early life of simplicity and obedience; His baptism in Jordan; the fast and temptation in the wilderness; His public ministry, unfolding to men heaven’s most precious blessings; the days crowded with deeds of love and mercy, the nights of prayer and watching in the solitude of the mountains; the plotting of envy, hate, and malice which repaid His benefits; the awful, mysterious agony in Gethsemane beneath the crushing weight of the sins of the whole world; His betrayal into the hands of the murderous mob; the fearful events of that night of horror--the unresisting prisoner, forsaken by His best-loved disciples, rudely hurried through the streets of Jerusalem; the Son of God exultingly displayed before **Annas**, arraigned in the high priest’s palace, in the judgment hall of **Pilate**, before the cowardly and cruel **Herod**, mocked, insulted, tortured, and condemned to die--all are vividly portrayed.*

And now before the swaying multitude are revealed the final scenes--the patient Sufferer treading the path to Calvary; the Prince of heaven hanging upon the cross; the haughty priests and the jeering rabble deriding His expiring agony; the supernatural darkness; the heaving earth, the rent rocks, the open graves, marking the moment when the world's Redeemer yielded up His life.

*The awful spectacle appears just as it was. Satan, his angels, and his subjects have no power to turn from the picture of their own work. **Each actor** recalls the part that he performed. **Herod**, who slew the innocent children of Bethlehem that he might destroy the King of Israel; the base **Herodias**, upon whose guilty soul rests the blood of John the Baptist; the weak, timeserving **Pilate**; the **mocking soldiers**; the **priests and rulers** and the **maddened throng** who cried, "His blood be on us, and on our children!"--all behold the enormity of their guilt. They vainly seek to hide from the divine majesty of His countenance, outshining the glory of the sun, while the redeemed cast their crowns at the Savior's feet, exclaiming, "He died for me!"*

*Amid the ransomed throng are the apostles of Christ, the heroic Paul, the ardent Peter, the loved and loving John, and their truehearted brethren, and with them the vast host of martyrs; while outside the walls, with every vile and abominable thing, are those by whom they were persecuted, imprisoned, and slain. There is **Nero**, that monster of cruelty and vice, beholding the joy and exaltation of those whom he once tortured, and in whose extremest anguish, he found satanic delight. His mother is there to witness the result of her own work; to see how the evil stamp of character transmitted to her son, the passions encouraged and developed by her influence and example, have borne fruit in crimes that caused the world to shudder.*

*There are **papist priests and prelates**, who claimed to be Christ's ambassadors, yet employed the rack, the dungeon, and the stake to control the consciences of His people. There are the **proud pontiffs** who exalted themselves above God and presumed to change the law of the Most High. Those **pretended fathers** of the church have an account to render to God from which they would fain be excused.*

Too late, they are made to see that the Omniscient One is jealous of His law and that He will in no wise clear the guilty. They learn now that Christ identifies His interest with that of His suffering people; and they feel the force of His own words: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." Matthew 25:40.

The whole wicked world stand arraigned at the bar of God on the charge of high treason against the government of heaven. They have none to plead their cause; they are without excuse; and the sentence of eternal death is pronounced against them." The Great Controversy, pp. 666-669



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LESSON #4 – WHO ARE THE 24 ELDERS?

In recent years, there has been some discussion on the identity of the twenty-four elders of Revelation. The traditional view holds that this group is composed of the saints who resurrected with Jesus (see Matthew 27:51-53). Those who hold this view believe that when Jesus went to heaven forty days after His resurrection, he took these saints to heaven and presented them as the first fruits to His Father. In this study, we will examine this view to see if it squares with the sure word of prophecy.

The Morning Stars and the Sons of God

Job 38:4-7: A description of creation:

"Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements? Surely, you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"

Conclusions:

- Job 38:1-7 describes events that transpired at **creation week**.
- The morning stars/sons of God **were present** as witnesses of creation
- The expressions ‘morning stars’ and ‘sons of God’ are placed in **synonymous parallelism**. That is to say, the ‘morning stars’ and the ‘sons of God’ are two different names for the **same group**.
- Clearly, the ‘sons of God/morning stars’ **already existed** when God created this world.

Who are the Morning Stars/sons of God?

Revelation 12:3, 9 identifies the stars as angels:

*“And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. His tail drew **a third of the stars** of heaven and threw them to the earth. . . So, the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and **his angels** were cast out with him.”*

Ellen White identifies the **sons of God** in the book of Job as angels:

*“The Scriptures declare that upon one occasion, when the **angels of God came** to present themselves before the Lord, Satan came also among them (Job 1:6), not to bow before the Eternal King, but to further his own malicious designs against the righteous. With the same object he is in attendance when men assemble for the worship of God”. The Great Controversy, p. 519:*

The Sons of God in Genesis 6

Some might wonder whether the expression 'sons of God' in **Genesis 6** also refers to angels. After all, if the expression 'sons of God' refers to angels in **Job 1**, does it not refer also to angels in Genesis 6? The answer is, **not necessarily**.

- We must understand the expression 'sons of God' within the **specific context** in which it appears.
- In the Bible, **a lion** can represent Christ, the devil, Babylon and Judah. **Leaven** can represent sin as well as the Holy Spirit who makes the church grow from the inside out.
- The immediately preceding context of Genesis 6 identifies the 'sons of God' as the righteous descendants of **Seth** (Genesis 5) and the 'daughters of men' as the wicked descendants of **Cain** (Genesis 4).
- The gospel of Luke tells us that God created **Adam** as '**the son of God**' (Luke 3:38) and Adam was certainly **not an angel**.
- The apostle Paul refers to Christ's **converted brethren** as 'sons of God' (Galatians 4:5; 2 Corinthians 6:18).

Romans 8:14-15:

*"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are **sons of God**."*

The First Meeting of the Heavenly Council

Job 1:6, 7: God called the heavenly council to a meeting and God brought up the case of Job:

*"Now there was a day when the sons of God **came** to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also **came among** them. And the Lord said to Satan, "From where do you **come**?" So Satan answered the Lord and said, "**From** going to and fro on the **earth**, and from walking back and forth on it."*

Some very **interesting details** emerge from these verses:

- The sons of God **do not always dwell** in the presence of God. They **came** to present themselves before the Lord on a **certain day**, which means that they are not always there. This contrasts with the previous verse where it says that Job offered sacrifices **always** (Job 1:7).
- Satan did not come **with** the sons of God but rather **among** them. This seems to indicate that Satan claimed the right to belong to this select group. What made him feel like **he had a right** to appear among this select group?
- The record tells us that Satan came representing **a planet**, the earth. **Where**, then, must the **other sons of God** have come from? They must have come from **other planets**.

The Second Meeting of the Heavenly Council

Job 2:1, 2: God called a second council meeting in heaven and once again challenged Satan:

*"**Again** there was a day when the sons of God **came** to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan **came** also among them to present himself before the Lord. ² And the Lord said to Satan, "From **where** do you **come**?" Satan answered the Lord and said, "From going to and fro on the **earth**, and from walking back and forth on it."*

- The **same remarks** we shared on Job 1:6, 7 apply to Job 2:1, 2.
- The word '**again**' in verse 1 is important. If the sons of God came **again**, then they **must have left** the presence of God after the first meeting and **gone back** to where they came from.

Ahab and Jehoshaphat

God does not operate the universe as a dictator. He has a representative style of governance where representatives from the entire universe gather in heavenly council to make important decisions. The book of Job illustrates God's style of governance, as does the passage in 2 Chronicles.

On a certain occasion, Ahab, the king of the Northern Kingdom, suggested to King Jehoshaphat, the king of the Southern Kingdom, that they join forces to war against the Syrians. Before accepting the proposal, Jehoshaphat suggested that they get prophetic approval. In response, King Ahab called 400 false prophets who rubber-stamped his decision. However, Jehoshaphat was not convinced. He asked Ahab if there was not a prophet of the Lord in the kingdom. Ahab answered 'yes' but told him that he had thrown Micaiah into prison because he always told him what he did not want to hear! When Ahab brought Micaiah before him, the prophet explained why the 400 false prophets had encouraged Ahab to go to war against the Syrians:

2 Chronicles 18:18-22:

*"Then Micaiah said, "Therefore hear the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting **on His throne**, and all the **host of heaven** standing on His right hand and His left. ¹⁹ And the Lord said, 'Who will persuade Ahab king of Israel to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?' So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner. ²⁰ Then **a spirit came** forward and stood before the Lord, and said, 'I will persuade him.' The Lord said to him, 'In what way?' ²¹ So he said, 'I will go out and **be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets**.' And the Lord said, '**You shall persuade him** and also prevail; go out and do so.' ²² Therefore look! The **Lord has put a lying spirit** in the mouth of these prophets of yours, and the Lord has declared disaster against you."*

Ellen White explained that God gathered the heavenly council when **Lucifer's heart** rebelled against Jesus:

*"In **heavenly council** the angels pleaded with Lucifer."* *Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 36*

After God created Adam and Eve, Satan gathered his own council to prepare a **strategy to deceive Adam and Eve**. In turn, God gathered His own council to deliberate on a strategy to frustrate the stratagems of Satan's council:

*"God assembled the angelic host to take measures to avert the threatened evil. It was decided in **heaven's council** for angels to visit Eden and warn Adam that he was in danger from the foe. Two angels sped on their way to visit our first parents."* *The Story of Redemption, p. 29*

Conclusion:

God has a heavenly council that is composed of **representatives** from the entire universe. The council make decisions with regard to the **administration** of the universe.

Ellen White on the Identity of the 24 Elders

According to the Spirit of Prophecy, the **sons of God** are the **commanders** of the angel hosts and the **representatives of the worlds** that never sinned. They are members of the heavenly council. Writing about those who were present to welcome Christ upon His ascension, Ellen White wrote:

*"The commanders of the angel hosts, **the sons of God**, the **representatives of the unfallen worlds** [Revelation 4:4], are assembled. The **heavenly council** before which Lucifer had accused God and His Son, the **representatives** of those sinless*

*realms over which Satan had thought to establish his dominion,--all are there to **welcome** the Redeemer."*

Some have wondered whether Ellen White was referring to **three separate groups** when she wrote about the 'the commanders of the angel hosts', 'the sons of God' and 'the representatives of the unfallen worlds'. In my study, I found that Ellen White used this type of sentence structure in other places to describe the same concept in three different ways. Notice the following three examples:

*"Revival signifies a **renewal** of spiritual life, a **quickenning** of the powers of mind and heart, a **resurrection** from the spiritual death." Christian Service, p. 42*

It is obvious that the words 'renewal', 'quickenning' and 'resurrection' are **synonymous**.

Here is a second example where Ellen White described the final union of the world against the government of God:

*"There will be a universal **bond of union**, one great **harmony**, a **confederacy** of Satan's forces." Selected Messages, volume 3, p. 392*

In this statement, Ellen White employs three synonymous expressions to describe the final union of the world against the remnant. 'Bond of union,' 'harmony' and 'confederacy' are synonymous and describe the same reality in three different ways.

Here is a third example:

*"In Christ is life, **original**, **unborrowed**, **underived**. "He that hath the Son hath life." 1 John 5:12. The divinity of Christ is the believer's assurance of eternal life." DA, p. 530*

It is clear that the words ‘original’, ‘unborrowed’, ‘underived’, are synonymous, one building upon the other.

Some might wonder whether there are other sinless inhabited planets in the universe, each with a representative in the heavenly council.

When Jesus gained the victory over Satan on the cross, the heavens and all who dwell in them rejoiced. The plural ‘heavens’ and ‘them’ strongly suggests that there are other populated worlds:

Revelation 12:12:

*“Therefore rejoice O **heavens**, and you who dwell in **them**! Woe to the inhabitants of **the earth** and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.”*

Billy Graham, the most visible evangelist of the twentieth century, once stated:

*“I believe **there is life on other planets**. We have this galaxy, the Milky Way, and they now speculate that there are millions and millions of galaxies and in each galaxy, a trillion stars, planets and all that. I cannot imagine that **we are the only one that has life**; that would be a terribly egotistical thing for us to say as a planet. I believe that God is the God of all of it, and that's why He's so awesome and so tremendous and why, when I come into His presence, I feel that I'm not worthy.”*

The 24 Elders are Angelic Beings

According to **Revelation 5:5**, John wept because no one was worthy to break the seals and open the book that was in the right hand of the Father. As John was sobbing, **one of the twenty-four elders** encouraged him with the following words:

*"But **one of the elders** said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals."*

Remarkably, when **Ellen White** commented on this event she affirmed that **one of the strong angels** spoke these words of encouragement to John:

*"This roll was written within and without. John says, "I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon" [verse four]. The vision as presented to John made its impression upon his mind. The destiny of every nation was contained in that book. John was distressed at the utter inability of any human being or angelic intelligence to read the words, or even to look thereon. His soul was wrought up to such a point of agony and suspense that **one of the strong angels** had compassion on him, and laying his hand on him assuringly, said, "Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof" [verse 5]." Manuscript Releases, volume 12, pp. 296, 297*

The **conclusion** is inevitable. According to verse 5, one of the **twenty-four elders** spoke to John. However, Ellen White identifies the elder as '**one of the strong angels**.' This clearly indicates that the twenty-four elders are not human but rather angelic.

Something similar occurs in Ellen White's comments on **Revelation 7**. In the **biblical context**, God showed John a **great multitude** that no one could number from all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues who were standing before the throne of God and of the Lamb (verse 9). **One of the elders** asked John a question:

*"Then **one of the elders** answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" (Verse 13)*

John answered the elder's question:

"And I said to him, 'Sir, you know.' (Verse 14)

The elder then said to John:

"These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Verse 15)

Ellen White's remarks on this episode are enlightening. Whereas the book of Revelation affirms that the **elder was conversing with John**, Ellen White states that an **angel spoke with John**:

*"John beholds an innumerable company, precious, refined, purified, around the throne of the Majesty of Heaven. **The angel inquires** of John, "What are these which are arrayed in white robes? And whence came they?" and John answers, "Sir, thou knowest." Then **the angel declares**, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Signs of the Times, December 22, 1887*

Once again, the conclusion is inevitable. In its original Biblical context, **one of the elders** asked John the questions but Ellen White identifies the asker as **the angel**. Thus, the elder that spoke to John was one of the **strong angels**.

However, there is another vital conclusion that we will expand upon later. Clearly, the elder was **not a member of the great multitude** from all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues. We shall find that this is an important point because the *King James* translation of **Revelation 5:9, 10** gives us the impression that the elders were redeemed from every 'tribe and tongue and people and nation'.

Two more quotations from the pen of Ellen White will suffice:

*"John saw a company standing around the throne of God and **the angel** asked him: Who are these in white robes? He answered, thou knowest. Moreover, **the angel** said, "These are they who have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (See Revelation 7:13, 14). There is a fountain in which we may wash from every stain of impurity. In addition, says **the angel**, "He shall lead them to fountains of living waters, and shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." (See v. 17.) This will be the happy privilege of those that have kept the commandments of God in the earth." Sermons and Talks, volume 1, p. 20:*

*"As John saw the multitude standing around the throne of God, the question was asked, "What are these which are arrayed in white robes? And whence came they?"--"These are they which came out of great tribulation," **the angel** answered, "and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Signs of the Times, November 22, 1905*

Revelation 5:8 tells us that the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders play harps and present the prayers of the saints before the throne of God in bowls of incense. Commenting on this verse, Ellen White identifies the elders as the **very highest angels**:

*"Heavenly beings are appointed **to answer the prayers** of those who are working unselfishly for the interests of the cause of God. The **very highest angels** in the heavenly courts are appointed **to work out the prayers** that ascend to God for the advancement of the cause of God. Each angel has his particular post of duty, which he is not permitted to leave for any other place. If he should leave, the powers of darkness would gain an advantage. . ." Lift Him Up, p. 370*

If the elders are strong angels or the **very highest angels**, they cannot be the human first fruits who resurrected with Jesus.

Why Was Satan among the Sons of God?

The book of Job tells us that Satan came among—not with—the sons of God. Why did Satan claim the right to belong to this select group? We find the answer in Luke 4:5, 6 where Jesus was tempted of the devil:

“Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, “All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.”

Note: Adam was originally the legitimate representative of planet earth but Satan stole the position that rightfully belonged to Adam. That is to say, Satan usurped Adam’s rightful throne and the territory over which he ruled. For this reason, Jesus referred to Satan as “*the ruler of this world*” (John 12:31). When Adam chose to obey Satan, he became Satan’s subject for we are subjects of the master whom we choose to obey (Romans 6:16)

However, an important question remains unanswered. Why did God place Adam on the throne of this world to represent it in the heavenly council rather than a strong angel or an elder like the other worlds in God’s universe?

God’s Plan for the Human Race

God’s plan for the human race was different from that of any other world in His universe. Whereas the other worlds had strong angels (elders) representing them in the heavenly council, God placed Adam to rule over and represent this world. Ellen White explained that human beings were in a unique category:

“All heaven took a deep and joyful interest in the creation of the world and of man. Human beings were a new and distinct order. They were made “in the image of God,” and it was the Creator’s design that they should populate the earth. They

were to live in close communion with heaven, receiving power from the Source of all power. Upheld by God, they were to live sinless lives." Sons and Daughters of God, p. 7

God created Adam and Eve a little lower than the angels (Psalm 8:3-5). If they passed test and trial, God planned to use their descendants to **fill the vacancies** that Lucifer and his angels left in heaven. Let us consider the evidence.

"God created man for His own glory that **after test and trial [after an individual passes the test, he is promoted]** the human family might become one with the heavenly family. It was God's purpose to **repopulate heaven** with the human family." The Truth about Angels, pp. 48, 49

This was God's plan before the inception of sin. However, was it still God's plan to repopulate heaven, even after Adam and Eve sinned? Ellen White indicates as much in the following quotations:

"Satan has an accurate knowledge of the sins that he has tempted God's people to commit and he urges his accusations against them, declaring, that by their sins they have forfeited divine protection and claiming that he has the right to destroy them. He pronounces them just as deserving as himself of exclusion from the favor of God. "Are these," he says, "the people who are to **take my place in heaven, and the place of the angels** who united with me? They profess to obey the law of God; but have they kept its precepts? Have they not been lovers of self more than lovers of God? Have they not placed their own interests above His service? Have they not loved the things of the world? Look at the sins that have marked their lives. Behold their selfishness, their malice, their hatred of one another. Will God banish me and my angels from His presence, and yet reward those who have been guilty of the same sins? Thou canst not do this, O Lord, in justice. Justice demands that sentence be pronounced against them." Prophets and Kings, pp. 588, 589

"The Father consulted His Son in regard to at once carrying out their purpose to make man to inhabit the earth. He would place man upon probation to test his

loyalty before he could be rendered eternally secure. If he endured the test wherewith God saw fit to prove him, he should eventually be equal with the angels. He was to have the favor of God, and he was to converse with angels, and they with him.” Story of Redemption, p. 19

“The vacancies made in heaven by the fall of Satan and his angels will be filled by the redeemed of the Lord.” The Truth about Angels, p. 49

Where do we find the evidence in the Bible that God established procreation for this very purpose? Where in the Bible do we find the idea that God created humans a little lower than the angels and that if they passed the test they would be as the angels?

The answer is in a conversation that Jesus had with a group of Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead.

Luke 20:34-36:

“Jesus answered and said to them, “The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.”

We can reach four certain conclusions from these verses:

- God established marriage only for this age and for a specific purpose.
- There will be no marriage in the world to come because marriage will have fulfilled its purpose.
- In the world to come the redeemed will be equal to the angels thus fulfilling God’s original plan.
- Like the angels, human beings will be the sons of God.

Ellen White explicitly stated that there will be no marriage in the new earth:

*“There are men today who express their belief that there will be **marriages** and **births** in the **new earth**, but those who believe the Scriptures **cannot accept such doctrines**. The doctrine that children will be **born in the new earth** is not a part of the “sure word of prophecy.” The **words of Christ** are too plain to be misunderstood. They should forever settle the question of **marriages and births** in the new earth. Neither those who shall be raised from the dead, nor those who shall be translated without seeing death, will marry or be given in marriage. They will be **as the angels of God**, members of the royal family.” *Medical Ministry*, p. 99*



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LESSON #5 – EARTH’S TWO REPRESENTATIVES

Review of Previous Presentation

- There is life on other planets and each planet has its ambassador or representative. The inhabitants of other planets existed before the creation of this world.
- At creation, the morning stars/sons of God rejoiced and shouted for joy (Job 38:7).
- God has a heavenly council with representatives from the worlds that participate in deliberations and decision-making.
- **Job 1**: The sons of God/representatives of the worlds, came to present themselves before the Lord in the heavenly council.
- **Job 2**: The sons of God/representatives of the worlds, left after the first meeting and came back for a second so they must not live in the presence of God.
- Ellen White refers to these representatives as ‘strong angels’ and the ‘highest angels’

- Satan came to the meetings of the heavenly council in the Old Testament representing planet earth because he had usurped Adam's throne and territory.

God's Plan for the Human Race

- Human beings were a new and distinct order, created for a specific purpose.
- Earth was the only planet with the capacity to reproduce.
- God had a special plan for humans after they passed the test and trial.
- Human beings would be equal to the angels, sons of God.
- Human beings would fill the vacancies that Satan and his angels left when God expelled them from heaven.

Adam, the Original Representative of Planet Earth

God created Adam

"Then God said: 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.'"

²⁷ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." Genesis 1:26-17

Adam was the Son of God

Luke 3:38: The Bible refers to Adam as the 'son of God':

The conclusion of Christ's genealogy tells us that Enosh was '*the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.*'

Regarding Adam's status as the son of God, we have this from **Ellen White**:

*"The genealogy of our race, as given by inspiration, traces back its origin, not to a line of developing germs, mollusks, and quadrupeds, but to the great Creator. Though formed from the dust, Adam was "**the son of God**." He was placed, as God's **representative**, over the lower orders of being." PP, p. 45*

Conclusion:

The original 'son of God' on **planet earth was Adam**. However, he was the **son of God** in a **special** and different sense than we are—he was the son of God by creation, not **procreation**. In other words, we are **sons** of the **son** (of Adam) of the **Son** of God (of Jesus).

Adam Crowned at Creation

At creation, God crowned Adam and gave him the earth as the realm of his dominion (see also Genesis 1:26-28).

Psalms 8:3-8:

*"When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, ⁴ what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? ⁵ For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have **crowned him** with glory and honor. ⁶ You have made him to have **dominion** over the works of Your hands; you have put **all things under his feet**, ⁷ all sheep and oxen—even the **beasts** of the field, ⁸ the **birds** of the air, and the **fish** of the sea that pass through the paths of the seas."*

Note: When the Bible uses the expression 'beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea that pass through the paths of the seas' it is referring

to the **entire planet—heaven, earth and waters**. Thus, the Psalmist is saying that the **entire planet** was under the dominion of Adam who was the king.

Ellen White amplifies this thought:

*“Adam was **crowned as king** in Eden. God gave him **dominion** over **every** living thing that He had created. The Lord blessed Adam and Eve with intelligence such as he had not given to the animal creation. He made Adam the **rightful sovereign** over **all** the works of his hands.” The Review and Herald, February 24, 1874*

Conclusion: God **crowned** Adam as king and the earth was **his kingdom**.

Adam and Eve’s Garments

When God created Adam and Eve, they were **naked** and were not ashamed.

Genesis 2:25:

*“And they were **both naked**, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.”*

However, a closer look at the evidence reveals that, although Adam and Eve did not wear artificial garments, God covered them with glorious garments of **white light** that were a reflection of God’s glory:

Notice the following incisive comment by **Ellen G. White**:

*“The **white robe** of innocence was worn by our first parents when they were placed by God in holy Eden. They lived in perfect conformity to the will of God. They gave all the strength of their affections to their heavenly Father. A beautiful soft light, the light of God, enshrouded the holy pair. This **robe of light** was a symbol of their spiritual garments of heavenly innocence.” Christ’s Object Lessons, pp. 310, 311.*

The **angels**, who reflect the glory of God, also wear white garments of light:

Matthew 28:2, 3:

*“And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. ³ His countenance was like lightning and his **clothing as white as snow.**”*

*“The sinless pair wore no artificial garments; they were clothed with a covering of light and glory, such as **the angels wear.**” PP, p. 45*

God Himself is clothed with a glorious garment of **light**:

Psalms 104:1-2 (see also 1 Timothy 6:16):

*“Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord my God, You are very great: You are clothed with honor and majesty, ² who cover Yourself with **light as with a garment**, who stretch out the heavens like a curtain.”*

Daniel describes the light-garment of the Ancient of Days as being **white** as snow:

Daniel 7:9:

*“I watched till thrones were put in place, and the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was **white as snow**, and the hair of His head was like pure wool.”*

Adam was the Father and Representative of Planet Earth

*“In Eden, God set up the memorial of His work of creation, in placing His blessing upon the seventh day. The Sabbath was committed to Adam, the **father and representative** of the **whole human family.**” Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 48*

In spite of the fact that Eve sinned first, God held Adam accountable for the inception of sin. Jesus came to redeem the position that Adam lost, and for this reason, the Bible refers to Jesus as the last Adam, not the last Eve! As the 'sons of God' in Job 1 and 2 were the representatives of the worlds, so Adam represented planet earth.

Beings Present in Revelation Four

Revelation 4 describes four orders of beings that were present before Jesus arrived in heaven:

- The One who was seated on the throne, God the Father (4:2).
- The seven Spirits that were before the throne (4:5).
- The four living creatures or seraphim (4:6-8; Isaiah 6:1-3).
- The Twenty-four elders (4:4).

Missing in chapter 4 were:

- Jesus, the Lamb slain but resurrected
- The angelic hosts

It is important to remember that the twenty-four elders already surrounded the throne in chapter 4 before Jesus arrived with the angelic hosts and the first fruits in chapter 5. This means that the twenty-four elders cannot be those who resurrected with Jesus because when Jesus arrived in heaven they were already there!

Beings who join the Celebration in Revelation 5

All the beings that appear in Revelation 4 are also present in Revelation 5. However, in Revelation 5 the angelic hosts and the Lamb join the stage:

- The One who was seated on the throne, God the **Father** (5:7).
- The **seven Spirits** that the Father then sends into all the earth (5:6).
- The **four living creatures** or seraphim (5:6, 8; Isaiah 6:1-3).
- The **Twenty-four elders** (5:6, 8).
- Jesus, the slain but resurrected Lamb (5:6).
- The angelic hosts (5:11, 12).

The Twenty Four Elders are Angelic Beings

As we have seen, Ellen White in the book **The Great Controversy** states that the **sons of God** in the book of Job were **angels**. This harmonizes with her view **elsewhere** that the representatives of the worlds are **powerful angels** or the **highest angels** to whom God has delegated the responsibility of **ruling over those worlds** and representing them in the **heavenly council**:

*"The Scriptures declare that upon one occasion, when the **angels of God** came to present themselves before the Lord, Satan came also among them (Job 1:6), not to bow before the Eternal King, but to further his own malicious designs against the righteous. With the same object he is in attendance when men assemble for the worship of God"* **The Great Controversy** p. 518:

Although the twenty-four elders are angelic, they must not be confused with the regular angelic hosts. Revelation 5 draws a clear distinction between the 'regular' heavenly hosts and the twenty-four elders:

Revelation 5:11-12:

*"Then I looked, and I heard the voice of **many angels** around the throne, the living creatures, **and the elders**; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, ¹² saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!"*

Characteristics of the 24 Elders

Revelation 4:4:

“Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.”

Some have assumed that the twenty-four elders cannot be angelic because their characteristics are human:

- They are created beings (Revelation 4:10, 11).
- They sit on thrones, an indication that they are rulers. Supposedly, the angels are not rulers.
- They have crowns on their heads, another indication that they are kings or rulers, and the word ‘crown’ is *stephanos*—the victor’s crown. Some claim that the angels never won the victory over sin and therefore they do not wear crowns.
- The elders wear white garments. Elsewhere the book of Revelation states that the redeemed are the ones who wear white garments.

However, hasty assumptions sometimes lead to wrong conclusions. Is it just possible that these characteristics fit angelic beings just as well as human beings?

As we have seen, Ellen White used three expressions to describe the group of the 24 elders. She clearly believed that the elders were present in heaven before Jesus arrived:

"The [1] commanders of the angel hosts, [2] the sons of God, the [3] representatives of the unfallen worlds [Revelation 4:4], are assembled. The heavenly council before which Lucifer had accused God and His Son, the representatives of those sinless realms over which Satan had thought to establish his dominion,--all are there to welcome the Redeemer."

Angels are Created Beings

The Bible teaches that Jesus created all things in the entire universe and that would include the angelic hosts:

Colossians 1:16:

"For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him."

"Before men or angels were created, the Word was with God, and was God."
Review and Herald, April 5, 1906

"The Son of God had wrought the Father's will in the creation of all the hosts of heaven; and to Him, as well as to God, their homage and allegiance were due. Christ was still to exercise divine power, in the creation of the earth and its inhabitants." PP, p. 36

Angels Wear Crowns

Those who believe that the 24 elders are human, claim that the stephanos crown always refers to the victor's crown while *diadema* refers to the kingly crown. With this assumption in mind, they argue that the angels cannot wear the victor's crown because they did not gain the victory over sin. Therefore,

they conclude that the 24 elders cannot be angelic; they must be human because only humans have gained the victory over sin.

It is true that the word *stephanos* in most cases describes the victor's crown. However, there are exceptions.

The Romans mocked Jesus and placed a *stephanos* crown of thorns on His head. They did this because He claimed to be a **king**, not because He was a victor:

Matthew 27:29 (see also, Mark 15:17; John 19:2):

*"When they had twisted a **crown** of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand and they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, **King** of the Jews!"*

The book of **Revelation** also uses the word *stephanos* to describe the **kingly crown**:

Revelation 14:14

*"Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden **crown** [**stephanos**], and in His hand a sharp sickle."*

This text describes the close of probation when, at the conclusion of the investigative judgment, Jesus receives the kingdom from His Father and begins to reign as King. Daniel 12:1 points to this moment and describes it as Michael standing up (see Daniel 11:2, 3 for the meaning of the expression 'stand up').

Is it true that angels do not wear crowns? No. **Ellen White** repeatedly mentions that the angels **wear crowns**. Here are some examples:

When man sinned in the Garden:

*"The news of man's fall spread through heaven. Every harp was hushed. The **angels cast their crowns** from their heads in sorrow." Early Writings, p. 148*

When Jesus suffered in Gethsemane:

*"There was no joy in heaven. The **angels cast their crowns** and harps from them and with the deepest interest silently watched Jesus." Early Writings, p. 167*

When Jesus ascended to heaven:

*"Then the entire heavenly host surrounded their majestic Commander, and with the deepest adoration bowed before Him and **cast their glittering crowns** at His feet." Early Writings, p. 191*

At the close of human probation:

*"And all the angelic host **laid off their crowns** as Jesus made the solemn declaration, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." Early Writings pp. 279, 280*

At the second coming of Jesus:

*"A retinue of holy angels, with bright, **glittering crowns upon their heads**, escorted Him on His way. No language can describe the glory of the scene." Early Writings, p. 286*

Angels Wear White Garments

Matthew 28:2, 3:

*“And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. ³ His countenance was like lightning and his **clothing as white as snow.**”*

Acts 1:10:

*“And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in **white apparel.**”*

Ellen White described the angel who came to resurrect Jesus:

*“His face was like the lightning, and his **garments white as snow.**” Early Writings, p. 181*

Ellen White described the angels at the tomb of Jesus:

*“As she [Mary] stood weeping, she stooped down to once more look into the sepulcher; and lo, there were two angels, clothed in **garments of white.**” Spirit of Prophecy, volume 3, pp. 200, 201*

Adam and Eve wore garments of light such as the angels wear:

*“The sinless pair wore no artificial garments; they were clothed with a covering of light and glory, such as **the angels wear.**” PP, p. 45*

Ellen White Identifies the 24 Elders

In the last three pages of The Desire of Ages 833-835, Ellen White described the **expectancy** of the heavenly beings as they **anticipated** the ascension of Jesus and the **exuberant joy** they experienced as He **entered the gates** of the New Jerusalem. I have added some of my own comments in **brackets** to help identify the various beings that were present:

*"All heaven was waiting to **welcome** the Savior to the celestial courts. As **He ascended**, He led the way, and the **multitude of captives [the elders were already in heaven when Jesus arrived]** set free at His resurrection followed. The **heavenly host**, with shouts and acclamations of praise and celestial song, attended the joyous train.*

As they drew near to the city of God, the escorting angels give the challenge: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in."

Joyfully the waiting sentinels respond:

"Who is this King of glory?"

This they say, not because they know not who He is, but because they would hear the answer of exalted praise:

"The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle! Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in."

Again, the challenge is heard:

"Who is this King of glory?" for the angels never weary of hearing His name exalted. The escorting angels make reply:

"The Lord of hosts; He is the King of glory." Psalm 24:7-10.

*Then the portals of the city of God are opened wide, and the **angelic throng** sweep through the gates amid a burst of rapturous music.*

*There is the **throne** [Revelation 4:2], and around it the **rainbow** of promise [Revelation 4:3]. There are **cherubim and seraphim** [Revelation 4:6, 8]. The **commanders** of the angel hosts, **the sons of God**, the **representatives of the unfallen worlds** [Revelation 4:4] are assembled. The **heavenly council** before which Lucifer had accused God and His Son, the **representatives** of those sinless realms over which Satan had thought to establish his dominion—all are there to **welcome** the Redeemer. They are eager to celebrate His triumph and to glorify their King.*

*However, He waves them back. Not yet, He cannot now receive the coronet of glory and the royal robe. He enters into the presence of His **Father** [the one seated on the throne]. He points to His wounded head, the pierced side, the marred feet; He lifts His hands, bearing the print of nails [the lamb as though it had been slain]. He points to the tokens of His triumph; He presents to God the wave sheaf, those raised with Him as representatives of that great multitude who shall come forth from the grave at His second coming [the representatives of the worlds were already there when He presented the wave sheaf]. He approaches the **Father** [the one seated on the throne], with whom there is joy over one sinner that repents; who rejoices over one with singing. Before the foundations of the earth were laid, the Father and the Son had united in a covenant to redeem man if Satan should overcome him. They had clasped Their hands in a solemn pledge that Christ should become the surety for the human race. This pledge Christ has fulfilled. When upon the cross He cried out, "It is finished," He addressed the Father. The compact had been fully carried out. Now He declares, Father, it is finished. I have done Thy will, O My God. I have completed the work of redemption. If Thy justice is satisfied, "I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am." [The sealed book will reveal who will inherit with Jesus] John 19:30; 17:24*

*The voice of God is heard proclaiming that justice is satisfied. Satan is vanquished. Christ's toiling, struggling ones on earth are "accepted in the Beloved." Eph. 1:6. Before the heavenly angels **and** the representatives of unfallen worlds [Ellen White distinguishes the two groups], they are declared justified. Where He is, there His church shall be. "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Ps. 85:10. The Father's arms encircle His Son, and the word is given, "Let all the angels of God worship Him." Heb. 1:6.*

*With joy unutterable, rulers, principalities, and powers acknowledge the supremacy of the Prince of life. The **angel host** prostrate themselves before Him, while the glad shout fills all the courts of heaven, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." Revelation 5:12*

Songs of triumph mingle with the music from angel harps, till heaven seems to overflow with joy and praise. Love has conquered. The lost is found. Heaven rings with voices in lofty strains proclaiming: "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

Satan Missing in Heaven

When Christ returned to heaven, one notable being was absent: **Satan**. As we have seen, whenever God called a meeting of the heavenly council, Satan went as the representative from planet earth. **Why was Satan** absent at the glorious reception of the War Hero? No doubt, he would have been miserable in the presence of his archenemy. However, there is a deeper reason. At **the cross**, Jesus **defeated Satan** and expelled him from the heavenly council as the representative of this world. Jesus, the second Adam, recovered the throne and He now represents our planet!

Shortly before dying on the cross, Jesus predicted that His death would evict Satan from heaven as the ruler and representative of the world:

John 12:31-33:

*"Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world **will be cast out.** And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself." This He said, signifying by **what death** He would die."*

Many years later, John described the victory celebration that transpired in heaven when Jesus died on the cross and resurrected from the dead:

Revelation 12:10-12:

*"Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, 'Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been **cast down.**'"*

*"At the death of Jesus the earth was wrapped in profound darkness at midday; but at the resurrection the brightness of the angels illuminates the night, and **the inhabitants of heaven sing with great joy and triumph:** Thou hast vanquished Satan and the powers of darkness! Thou hast swallowed up death in victory! "And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God, day and night." The Present Truth, February 18, 1886*

Jesus, the New Representative

Jesus is the new representative of the human race in the heavenly courts. Scripture describes Jesus as the last Adam because He recovered what the first Adam lost.

1 Corinthians 15:22:

*“For as in **Adam** all die, even so in **Christ** shall all be made alive.”*

1 Corinthians 15:45:

*“And so it is written: The **first man Adam** was made a living soul; the **last Adam** was made a quickening spirit.”*

Romans 5:18:

*“Therefore as by the offence of **one** judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of **one** the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.”*

Jesus is the Son of God

Before His incarnation, Jesus was the divine Son of God:

*“The **divine Son of God** left the throne of heaven and gave His life for us, and for our sakes became poor. He clothed His divinity with humanity.” Manuscript 40, 1886.*

At His incarnation, Jesus became the Son of God in a **new sense**. The Father **prepared a body** for him (Hebrews 10:5) as He had prepared a body for Adam and Jesus was born into the human race.

Luke 1:35:

*“And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee **shall be called** the **Son of God**.”*

Ellen White explained:

*“He became the Son of God in a **new sense**. Thus He stood in our world--the **Son of God**, yet allied by **birth to the human race**.” Selected Messages, volume 1, p. 226*

Jesus is King

Hebrews 4:16:

*“Let us therefore come boldly to the **throne** of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”*

*“The **throne of grace** represents the kingdom of grace; for the existence of a **throne** implies the **existence of a kingdom**.” God’s Amazing Grace, p. 68*

*“Christ’s ascension to heaven was the signal that His followers were to receive the promised blessing. For this, they were to wait before they entered upon their work. When Christ passed within the heavenly gates, He **was enthroned** amidst the adoration of the angels. As soon as this ceremony was completed, the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples in rich currents, and Christ was indeed glorified, even with the glory that He had with the Father from all eternity. The Pentecostal outpouring was Heaven’s communication that the Redeemer’s inauguration was accomplished. According to His promise He had sent the Holy Spirit from heaven to His followers as a token that He had, as priest **and king**, received **all authority in heaven and on earth**, and was the Anointed One over His people.” Acts of the Apostles, p. 38*

Jesus is the Head and Representative of Earth

In its original context, Psalm 8:3-5 refers to the creation of the first Adam and the position that God conferred upon him. However, **Hebrews 2:5-9** applies this Psalm to Jesus who took the place of the original Adam:

Hebrews 2:5-9:

*"For He has not put the world to come of which we speak, in subjection to angels. ⁶ But one testified in a certain place, saying: "What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You take care of him? ⁷ You have made him a little lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands. ⁸ You have put all things in subjection under his feet." For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But **now we do not yet see** all things put under him. ⁹ But we see **Jesus**, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste **death for everyone**."*

Ellen White repeatedly refers to Jesus as the head and representative of humanity:

*"The human race does not stand in the righteousness of character which Adam possessed at his creation. Although neglect to keep the requirements of God is sin, and the wages of sin is death, yet there is no claim made that man may have eternal life except through the obedience and righteousness of Jesus Christ, who is the **representative and head** of all humanity." Signs of the Times, June 11, 1894*

*"Jesus humbled himself, clothing his divinity with humanity, in order that he might stand as the **head and representative** of the human family, and by both precept and example condemn sin in the flesh, and give the lie to Satan's charges." Signs of the Times, January 16, 1896*

*“As representative of the fallen race, Christ passed over the **same ground on which Adam stumbled** and fell. By a life of perfect obedience to God's law, Christ redeemed man from the penalty of Adam's disgraceful fall.” Manuscript 126, 1901*

*“Christ was to suffer in our behalf, standing at the head of humanity as **representative** of the race. He was to work out the character which every follower of His is to work out, through the provision He has made,—His infinite sacrifice, His life and death on earth.” The Gospel Herald, March 1, 1901*

The Restoration of Adam

When the great controversy ends, Jesus will restore the throne and the territory to the first Adam:

The Great Controversy, p. 647:

“As the ransomed ones are welcomed to the City of God, there rings out upon the air an exultant cry of adoration. The two Adams are about to meet. The Son of God is standing with outstretched arms to receive the father of our race—the being whom He created, who sinned against his Maker, and for whose sin the marks of the crucifixion are borne upon the Savior's form. As Adam discerns the prints of the cruel nails, he does not fall upon the bosom of his Lord, but in humiliation casts himself at His feet, crying, “Worthy, worthy is the Lamb that was slain!” Tenderly the Savior lifts him up and bids him look once more upon the Eden home from which he has so long been exiled.

After his expulsion from Eden, Adam's life on earth was filled with sorrow. Every dying leaf, every victim of sacrifice, every blight upon the fair face of nature, every stain upon man's purity, was a fresh reminder of his sin. Terrible was the agony of remorse as he beheld iniquity abounding, and, in answer to his warnings, met the reproaches cast upon himself as the cause of sin. With patient humility he bore, for nearly a thousand years, the penalty of transgression. Faithfully did he repent of his sin and trust in the merits of the promised Savior, and he died in the

*hope of a resurrection. The Son of God redeemed man's failure and fall; and now, through the work of the atonement, **Adam is reinstated in his first dominion.***



ANCHOR SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

“Revelation’s Seven Seals: Studies in Revelation 4-8”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #6 THE ELDERS: HUMAN OR ANGELIC?

A Process of Elimination (who the 24 elders are not)

In order to identify the 24 elders it would be helpful to follow a process of elimination that will help us discover who they are not:

- The 24 elders are not seraphim because the two groups are distinct:

Revelation 4:4, 10:

“Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne.”

- The 24 elders are not part of the ‘regular’ angelic hosts because the angelic hosts are clearly distinguished from them. As we have seen, the 24 elders were already present in heaven (Revelation 4:4) before the angelic hosts arrived with Jesus.

Revelation 5:11, 12:

*"Then I looked, and I heard the voice of **many angels** around the throne, the **living creatures**, and the **elders**; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, ¹² saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!"*

- The 24 elders are not members of the **unnumbered host of the redeemed**. This is made evident by the fact that one of the elders asked John **about the identity** of the great multitude that no man could number 'from every nation, kindred, people and tongue'. It is rather obvious that the elder would not ask about the identity of the great multitude if he belonged to it.

Revelation 7:13, 14:

"Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" ¹⁴ And I said to him, "Sir, you know."

Revelation 5:9, 10 seems to indicate that the elders sing the song of their redemption *"from every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."* However, Revelation 7:13 distinguishes one of the elders from the great multitude that was redeemed from *"all nations, and kindreds, and people and tongues."* (Revelation 7:9). This clearly proves that the translation of Revelation 5:9, 10 in the *King James Version* is incorrect.

- The 24 elders are not part of the **144,000** because the 144,000 are a distinct group.

Revelation 14:3

*"They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four **living creatures**, and the **elders**; and no one could learn that song except the **hundred and forty-four thousand** who were redeemed from the earth."*

- The 24 elders are not among those who will resurrect in the **special resurrection** (Daniel 12:2) just before the second coming because the 24 elders were already in heaven when Jesus ascended (Revelation 4:4)

"At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book. ² And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt." Daniel 12:1-3

- The 24 elders are not those who will resurrect in the **general resurrection** nor those who will be **alive when Jesus comes** because the elders were in heaven when Jesus ascended.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17:

"For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord."

- The 24 elders are not those who **resurrected with Jesus** because the 24 elders were already in heaven before Jesus arrived (Revelation 4:4).

- **Conclusion:** They are not members of the **regular angelic hosts** or of the **human family**. Therefore, they must be **some other order** of being.

A Problem in Translation

How, then, do we explain **Revelation 5:8-10** where the 24 elders (only in the **KJV** and **NKJV**) appear to be singing the song of their **redemption** from “every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation?” Why do these verses seem to say that the 24 elders will reign upon the earth? Let us consider the passage as it appears in the *King James Version*:

Revelation 5:8-10:

*“And when he had taken the book, the four beasts **and** four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints. And they **[both the living beings and the elders]** sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed **us** to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made **us** unto our God kings and priests: and **we** shall reign on the earth.”*

Does not this passage explicitly state that God redeemed the elders **from the earth**, that He made them **kings and priests** and that they would **rule upon the earth**? How then could they be **strong angels** or **the highest angels** that represent other worlds in the heavenly council?

Before I answer this question, I would like to share a word about the *King James Version*. I personally believe that the *King James Version* is a good translation. I believe that the **manuscript trail** that it comes from (the *Textus Receptus*) is also very good. However, **neither** the manuscript trail nor the translation are perfect. The *King James Version* is a **reverent version** written in beautiful **Victorian English**.

Having said this, some well-intended people **revere** this version so much that they practically give the impression that God verbally dictated it! However, the *King James* translation is by no means perfect. By way of example, the much-maligned *New International Version* is more accurate than the *Authorized Version* when it translates texts that deal with the state of the dead. Let us consider an example.

The *King James Version* of Acts 2:25-27 leaves the distinct impression that the soul of Jesus went to hell when He died. Clearly, this does not square with Seventh-day Adventist theology:

Acts 2:25-27 - KJV:

*"For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: ²⁶ Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: ²⁷ Because thou wilt not leave **my soul** in **hell**, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption."*

Now consider the *New International Version*:

Acts 2:25-27 - NIV:

*"I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. ²⁶ Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope, ²⁷ because you will not abandon **me** to the **grave**, nor will you let your Holy One see decay."*

Without a doubt, the *New International Version* is a much clearer translation because it defines the soul as 'me' and hell as 'the grave'.

Correcting a Mistranslation

Now let us return to the translation problem in Revelation 5:8-10. The simple fact is that the *King James Version* as well as the *New King James Version* mistranslate Revelation 5:9, 10 and every **modern translation** has corrected the error. Notice the following translations:

Revelation 5:9-10 (*New International Version*):

*"And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased **men** for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made **them** to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and **they** will reign on the earth."*

Revelation 5:9-10 (*New American Standard*):

*"And they sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood **men** from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.' 'You have made **them** to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and **they** will reign upon the earth."*

Revelation 5:9-10 (*Revised Standard Version*):

*". . . and they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy art thou to take the scroll and to open its seals, for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom **men** for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and hast made **them** a kingdom and priests to our God, and **they** shall reign on earth."*

Revelation 5:9-10 (*New English Bible*):

*". . . and they were singing a new song: 'Thou art worthy to take the scroll and to break its seals, for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst purchase for God **men***

*of every tribe and language, people and nation; thou hast made of **them** a royal house, to serve our God as priests; and **they** shall reign upon earth."*

Revelation 5:9, 10 (Weymouth Bible):

*"And now they sing a new song, saying, 'Worthy art Thou to take the book and break its seals; because Thou hast been slain, and hast purchased for God with Thine own blood **men** out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and hast formed **them** into a kingdom to be priests to our God, and **they** shall reign over the earth."*

Revelation 5:9, 10 (Phillips translation):

*"They sang a new song and these are the words they sang: 'Worthy art thou to take the book and break its seals, for thou hast been slain and by thy blood hast purchased for God **men** from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation! Thou hast made **them** a kingdom of priests for our God, and **they** shall reign as kings upon the earth."*

Revelation 5:9, 10 (Jerusalem Bible):

*"They sang a new hymn: 'You are worthy to take the scroll and break the seals of it, because you were sacrificed, and with your blood you bought **men** for God of every race, language, people and nation and made **them** a line of kings and priests, to serve our God and to rule the world."*

Revelation 5:9, 10 (The New American Bible, Catholic):

*"This is the new hymn they sang: 'Worthy are you to receive the scroll and break open its seals, for you were slain. With your blood you purchased for God **men** of every race and tongue, of every people and nation, you made of **them** a kingdom, and priests to serve our God, and **they** shall reign upon the earth."*

Revelation 5:9, 10 (*The Jewish New Testament*):

"... and they sang a new song, 'You are worthy to take the scroll and break its seals; because you were slaughtered; at the cost of blood you ransomed for God persons from every tribe, language, people and nation. You made them into a kingdom for God to rule, cohanim [priests] to serve him; and they will rule over the earth."

Why the elders cannot be human

There are several reasons why the 24 elders cannot be human:

- **First**, the elders cannot be those who resurrected with Jesus (the first fruits) because the elders were **already present** in the Father's heavenly throne room before **Jesus arrived** with the first fruits.
- **Second, both** the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders sang the **song of redemption** (Revelation 4:8). Clearly, God did not redeem the four living creatures (which we will shortly identify as seraphim) from among men and they **will not reign** upon the earth.

The angels will sing the song of redemption although they **never had the experience**:

***Holy angels will join in the song of the redeemed.** Though they cannot sing from experimental knowledge, "He hath washed us in His own blood, and redeemed us unto God," yet they understand the great peril from which the people of God have been saved. Were they not sent to lift up for them a standard against the enemy? They can fully sympathize with the glowing ecstasy of those who have overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony (Letter 79, 1900). ZBC, p. 922*

- **Third**, the identical group that was redeemed by the Lamb from every nation, tribe, tongue and people is **distinguished** from the elder who asked about their identity:

*“And **one of the elders** answered, saying unto me, what are **these** which are arrayed in white robes and whence came **they**? ¹⁴ And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, these are **they [not ‘we’]** that came out of great tribulation, and have washed **their [not ‘our’]** robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵ Therefore are **they [not ‘are we’]** before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among **them [not ‘us’]**. ¹⁶ **They [not ‘we’]** shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun light on **them, [not ‘us’]** nor any heat. ¹⁷ For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed **them, [not ‘us’]** and shall lead **them [not ‘us’]** unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from **their [not ‘our’]** eyes.”*
(Revelation 7:13-17)

- **Finally**, Ellen White clearly indicates that the 24 elders **are strong angels** or the **highest of angels**, not human beings

The Elders in the Rest of Revelation

Revelation 5:12, 13 describes a **future celebration** in heaven where all the redeemed will be present. When the heavenly beings first sang this song not everyone in heaven, on earth and under the earth sang it. This means that the entire universe will again sing the song at the close of the great controversy.

Four other passages in the book of Revelation mention the 24 elders. In each of these, with the **exception of Revelation 11:16** (which is describing the **close of probation**), the redeemed are present.

- **Revelation 7:13:** The elders in the context of **future victory** (throne [7:9], Lamb [7:9], four living creatures [7:11], 24 elders [7:11], angels [7:11] the redeemed [7:9])

*"After these things I looked, and behold, a **great multitude** which no one could number, of all **nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues**, standing before the **throne** and before the **Lamb**, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, saying: "Salvation belongs to our **God** who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" ¹¹ **All the angels** stood around the throne, the elders, and the **four living creatures**, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying: "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen."*

- **Revelation 11:15, 16:** The close of probation takes place in the heavenly sanctuary so the multitude of the redeemed is not yet there (Lord [11:15], Christ [11:15], elders [11:16], angelic hosts [11:15]).

*"Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying: "The kingdoms of this world **have become the kingdoms** of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"*

- **Revelation 14:1-4:** The elders in the context of **future victory** (throne [14:3], Lamb [14:1], four living creatures [14:3], 24 elders [14:3], 144, 000 redeemed from the earth [14:1])

*"Then I looked, and behold, a **Lamb** standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His **Father's** name written on their foreheads. ² And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of **many waters**, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. ³ They sang as it were a new song before the **throne**, before the **four living creatures**, and the **elders**; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth."*

- **Revelation 19:-9:** The elders in the context of **future victory** (throne [19:4], Christ [Lamb [19:9], four living creatures [19:4], 24 elders [19:4], angels [19:1], multitude of the redeemed [19:6])

The following chart that describes the beings that are present in Revelation 4, 5, 7 and 19:

Parallels between Revelation 4, 5, 7, 19

| Revelation 4 | Revelation 5 | Revelation 7 | Revelation 19 |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Father (4:2) | Father (5:1) | Father (7:10) | God (19:4) |
| 24 Elders (4:4) | 24 Elders (5:6) | 24 Elders (7:11) | 24 Elders (19:4) |
| 4 Living Creatures (4:6-7) | 4 Living Creatures (5:6) | 4 Living Creatures (7:11) | 4 Living Creatures (19:4) |
| Seven Spirits before the Throne (4:5) | Seven Spirits sent to the Earth (5:6) | Work Finished | Work Finished |
| | Lamb (5:6) | Lamb (7:10, 17) | Lamb (19:7, 9) |
| | Angelic Host (5:11) | Angelic Host (7:11) | Angelic Host (19:6) |
| | | Great Multitude (7:9) | Great Multitude (19:1, 6) |

Explanation of the chart:

- In **Revelation 4** the Father, the elders, the four living creatures and the seven Spirits are present but **Jesus, the angelic hosts** and the **great multitude** are **absent**.
- In **Revelation 5**, the **angelic hosts** and the **Lamb** are added and the **seven Spirits** are **sent** to the earth. The **great multitude is missing** in chapter 5.
- In **Revelation 11:16**, the **great multitude is missing** because this verse is describing the **close of probation** and the great multitude is not yet in heaven.
- Finally, in **Revelation 7 and 19** the great multitude of the redeemed **join the scene**.

A careful analysis of the hymns reveals that in:

- **Chapter 4** the motivation for anthems of praise is **creation**.
- **Chapter 5** the motivation for the anthems of praise is **redemption**.
- **Chapters 7 and 19** the motivation for the anthems of praise is **deliverance** in the final crisis. **Revelation 7:10** describes the deliverance of the remnant from the great tribulation and **Revelation 19:1, 2**, portrays the remnant rejoicing because God delivered them from the wrath of the great harlot and because the marriage supper of the Lamb has come. The songs by the elders, the four living creatures have faded from view and now the **redeemed are the singers**.

The Final Celebration

Luke 15:4-7: The parable of the lost sheep describes the final celebration found in Revelation 5:12, 13:

*"What man of you, having a **hundred sheep**, if he loses **one of them** [**this sinful world**], does not **leave the ninety-nine** in the wilderness [**the sinless worlds**], and go after [**Jesus coming down to this earth**] the one which is lost until he finds it? ⁵ And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, **rejoicing**. ⁶ And when he **comes home** [**the return of Jesus to heaven**] he calls together his friends and neighbors [**the angels and the representatives of the sinless worlds**], saying to them, '**Rejoice with me**, for I have found **my** sheep which was lost!' ⁷ I say to you that likewise there **will be** more **joy** in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance."*

Ellen White described the broader meaning of this parable:

*"By the lost sheep Christ represents not only the **individual** sinner but the **one world** that has apostatized and has been ruined by sin. **This world** is but an atom in the vast dominions over which God presides, yet **this little fallen world--the one lost sheep**--is more precious in His sight than are the ninety and nine that went not astray from the fold. **Christ, the loved Commander** in the heavenly courts, **stooped** from His high estate, laid aside the glory that He had with the Father, in order to save the **one lost world**. For this, He left the sinless worlds on high, the ninety and nine that loved Him, and came to this earth, to be "wounded for our transgressions" and "bruised for our iniquities." (Isa. 53:5.) God gave Himself in His Son that He **might have the joy of receiving back the sheep that was lost**." *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 190, 191*

At the second coming

Just before the second coming of Jesus, the **Father** (Acts 3:20), the **cherubim and seraphim**, the **representatives of the worlds** that never sinned and the **Holy Spirit** will gather in the heavenly throne room for **the arrival** of Jesus with all of the **redeemed from all ages**.

Jesus will **leave heaven** accompanied by **all of the holy angels** on route to planet earth to receive His people from all ages (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17). The **sampling** of the first fruits that Jesus presented **before His Father** upon His ascension will now translate into the **abundant harvest** of all of the redeemed from **all ages**. When Jesus nears the city with His people, the angels will sing the hymn of **Psalms 24 once again**. Jesus will then enter through the gates with His people in the midst of an **explosion of praise**. The Father will be present at the gates of the city to welcome His children home:

“The sacrifice of our Savior has made ample provision for every repenting, believing soul. We are saved because God loves the purchase of the blood of Christ; and not only will He pardon the repentant sinner, not only will He permit him to enter heaven, but He, the Father of mercies, **will wait at the very gates of heaven to welcome us**, to give us an abundant entrance to the mansions of the blest. Oh, what love, what wondrous love the Father has shown in the gift of His beloved Son for this fallen race! And this Sacrifice is a channel for the outflow of His infinite love, that all who believe on Jesus Christ may, like the prodigal son, receive full and free restoration to the favor of Heaven (The Review and Herald, Sept. 21, 1886) 7BC, p. 950



ANCHOR SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

“Revelation’s Seven Seals: Studies in Revelation 4-8”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #7 – FUTURE HISTORY AND FUNCTIONS

The Little Apocalypse

Theologians have called Isaiah 24-27 ‘the little apocalypse’ because it has many elements in common with the book of Revelation, particularly the last three chapters.

A Global Cataclysmic Catastrophe

The prophet Isaiah described the cataclysmic events that will occur in connection with the second coming of Jesus:

Isaiah 24:1-4:

“Behold, the LORD makes the earth empty and makes it waste, distorts its surface and scatters abroad its inhabitants. In addition, it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the creditor, so with the debtor. The land

shall be **entirely emptied** and **utterly plundered**, for the LORD has spoken this word. The earth **mourns** and **fades away**, the world **languishes** and fades away; the haughty people of the earth languish.”

Note: Frederick Moriarty commented regarding this passage:

“God’s word had once established order in the world (Genesis 1); the picture is that of a **return to primeval chaos**.” Frederick Moriarty, *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, volume 1, p. 277

Isaiah 24:18-20:

“And it shall be that he who **flees** from the noise of the fear shall fall into the **pit**, and he who comes up from the midst of the pit shall be caught in the **snare**; for the windows from on high are open, and the **foundations of the earth are shaken**.¹⁹ The earth is **violently broken**, the earth is **split open**; the earth is **shaken exceedingly**.²⁰ The earth shall **reel to and fro** like a drunkard, and shall **totter** like a hut; its **transgression** shall be heavy upon it, and it will fall, and not rise again.”

Note: These verses bring other Biblical passages to mind. **Revelation 6:15-17** describes the wicked **hiding in the caves** and crying for the **rocks to fall** on them when Jesus returns. Another passage that comes to mind is **Revelation 16:17-21** where a global earthquake immediately precedes Christ’s second coming.

Who is Left?

Isaiah 24:6:

*"Therefore the curse has devoured the earth, and those who dwell in it are desolate. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and **few men** are **left**."*

Note: It is a common assumption among Adventist interpreters that the 'few men [who] are left' at the second coming are the wicked who die and remain on earth during the millennium. However, an analysis of the terminology and context indicates that those who 'are left' represent the righteous who remain alive when Jesus comes (for a fuller analysis of those who are 'taken' and those who are 'left' see my book *"Taken or Left"*). At the time of the flood, only Noah and his family were left.

Genesis 7:22, 23:

*"So He destroyed all living things which were on the face of the ground: Both man and cattle, creeping thing and bird of the air. They were destroyed from the earth. Only Noah and those who were with him in the ark **remained** alive."*

Genesis 7:23 - ESV: *"Only Noah was **left**, and those who were with him in the ark."*

Peter describes those who survived the flood as the '**few**':

1 Peter 3:20: This text uses the word 'few' to describe those who remained alive at the flood:

*"... in which **a few**, that is, **eight persons**, were brought safely through water."*

Punishment of the Heavenly Hosts and the Kings of the Earth

According to Isaiah 24:21 God will punish **two groups** at the second coming: The 'host of the exalted ones' and the 'kings of the earth'.

Isaiah 24:21:

*"It shall come to pass in that day that the LORD **will punish** on high the host of **exalted ones** and on the earth **the kings of the earth.**"*

Isaiah 24:21 - RSV:

*"In that day the Lord will punish the **powers in the heavens** above and the kings on the **earth below.**"*

Note: God will punish two groups when Jesus comes. The first is a **heavenly group** and the second is an **earthly group**. The expression 'kings of the earth' is self-explanatory but who are the 'hosts of heaven'?

Ephesians 6:12:

*"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against **spiritual hosts** of wickedness in the **heavenly places**"*

Note: In Scripture, the expression '**flesh and blood**' refers to human beings (Hebrews 2:14) and the **heavenly hosts** are **angels** (see 2 Chronicles 18:18; Luke 2:13, 14). The apostle Paul wrote that we are not warring against human **beings** but against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the **heavenly realms** (Ephesians 6:12). Elsewhere the apostle Paul calls Satan "*the prince of the power of the air.*" (Ephesians 2:2). The 'hosts of heaven' in Isaiah 24 refers to **Satan and his angels.**

At the second coming God will also punish the kings of the earth on the earth:

Revelation 19:19:

*“And I saw the beast, the **kings of the earth**, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.”*

The First Stage of Punishment

God will meet out punishment on the kings of the earth and the wicked heavenly hosts in two stages. In the first stage at the beginning of the millennium, death will incarcerate the kings of the earth and God will shut up the hosts of heaven in a desolate world while they are alive.

Isaiah 24:22A:

*“They will be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in **the pit**, and will be shut up in **the prison**.”*

Joseph’s brothers cast him alive into a cistern when he arrived in **Dothan** until they could decide what to do with him:

Genesis 37:24:

*“Then they took him and cast him **into a pit** and the pit was empty; there was no water in it.”*

The enemies of **Jeremiah** cast him alive into a dungeon or cistern:

Jeremiah 38:6:

*“So they took Jeremiah and cast him into the **dungeon** of Malchiah the king's son, which was in the **court of the prison**, and they let Jeremiah down with ropes. And in the **dungeon**, there was no water, but mire. So Jeremiah sank in the mire.”*

Note: Both Joseph and Jeremiah were cast into **cisterns alive**. The word “pit” in Genesis and “dungeon” in Jeremiah, translates the **identical Hebrew word**. In both cases, the pit was a place of **temporary confinement**. However, the identical Hebrew word describes a place of confinement for the dead:

Isaiah 38:18:

*“For **Sheol** cannot thank You, **death** cannot praise You; those who go down to **the pit** cannot hope for Your truth.”*

God will **cast Satan** and his angels into the **pit or the abyss** at the second coming where they will remain alive for a thousand years. During the same period, God will shut up Satan's wicked followers in the prison of death (Revelation 1:17, 18 compares death with a prison house and Jesus has the keys):

Revelation 20:2, 3:

*“He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and **bound** him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless **pit** [**abussos**], and **shut him up**, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.”*

Revelation 20:5:

*“But the **rest of the dead** did not live again until the thousand years were finished.”*

Length of the First Stage of Punishment

According to Isaiah, Satan, his angels and the wicked will remain in their prison for ‘many days’ that is, one thousand years:

Isaiah 24:22 - last part:

*“**After many days** they will be **punished**.”*

Note: A careful reading of Isaiah 24:21, 22 clearly reveals that God will meet out punishment upon Satan and the wicked kings of the earth in **two distinct stages**. In the first stage, He will imprison them for **many days** (Revelation’s millennium). In the second stage after the millennium, God will destroy them.

The New Jerusalem will descend

The New Jerusalem will come down from heaven after the ‘many days’:

Revelation 21:2:

*“Then I, John, saw the holy city, **New Jerusalem**, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”*

The city will have **no need** of sun or moon:

Isaiah 24:23:

*“Then the **moon** will be disgraced and the **sun** ashamed; for the LORD of hosts **will reign** on Mount Zion and in **Jerusalem** and **before His elders**, gloriously.”*

Revelation 21:23:

*“The **city** had **no need** of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the **glory of God** illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.”*

Note: Neither Isaiah nor Revelation say that there will **not be** any sun or moon when God creates a new heavens and the new earth. After all, there will be **monthly** and **weekly cycles** there (see Isaiah 66:22, 23; Revelation 22:2). The texts tell us that the **city** has no **need** of sun or moon. The light of the sun and moon will be like the light of a **flashlight** at high noon.

Stage Two of the Punishment

Revelation 20:7-9:

*“Now when the **thousand years have expired**, Satan will be **released from his prison**⁸ and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. ⁹ They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And **fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.**”*

Note: After the millennium the rest of the dead **live again** (Revelation 20:5) and Satan recovers his power base. The word ‘**prison**’ appears in both Isaiah 24:22 and Revelation 20:7. After the thousand years, Satan and the wicked will suffer the **second and final stage** of their punishment—death from which there will be no resurrection.

Life Ever After

Revelation 21:1: God will create a new heaven and a new earth:

“Now I saw a new heavens and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.”

Revelation 21:4: God will wipe away all tears, pain, sorrow, crying and death:

*“And God will wipe away **every tear** from their eyes; there shall be no more **pain**, nor **sorrow**, nor **crying**. There shall be no more **death**, for the former things have passed away.”*

Isaiah 25:8:

*“He will **swallow up death** forever, and the Lord GOD will **wipe away tears** from all faces; the rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; for the LORD has spoken.”*

Isaiah 24:23: The Lord will reign **before His elders** gloriously:

*“Then the **moon** will be disgraced and the **sun** ashamed; for the LORD of hosts **will reign** on Mount Zion and in **Jerusalem** and **before His elders**, gloriously.”*

Who are these elders, and what is their function? In the light of what we have studied, the elders are the representatives of the worlds before the heavenly council.

The Number 24 is Symbolic

There are far more than 24 inhabited worlds in the universe:

“God has worlds upon worlds that are obedient to his law. These worlds are conducted with reference to the glory of the Creator. As the inhabitants of these worlds see the great price that has been paid to ransom man, they are filled with amazement. With intense interest they watch the controversy between Christ and Satan; and as this controversy progresses, and the glory of God shines brighter and brighter, they give praise to God.” The Review and Herald, September 25, 1900

The Church on Earth Mirrors Heaven

“The church of God below is one with the church of God above. Believers on the earth and the beings in heaven who have never fallen constitute one church. Every heavenly intelligence is interested in the assemblies of the saints who on earth meet to worship God. In the inner court of heaven they listen to the testimony of the witnesses for Christ in the outer court on earth, and the praise and thanksgiving from the worshipers below is taken up in the heavenly anthem, and praise and rejoicing sound through the heavenly courts because Christ has not died in vain for the fallen sons of Adam. While angels drink from the fountainhead, the saints on earth drink of the pure streams flowing from the throne, the streams that make glad the city of our God.” Counsels to the Church, pp. 240, 241

God is not a dictator. He has a heavenly council that meets on a regular basis to make decisions concerning the administration of the universe. God runs the universe as a republic with representatives from different regions having voice and vote (see GC, p. 494, 495; DA, p. 759; LHU 166; BE November 1, 1893;

Ranks in the Heavenly Realms

The heavenly hosts have ranks. There are Michael the archangel, cherubim, seraphim, tall commanding angels, strong angels, the highest of angels and

‘common’ angels. Colossians 1 describes these orders of being in the heavenly universe:

Colossians 1:16

*“For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether **thrones** or **dominions** or **principalities** or **powers**.”*

When Jesus ascended to heaven, rulers, principalities and powers were there to receive Him:

*“With joy unutterable, **rulers** and **principalities** and **powers** acknowledge the supremacy of the Prince of life.” DA, p. 834*

Note: When Jesus ascended to heaven, these **rulers** (rulers sit on thrones) were present to receive Him. It is interesting that while Colossians 1:16 uses the word ‘thrones’, Ellen White refers to those who occupy the thrones as rulers. It is clear that the rulers who sat on the thrones when Jesus ascended were not human because they were already there when Jesus arrived. Clearly, the resurrected saints who ascended with Jesus cannot be the 24 elders who sit on thrones.

Satan’s Organizational System

Satan has not only copied God’s organizational system. He also has a council of angels that meet on a regular basis to lay out plans to counteract God (see EW, p. 147; 2T, pp. 291, 292; DA, pp. 116, 205; EW, pp. 161, 178, 182-183, 191-192, 124-126; TM, pp. 472, 473).

Ephesians 6:12:

*“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against **principalities**, against **powers**, against the **rulers** of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places”*

Colossians 2:15:

*“Having disarmed **principalities** and **powers**, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.”*

*“Evil spirits, in the beginning created sinless, were equal in nature, power, and glory with the holy beings that are now God's messengers. But fallen through sin, they are leagued together for the dishonor of God and the destruction of men. United with Satan in his rebellion, and with him cast out from heaven, they have, through all succeeding ages, **co-operated with him** in his warfare against the divine authority. We are told in Scripture of their confederacy and **government**, of their various **orders**, of their **intelligence** and **subtlety**, and of their malicious designs against the peace and happiness of men.” The Great Controversy, p. 513.*

Note: The functions of the elders in Christ's earthly kingdom is parallel to the function of the elders in the heavenly kingdom for the church on earth and the church in heaven are one.

Command to Appoint Elders

Titus 1:5: Paul commanded Titus to appoint elders in every city of the Roman Empire:

*“For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should **set in order** the things that are lacking, and **appoint elders** in **every city** as I commanded you.”*

The Elders are Regional Rulers and Overseers

Numbers 11:16, 17:

*“So the Lord said to Moses: “Gather to Me seventy men of the **elders** of Israel, whom you know to be the **elders** of the people and officers over them; bring them to the tabernacle of meeting, that they may stand there with you. ¹⁷ Then I will come down and talk with you there. I will take of the Spirit that is upon you and will put the same upon them; and they **shall bear the burden of the people** with you, that you may not bear it yourself alone.”*

*“Later, when choosing seventy **elders** to share with him the responsibilities of **leadership**, Moses was careful to select, as his helpers, men possessing dignity, sound judgment, and experience. In his charge to these **elders** at the time of their ordination, he outlined some of the qualifications that fit a man to be a **wise ruler** in the church.” AA, p. 94*

1 Timothy 5:17:

*“Let the **elders** [the previous verse is speaking of the church] who **rule** [be at the head of or manage] well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.”*

1 Timothy 3:4, 5:

*The bishop or overseer must be “one who **rules** his own house well, having his children in **submission** with all reverence ⁵ (for if a man does not know how to **rule** his own house, how will he **take care** of the church of God?)”*

Elders Gather in Representative Council

The elders on earth function as **representatives** of their respective regions and on occasion gather in **council** to make decisions that affect the world church.

Acts 15:6:

*“Now the **apostles and elders** came together to consider this matter.”*

Acts 16:4-5:

*“And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the **decrees** to keep, which were determined by the **apostles and elders** at Jerusalem. ⁵ So the **churches** were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.”*

*“The **order** that was maintained in the early Christian church made it possible for them to move forward solidly as a **well-disciplined** army clad with the armor of God. The companies of believers, though scattered over a large territory, were all members of one body; all moved in concert and in harmony with one another. When dissension arose in a local church, as later it did arise in Antioch and elsewhere, and the believers were unable to come to an agreement among themselves, such matters were not permitted to create a division in the church, but were referred to **a general council** of the **entire body of believers**, made up of **appointed delegates** from the **various local churches**, with the **apostles and elders** in positions of leading responsibility. Thus the efforts of Satan to attack the church in isolated places were met by concerted action on the part of all, and the plans of the enemy to disrupt and destroy were thwarted.” AA, p. 95*

- They are **rulers and overseers**
- They are **representatives**
- They attend to deliberate **in council**
- They are **administrators** of a section of the church

- The **offer prayers** for all the saints (angels embroidered on the vail, the ladder in Jacob's dream:

"Let the members of every family bear in mind that they are closely allied to heaven. The Lord has a special interest in the families of His children here below. Angels offer the smoke of the fragrant incense for the praying saints. Then in every family let prayer ascend to heaven both in the morning and at the cool sunset hour, in our behalf presenting before God the Savior's merits. Morning and evening the heavenly universe take notice of every praying household." Child Guidance, p. 519



ANCHOR SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

“Revelation’s Seven Seals: Studies in Revelation 4-8”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #8 – REVELATION’S SEVEN SEALS: INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

Structural Issues

General overview of the sanctuary in Revelation (The chart: “*The Sanctuary in Revelation*”).

‘Capsule verses’ in the book of Revelation (3:21; 8:3-5; 11:18; 11:19).

Ellen White and the Seven Seals

At first sight, Ellen White had little to say about the first four seals and the seventh seal. However, do not be fooled. Though she does not have much to say in terms of quantity, she does have some significant qualitative statements that give us clues about when the events of each of the first four seals and the seventh seal transpire. Ellen White also had some significant statements on the fifth seal and especially the sixth.

In The Desire of Ages, pp. 833-835 Ellen White explained that the introductory vision to the seals (Revelation 4-5) applies to Christ’s inauguration as High

Priest upon His ascension. The introductory vision gives us the crucial historical starting point for the seven seals. In The Great Controversy, p. 641 Ellen White places the seventh seal in the context of the second coming, which gives us the chronological ending point of the seals.

As we shall see, several times Ellen White applies the expression of the first seal “conquering and to conquer” to the gospel conquests of the church. With regard to the second seal, Ellen White has a clear statement on the meaning of the sword that takes away peace from the earth. She applies it to the persecutions that the early church suffered at the hands of the pagan Roman Empire. Concerning the third seal, Ellen White has a clear statement about the oil and the wine. Furthermore, we shall see in the course of our study, that Ellen White had several clear statements about the fifth and sixth seals. Regarding the seventh seal, she does not quote Revelation 8:1 but clearly alludes to it.

The best commentary on the introductory vision to the seals is the last chapter of The Desire of Ages. The first two chapters of the book Acts of the Apostles explain the enthronement of Jesus in heaven on the Day of Pentecost. Ellen G. White’s book The Great Controversy then expounds upon the seven seals in their proper order.

Two Points of Time and Two Thrones

Revelation 3:21 clearly distinguishes between two thrones. The first is the Father’s throne (Revelation 4:1, 2) and Revelation 5:5 describes the moment when Jesus ascended to heaven and joined His Father at this throne (cf. Revelation 12:5; Hebrews 4:16; Hebrews 8:1; 12:2; 4:2; Acts 7:56; Romans 8:34). Since His ascension, Jesus sits on the right hand of the Father until all enemies have been subdued. The second throne will belong to Jesus alone when He comes in His glorious kingdom (Revelation 11:18; 8:3-5; Matthew 19:28; 25:31; 19:4, 5; 20:11; 21:5).

After His ascension, the New Testament portrays Jesus as sitting and standing. We should understand the words ‘sitting’ and ‘standing’ as a description of function. He **stands** because He is the interceding High Priest and He **sits** because He is the king of the kingdom of grace. While the book of Hebrews highlights His function as priest, the book of Revelation emphasizes His position as king.

Genesis 14:18 predicted this two-fold function of Jesus where Melchizedek is described both as king of Salem and priest of the Most High God. Psalm 110:1-4, picks-up on Genesis 14:18 and describes Jesus as sitting at the Father’s right hand and as a priest after the order of Melchizedek. Later, Zechariah 6:12, 13 describes this dual role of Jesus as king and priest. Finally, in 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 the apostle Paul portrays the co-regency of Jesus with the Father until all His enemies are made His footstool.

The tense of the verbs in Revelation 3:21 is important:

*“To him who **overcomes** (present, active, participle) I **will grant** (future, active, indicative) to sit with me on my throne, even as I **overcame** (past, active, indicative), and **sat down** (past, active, indicative) with my Father on his throne.”*

Jesus overcame Satan, the world and the flesh while He was on earth and when He ascended, He sat with His father on His throne. If we overcome in our earthly trek (during the breaking of the seals), we will finally sit with Jesus on His throne.

The Chronology of Events in Revelation 4:1-8:1

One way of looking at it:

Revelation 4: The Father sits alone on His throne in the heavenly throne room (the holy place) as heaven prepares to receive Jesus upon His victorious return from the earth (Acts 1:9-11).

Revelation 5: Jesus, who has overcome the devil, the flesh and the world ascends to heaven and joins His Father at the throne (5:6; 3:21) where He sits at the Father's right hand until all His enemies are made His footstool (Psalm 110:1; I Corinthians 15:24-28) and where He stands as our interceding High Priest.

Revelation 6:1-17; 8:1: After Jesus ascends to heaven, the saints overcome in the course of Christian history as Jesus overcame while He was on the earth. The seven seals portray the events that transpire between the time when Jesus sat on His Father's throne and when the saints will join Jesus on personal throne.

Revelation 7:9-17; 19:1-8: God delivers His saints from death in the final tribulation and they ascend to heaven and join Jesus on His throne.

Here is **another way** of looking at it:

Revelation 4, 5: The Christian era begins at the enthronement of Jesus in the holy place.

Revelation 6:1-17; 8:1: In the course of Christian history, the church overcomes as Jesus overcame.

Revelation 7:9-17: The Christian era **ends** and God's people are victorious and sit with Jesus on His throne. The redeemed will offer praise to God for **delivering them** from the wrath of the end time harlot and her daughters during the great tribulation.

The relationship between the scene in Revelation 4, 5 and Daniel 7:8-14

Clearly, the encampment and the court of the earthly sanctuary symbolized the earthly work of Jesus. It is on earth where needy sinners reside and it was on earth where Jesus Christ lived a perfect life and offered His own life for sin.

Chapter one of Revelation describes Jesus as the “firstborn from the dead”, the one who ‘washed us from our sins in His own blood’ and the one who “was dead and is alive forevermore” (verses 5, 18). The life and death of Jesus transpired in the court on earth. The next stage must therefore transpire in the holy place of the heavenly sanctuary.

Where did Jesus go upon His ascension? The Bible tells us that He sat down at the right hand of God (his role as king of the kingdom of grace) and that He was standing at the right hand of God (his role as ministering High Priest, because priests stand ministering before God) [Acts 7:55; Hebrews 1:3]. The Bible is clear that both the Father and the Son were located in the same place upon the ascension. However, where was that place? The evidence clearly indicates that both of them were in the holy place. How can we be sure? The geography of the Hebrew sanctuary dictates it. In the sanctuary, the holy place followed the camp and the court.

Those who believe that Jesus went directly into the most holy place upon His ascension are at a loss to explain why Jesus would leap from the court to the most holy place upon His ascension thus totally bypassing the holy place.

Both Peter and Paul clearly inform us that Jesus went to heaven with His blood to be our intercessor, a work which clearly belongs to the holy place (Hebrews 7:25-26; I Timothy 2:5; Romans 8:34; Acts 2:16-39). This is why Jesus, after His ascension, walks among the seven candlesticks and ministers before the golden altar of incense (Revelation 1:13-16; 4:8:3-5).

It makes sense that if the Father and the Son were in the holy place until 1798 and then moved for the judgment at some point thereafter, they must have moved from the holy to the most holy place. There are no other options because the work of judgment takes place in the most holy place where are the Ark of the Covenant and the Law of God! (Revelation 11:15-19 makes this clear). Thus, we conclude that both the Father and the Son were in the holy place until the beginning of the judgment in 1844.

However, shortly after 1798, the Father moved from the holy to the most holy place followed by Jesus. The synonymous parallelism in Daniel 7:9, 10 highlights this movement of the Father's throne by explaining that it has fiery wheels! The New American Standard Bible (NASB) translation of Daniel 7:10 explains that the Father's throne had wheels: "*His **throne** was ablaze with flames, its **wheels** were a burning fire.*" According to Ezekiel 1 the angels, who are like flames of fire, (Psalm 104:3, 4; Hebrews 1:7; 2 Kings 6:17; Ezekiel 1:12, 13; Acts 2:2, 3) actually move the wheels as the heavenly chariot transports the Father into the most holy place.

However, notice in Daniel 7:10 tells us that there is more than one throne. There are thrones. How many thrones are there and who sits upon them? Daniel 7 does not provide an answer to these two questions but one thing is certain, the angelic hosts are not the ones who sit on the thrones. How do we know this? Simply because the Bible underlines that angels are constantly on the move. They are ministering spirits **sent out** to minister to those who will inherit salvation (Hebrews 1:14). In the Bible the angelic hosts always **stand** (Zechariah 4:14) before God and are **sent** to minister throughout the universe. In fact, in Ezekiel 1 the angels are in constant movement like bolts of lightning, never having a restful moment! Notice the following awesome description given by Ellen G. White:

*"The Bible shows us God in His high and holy place, not in a state of inactivity, not in silence and solitude, but surrounded by ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of holy beings, all **waiting to do His will**. Through these*

*messengers, He is in active communication with every part of His dominion. By His Spirit He is everywhere present. Through the agency of His Spirit and His angels He **ministers** to the children of men.” The Ministry of Healing, p. 417*

This scenario is confirmed by the fact that Revelation 5:11 describes God surrounded by ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of angels. There, the 24 elders sit on the thrones, not the angels (Revelation 4:4).

As we study Daniel 7 and Revelation 4-5 together, we discover that the thrones are **twenty-four in number** and that the **elders** sit upon them. Who these elders are and what their role is in the heavenly economy remains to be seen.

Daniel 7 and Ezekiel 1-11

There is undoubtedly a very **close relationship** between **Daniel 7** and **Revelation 4-5**. However, before we examine this relationship we must make a few remarks about the link between Daniel 7 and Ezekiel 1-11.

Even a hasty glance at these two passages will reveal their close relationship. In both we have a chariot-throne, an awesome being who sits upon the chariot-throne, angels who guide the wheels of the chariot-throne, fire, clouds, thrones that surround the chariot-throne, and a special man stands who stands in the midst of the throne. Moreover, in both the idea of judgment is at the forefront.

It should not surprise us that Daniel and Ezekiel spoke in similar terms because they were contemporaries. A thorough study of Ezekiel 1 is far beyond the scope of this manual, but as William Shea has shown elsewhere, Ezekiel 1 describes the journey of God from heaven to earth to judge apostate Jerusalem in the year 592 BC.

It is of critical importance to remember that in Ezekiel God's **apostate people** are in view. God calls His professed people a **harlot** (chapter 16), they were guilty of shedding **innocent blood**, the priests did violence to the **law** and

prophets and kings were corrupt. Israel was committing **abominations**, the greatest of which was sun worship (8:16).

However, in their midst of Jerusalem was a **remnant** who sighed and cried because of the abominations which God's own professed people were committing. God promised to seal the faithful for salvation and the apostate ones would be marked for destruction (9:1-6). This sealing work was a work of judgment.

After the sealing process concluded, the *Shekinah* glory departed from the temple (11:22-23), the city was left **desolate** and Nebuchadnezzar came and executed God's judgment upon it in 586.

It will be noticed that in common with Daniel 7, Ezekiel presented three steps in the judgment process: The **investigation** (9:1-4), the **sentence** when the *Shekinah* left, (11:22-23) and the **execution** of the sentence (9:5-6).

What happened with Jerusalem on a local and historical level (Ezekiel's view) foreshadows what will occur on a global and eschatological level (Daniel's view). That is to say, Ezekiel depicts the type while Daniel presents the antitype. In Ezekiel God came to judge apostate **Jerusalem**, but in Daniel 7 God came to judge a **worldwide** apostate Christianity.

As we have already shown in another place, Daniel 7's little horn symbolizes an **apostate Christian power**. This power is described as a **harlot** (Revelation 17:1), who commits **abominations** (Matthew 24:15; Revelation 17:5; Daniel 11:31), sheds **innocent blood** (Revelation 17:6), thinks she can change the **law** (Daniel 7:25) and persecutes a **remnant** who remain faithful to God (Daniel 7:21, 25).

As in Ezekiel 9, God will place a seal on the foreheads of His faithful ones for **salvation** (Revelation 7:1-4) whereas the apostates will be marked for **destruction** (Revelation 14:9-11). The *Shekinah* will then depart the heavenly

temple (Revelation 15:5-8) followed by **desolation** and destruction upon the apostates in the form of the seven last plagues and the second coming of Jesus (Revelation 16-19).

The key point we should remember here is that both Daniel and Ezekiel portray a judgment process that has God's **professed people** in view. Clearly, among those who claim to be God's people, there are genuine and counterfeit believers. The judgment process has the purpose of separating these two groups (see Revelation 14:14-20).

Daniel 7 and Revelation 4-5

With this background in mind, let us consider the relationship between Daniel 7 and Revelation 4-5. The striking similarities between these two passages have led some scholars to conclude that they are both describing the same historical event—the pre-advent investigative judgment. However, is this the case? Are both Daniel 7 and Revelation 4-5 describing the same judgment scene that begins shortly after 1798? I believe the answer to this question is a resounding no! Why, then, are there so many similarities? The answer is quite simple: The two passages are portraying two **distinct historical events** where the **same beings** are present.

It is clear from what we have studied so far that the scene of Revelation 4-5 is a symbolic description of the inauguration of Christ's priesthood upon His ascension to heaven. Acts 1:9-11 tells us that a cloud caught Jesus up to heaven. Before Jesus arrived, the Father was sitting upon His throne **by himself** (Revelation 4:2). Surrounding Him were the 24 elders sitting on **24 thrones** (4:4). Contrary to Daniel 7, there is no evidence of the Father moving to this throne from somewhere else. The Father was simply there. Significantly, at this point, Jesus had not yet arrived. However, in the next chapter (Revelation 5:6), the ten thousand times ten thousand angels transport Jesus to where the Father was, not as the **Son of man** as in Daniel 7 (see Revelation 14:14), but as a **lamb** "as if it had been slain." Notably, Revelation 5:11 uses the identical terminology

as Daniel 7 to describe the angelic hosts. The entire universe then sang a song extolling Jesus as the slain lamb who redeemed humanity (5:9).

As we have already shown, Jesus ascended to the Father in the holy place for His inauguration as High Priest and King of the kingdom of grace. Upon His arrival, the Father was waiting to welcome Him, along with the 24 elders and the 4 living creatures. When He arrived, His Father announced that He accepted His sacrifice and all heaven broke out in praise to the Lamb. The Father then invested His Son and Jesus began His intercessory work in the holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. Peter described this glorious investment in his eloquent sermon in Acts chapter 2. Ellen G. White confirmed this inaugural scenario in her book, The Desire of Ages, pp. 831-835. Ellen White also describes the glorious movement of the Father and the Son from the holy to the most holy place in Early Writings, pp. 54-56. In Daniel 7, the entire heavenly entourage moved from the holy to the most holy place for the beginning of the judgment. When this judgment concludes, the heavenly entourage will sing a different song extolling God as judge and king! (Revelation 11:15-19).

One cannot help but notice that the very same beings that were present for Jesus' inauguration in the holy place would later move into the most holy place and be present for the beginning of the judgment. This is why the two scenes appear so similar.

In summary, Revelation 4-5 describes Jesus taken by a **cloud** of angels from the **earth** to the presence of the Father in the holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. Upon His arrival, His father invested Him as King of the kingdom of grace and as High Priest.

On the other hand, Daniel describes the cloud of angels moving the Father and the Son from the holy to the most holy place in 1844. There the Father invested Jesus as **Judge** and ultimately will invest Him as King of the kingdom of glory. The same beings are present on both occasions and this is why the scenes are so similar.

The Churches, the Seals and the Trumpets

- **Church militant** described in Revelation 2, 3 becomes the church triumphant in Revelation 21, 22.
- **The seals** in Revelation 4:1-8:1 reach their climax in Revelation 19, 20.
- **The trumpets** in Revelation 8:2-11:19 reach their climax in Revelation 15-18.

Summary of the Introductory Vision and the Seven Seals

The seals are parallel in many ways to **Matthew 24**. This indicates that the seals describe, in symbolic language, events that occur during the **Christian era** because the events in Matthew 24 are in chronological order (see the chart on the next page).

The seven churches are a description of the internal condition of the church from apostolic times 'till the second coming. Even though the seals cover the same historical period as the churches, the emphasis is different. While in the churches, the emphasis falls upon the **internal** condition of the church in different periods of history, the seals describe the **external** forces that affect the church during the same periods.

Here is the chronological flow of the introductory vision, the breaking of the seven seals and the reading of the contents of the scroll:

- The **Father sits** alone on His throne in the holy place of the heavenly throne room (Revelation 4)
- The cloud catches Jesus up to the Father's throne in the holy place (Acts 1:9-11; **DA**, pp. 830-833; **AA**, pp. 30-34).

- The Father anoints the War Hero as Priest and King in the holy place and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost announces this heavenly event on earth (Revelation 5; Acts 2; AA pp. 35-46 [especially pages 38, 39])

Chronological Sequence of the Seals

- The breaking of the seven seals describe events that transpire **between** the moment when Jesus began His work in the holy place and when he finally opens the scroll to reveal who will inherit what Adam lost.
- **The First Seal (the white horse):** A description of the conquests of the **Apostolic church**: AA, pp. 47-602.
- **The Second Seal (the red horse):** The **pagan Roman Empire** sheds the blood of God's faithful people. By persecution Satan attempts to eradicate God's faithful people (GC, pp. 39-48)
- **The Third Seal (the black horse):** Satan changes his strategy from persecution to infiltration. His philosophy was this: If you cannot fight them join them! Christianity merges with paganism and the darkness of apostasy enters the church during the period of **Constantine** (GC, pp. 49-60)
- **The Fourth Seal (the pale horse):** The apostasy in the church intensifies and leads to the emergence of **Papal Rome** who persecutes and kills God's faithful people for 1260 years (GC, p. 61ff)
- **The Fifth Seal (the martyrs under the altar):** Those whom pagan and papal Rome slew cry out for justice (the judgment in Daniel 7 reverses the sentences in the earthly tribunals). In answer to their pleas, God gives

them white robes and tells them that He will avenge them when the last group of martyrs is complete.

- **The Sixth Seal** (signs in the sun, moon and stars and a great earthquake): The fulfillment of the first part of the sixth seal (Revelation 6:12, 13) occurs between 1755 and 1833. The second part of the sixth seal (Revelation 6:14-17) will occur at the second coming. Revelation 7:1-8 describes the period between the first and second part of the sixth seal.
- **The Seventh seal** (silence in heaven): There is a period of awful silence during the second coming of Jesus when the redeemed cry out, 'who shall be able to stand?' This is the very question that the redeemed ask in Revelation 6:17.

When the seventh seal is broken, God will take His people to heaven and for a thousand years, they will be able to examine the contents of the scroll. After the millennium, God will open the scroll and reveal its contents to the lost outside the Holy City.

ADDENDUM: THE LORD IS OUR ROCK

The Cross and Pentecost

As we begin our study, I want to underline two foundational points about what occurred on the day of Pentecost:

- There is a recurring pattern in the Old Testament: First, the priests placed animal sacrifices on the altar and then God showed His approval of the sacrifice by consuming them with fire. This symbolized the close link between Christ's sacrifice on the cross and the tongues of fire that the disciple saw on the day of Pentecost.
- The most important event on the Day of Pentecost took place in heaven, not on earth!

Abel's Sacrifice

The first biblical example of the relationship between sacrifice and fire is in the story of Cain and Abel. The Bible record tells us that Abel offered an animal sacrifice and God showed His approval by consuming the sacrifice with fire. The book of Hebrews tells us:

Hebrews 11:4:

"By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks."

Signs of the Times, February 6, 1879:

*“God had **respect** unto this sacrifice and **fire came down** from Heaven and consumed it.”*

The Inauguration of the Wilderness Tabernacle

The second biblical example of the relationship between sacrifice and fire is at the inauguration of the wilderness tabernacle:

Leviticus 9:22-24:

*“Then Aaron lifted his hand toward the people, blessed them, and came down from offering the **sin offering**, the **burnt offering**, and **peace offerings** and Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of meeting, and came out and **blessed the people**. Then the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people, ²⁴ and **fire came out from before the Lord** and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. When all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces.”*

The Hebrew Monarchy

During the period of the **Hebrew monarchy**, David offered a sacrifice to the LORD on **the threshing floor of Ornan** and God revealed His **approval** by sending fire from heaven:

1Chronicles 21:26:

*“And David built there an altar to the Lord, and offered **burnt offerings and peace offerings**, and called on the Lord; and He answered him **from heaven by fire** on the altar of burnt offering.”*

The Inauguration of the Temple Service in the Days of Solomon

When the Old Testament **Temple service** was inaugurated, animals were slain, placed **on the altar** and then **fire fell from heaven** upon the sacrifices to show that God accepted them:

2 Chronicles 7:1:

*“When Solomon had finished praying, **fire came down from heaven** and consumed the **burnt offering** and the **sacrifices**; and the glory of the Lord filled the temple.”*

The Period of the Prophets

In the days of **Elijah God showed** His acceptance of His prophet's offering by sending fire from heaven to consume the victims on the altar:

1 Kings 18:38:

*“Then the **fire of the Lord fell** and consumed the **burnt sacrifice**, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. ³⁹ Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said: ‘The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!’”*

The Rock Episodes in the Old Testament

Exodus and Numbers contain two ‘rock episodes’ that teach the **same lesson** as the sacrifice followed by fire. Israel was murmuring against the Lord because they had no water to drink. At this point they had experienced their spectacular deliverance from Egypt God had rained Manna from heaven to feed them. Their lack of faith merited the immediate judgment of God:

Exodus 17:1-6

*"Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin, according to the commandment of the Lord, and camped in Rephidim; but there was **no water** for the people to drink. ² Therefore the people **contended with Moses**, and said, "Give us water that we may drink." Therefore, Moses said to them, "Why do you contend with me? Why do you tempt the Lord?" ³ And the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses, and said, "Why is it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" ⁴ So Moses cried out to the Lord, saying, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me!" ⁵ And the Lord said to Moses: "Go on before the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel. Also, take in your hand **your rod** with which you **struck** the river and go. ⁶ Behold, **I will stand before you** there **on the rock** in Horeb; and you shall **strike the rock**, and **water will come out of it** that the people may drink."*

In order to understand the meaning of this episode we must **decipher the symbols**. The story contains **three** main symbols: The **rock**, the **rod** and the **water**. Let us interpret the symbols **one by one**:

The Rock

Nine times this chapter **identifies the Rock** as a **symbol** of the LORD (verses 4, 13, 15, 18, 30, 31, 37):

Deuteronomy 32:4:

***"He is the Rock**, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He."*

The New Testament identifies the **LORD** of Deuteronomy 32 as **Christ**:

1 Corinthians 10:1-4:

*“Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, ² all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³ all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and **that Rock was Christ.**”*

The Rod

Every time that Moses **raised His rod**, a **judgment afflicted** the Egyptians. Thus, the rod represents **God’s judgment.** (cf. Isaiah 10:26)

The Act of Smiting

The word ‘strike’ is **nakah** and means, “to strike, to beat, to smite, to hit, to slay, to kill, to receive a blow or to be wounded.” The identical word describes **Moses smiting** with the rod and making the various plague **judgments** fall on Egypt. Moses smote the **waters** and they turned to blood (Exodus 7:17, 10, 20), he **smote** the **dust** and the plague of lice fell (Exodus 8:16, 17), hail **smote** the land, and God **smote** all the **first-born** in Egypt.

The children of Israel were **sinning** against the LORD and **deserved to be smitten** by the **rod of God’s judgment**, but **instead** the rod smote the rock. Thus, the rock suffered God’s judgment **vicariously** in place of sinful Israel. It is significant that both the symbol and the reality were present at Horeb because **Jesus was standing** on the rock.

The striking of the rock by the rod of Moses represents the fact that Jesus was **smitten and stricken** of God for our sins—God smote Him **in our place**.

Isaiah 53:4:

*"Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him **stricken [nakah]**, smitten by God, and afflicted."*

The Water

When Moses smote the rock, it **gave its water**. Jesus explained that the water that came forth from the rock represents the **outpouring of the Holy Spirit** when God the Father in heaven approved the sacrifice of Jesus. The following passage underlines that when we drink the water, **we become fountains** of living water **to others**. Jesus was speaking about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost:

John 7:37-39:

*"On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him **come to Me and drink**.³⁸ He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, **out of his heart will flow rivers of living water**."³⁹ But this He spoke concerning **the Spirit**, whom those believing in Him **would receive**; for the **Holy Spirit** was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."*

The water we drink represents the **Holy Spirit**:

1 Corinthians 12:13:

*"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to **drink into one Spirit**."*

The Sun and the Moon

As the **moon receives** light from the sun and **reflects it** to the earth, so God's

people are to receive the light from Jesus and reflect it to the world. Jesus said in **John 9:5**: “*I am the light of the world*” but He also said to His disciples in **Matthew 5:14-16**: “*you are the light of the world.*”

The Second Rock Episode

God poured out the water of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost and the disciples drank and became fountains of blessing to others. How do we **get the water** today? Does Jesus need to fall under the rod of God’s judgment once more?

Numbers 20:7-11:

*“Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ⁸ “Take the **rod**; you and your brother Aaron gather the congregation together. **Speak to the rock** before their eyes, and **it will yield its water**; thus you shall bring **water** for them **out of the rock**, and give drink to the congregation and their animals.” ⁹ So Moses took the rod from before the Lord as He commanded him, ¹⁰ and Moses, and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them: “Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?” ¹¹ Then Moses lifted his hand and **struck the rock twice** with his **rod**; and water came out **abundantly**, and the congregation and their animals drank.”*

In **Patriarchs and Prophets**, p. 418 Ellen White explained the gravity of Moses’ act:

*“By his rash act Moses took away the force of the lesson that God purposed to teach. The rock, being **a symbol of Christ**, had been **once** smitten, as Christ was to be once offered. The second time it was needful **only to speak** to the rock, as we have **only to ask** for blessings in the name of Jesus. By the second smiting of the rock the significance of this **beautiful figure of Christ was destroyed.**”*

The book of Hebrews confirms that Jesus needed to fall under the rod of His Father's judgment only once:

Hebrews 7:26, 27:

*"For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; ²⁷ who **does not need daily**, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this **He did once for all** when He offered up Himself."*

The **Roman Catholic papacy** repeatedly commits the same sin, as did Moses. According to Roman Catholic theology, the priest offers Jesus on the altar anew at every mass. If God accepted this, He would have to apologize to Moses for excluding him from the Promised Land.

Jesus does not need to die again in order for us to receive the blessing of the Holy Spirit. All we must do is ask:

Luke 11:13:

*"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the **Holy Spirit** to **those who ask** Him!"*

God wanted to teach us that Jesus does not need to **die again** in order for us to receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The **once-for-all-death** of Jesus and the acceptance of the sacrifice by the Father, means that the Holy Spirit is **available** to us for the asking. If **we meet the conditions, all we must do is speak** to Jesus in prayer and **ask** for the Holy Spirit:

*"There is one blessing that all may have who **seek for it** in the right way. It is the Holy Spirit of God, and this is a blessing that brings **all other blessings** in its train." In Heavenly Places, p. 113.*

The Day of Pentecost

Jesus accomplished several things in His ministry on earth:

- He lived a perfect life in the sanctuary camp.
- He offered His life in sacrifice upon the altar in the court.
- He resurrected from the dead at the laver of regeneration.

Temple Geography

In the geography of the Hebrew Sanctuary, after the court, the altar of sacrifice and the laver came the ministration of the high priest in the holy place. Likewise, after Jesus lived, died and resurrected on earth we would expect Him to begin His ministry in the holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. Jesus did not go directly into the most holy place upon His ascension, thus bypassing the holy place. The tongues of fire on the Day of Pentecost announced to the apostles gathered in the Upper Room that the Father accepted Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.

Where did Jesus Enter upon His Ascension?

Before the arrival of Jesus at His ascension, the seven spirits were before the throne. The number seven indicates that the fullness of the Holy Spirit was present in the holy place before Jesus ascended to heaven.

Revelation 4:5:

"And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God."

After Jesus arrived in heaven and His Father accepted His sacrifice, God the sent the seven Spirits to the earth and the disciples saw the tongues of fire:

Revelation 5:6:

*“And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a **Lamb as though it had been slain**, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God **sent out** into **all** the earth.”*

The Day of Pentecost

Revelation 5:6 explains that the ‘lamb that was slain’ came to the Father who was sitting on His throne in the holy place and **immediately afterwards** the Father sent the **seven spirits of fire** to the earth. The pattern is clear: First, the **sacrificial** Lamb presented Himself **alive** before the Father, and then the Father sent the Holy Spirit, symbolized by the seven Spirits of fire, thus announcing that the Father had accepted the sacrifice! The holy place of the **heavenly sanctuary was now open** for business and individual clients could come to Jesus and personally claim the benefits of Christ’s earthly work.

Ellen White, in the **last three pages** of her classic book, ***The Desire of Ages***, vividly describes how Jesus approached His Father at His ascension to hear from His **own lips** that His sacrifice was accepted.

Pentecost came **50 days after** the resurrection. Ellen White expanded upon the relationship between heaven and earth when the Father poured out His Spirit:

The Story of Redemption, p. 386:

*“The rending of the veil of the temple showed that the Jewish sacrifices and ordinances would no longer be received. The great Sacrifice had been **offered** and had been **accepted**, and the Holy Spirit which **descended** on the day of Pentecost carried the minds of the disciples from the earthly sanctuary to the heavenly,*

where Jesus had entered by His own blood, to shed upon His disciples [not the whole world] the benefits [his perfect life and death] of His atonement."

Jesus could not pour out upon His disciples the benefits of His atonement until He had gained those benefits. Jesus gained the benefits for the human race corporately in the camp (where He lived His perfect life) and in the court (where He died on the cross). Then Jesus resurrected and entered the holy place to apply these benefits to individuals who personally claim them (cf. Acts 2:38).

Mark 16:16:

"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."

Acts 2:37, 38:

"Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" ³⁸ Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Acts 10:43:

"To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."

Hebrews 7:25

"Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."

1 John 2:1, 2 - NIV:

*"My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who **speaks to the Father in our defense**--Jesus Christ, the **Righteous One**."*

The Mission of the Disciples

What good would it do for Jesus to begin His intercessory work for individuals in the Holy Place if no one on **earth knew about it**? The **mission of the disciples** was to preach that Jesus had purchased salvation by His life and death. They were to announce that the **benefits** of Christ's work were now available to anyone who **personally** met the conditions and claimed them. That is to say, the message of the disciples was to announce what Jesus had **done on earth** and what He was **doing in heaven**.

Jesus had lived a perfect life and died in our place, and the Father gave the Holy Spirit to **enable the disciples to preach** the good news to others. During the ten days before Pentecost, the disciples had repented of and confessed their sins and had placed their faith in Jesus and then **asked** for the Spirit in prayer and they were the **first ones to personally receive the benefits** of Christ's earthly work.

What did the **disciples do** when they asked for and received the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost? They immediately **witnessed to others**. Put another way, they drank the water and then became springs of water!

Acts 1:7-8:

*"And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. ⁸ But **you shall receive** power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and **you shall be witnesses** to Me in Jerusalem, and in all*

Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Notice that the expression "you shall" appears twice in these verses. The purpose of the power they received was to witness! Unless we are **willing to give**, we will **not receive** because the purpose of **receiving** is **to give**! Jesus had said, "Give and it shall be given unto you."

The Woman of Samaria

The woman of Samaria provides a good example of the relationship between receiving and giving. When she received the water of salvation from Jesus, she immediately gave it in the city of Sicar where she lived.

John 4:13, 14:

*"Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again,
¹⁴ but **whoever drinks** of the water that **I** shall give **him** will never thirst. But the water that I shall give **him** will become **in him a fountain** of water springing up into everlasting life."*

The context of these verses is the story of the Samaritan woman: **She drank** from the fountain of water that **Jesus gave her** and then she became **a tributary** of the fountain. She brought the entire town of **Sicar** to hear the words of Jesus.

The Ministry of Healing, p. 102:

*"She proved herself a **more effective missionary** than His own disciples. The disciples **saw nothing in Samaria** to indicate that it was an encouraging field. Their thoughts were fixed upon a great work **to be done in the future [are we thinking the same about the latter rain?]**. They did not see that **right around them** was a harvest to be gathered. However, through the woman whom they*

despised a **whole cityful** were brought to hear Jesus. She carried the light **at once** to her countrymen. This woman represents the working of a **practical faith** in Christ."

"This woman represents the working of a practical faith in Christ. **Every true disciple** is born into the kingdom of God as **a missionary**. No sooner does he come to know the Savior than he desires to make others acquainted with Him. The saving and sanctifying truth cannot be **shut up in his heart**. He who **drinks** of the living water **becomes a fountain** of life. The **receiver becomes a giver**. The grace of Christ in the soul is like a spring in the desert, welling up to refresh all, and making those who are ready to perish eager to drink of the water of life. In doing this work, a greater blessing is received than if we work merely to benefit ourselves. It is in working to **spread the good news** of salvation that we are brought **near to the Savior**." *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 102, 103



ANCHOR SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

“Revelation’s Seven Seals: Studies in Revelation 4-8”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #9 – THE FIRST SEAL: THE WHITE HORSE

Meaning: The first seal is parallel to the first church, Ephesus. The white horse represents the conquests of the Apostolic Church and its rider symbolizes Jesus.

“Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, “Come and see.” ² And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.” (Revelation 6:1, 2)

The symbols and Expressions

- The white horse
- The rider
- The **crown**
- The bow
- Conquering and to conquer

The White Horse and its Rider

In **Zechariah 10:3-6**, compares God's people, **Judah**, to a **conquering horse**:

*"My anger is kindled against the shepherds, and I will punish the goatherds. For the LORD of hosts will visit His flock, the house of Judah, and **will make them as His royal [the king sits on a white horse in Revelation 19:11] horse in the battle.** ⁴ From him comes the cornerstone, from him the tent peg, from him the **battle bow**, from him every ruler together. ⁵ They shall be **like mighty men**, who **tread down their enemies** in the mire of the streets in the battle. They shall fight because **the LORD is with them**, and the riders on horses shall be put to shame. ⁶ I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph. I will bring them back, because I have mercy on them. They shall be as though I had not cast them aside; for I am the LORD their God, and I will hear them."*

Ellen White explained God's plan for ancient Israel using the symbolism of the first seal:

*"He [God] desired **his people** to go forth conquering and to conquer." **Review and Herald**, July 10, 1900*

Ellen White explained that the white horse represents the conquests of the end time church:

*"Clad in the armor of Christ's righteousness, **the church** is to enter upon her final conflict. 'Fair as the moon, clear as the sun [Revelation 12:1] and terrible as an army with banners' [Song of Solomon 6:10], **she [the church]** is to go forth into all the world **conquering and to conquer** [Revelation 6:1, 2]." **PK**, p. 725*

Ellen White also described **Jesus** as the **rider** of the white horse. It is the rider who guides the horse, not the horse that guides the rider. That is, the rider of the horse symbolizes Jesus and the horse itself represents His people:

*"The issue of the battle does not rest upon the strength of mortal man. "The **Lord** shall go forth as a **mighty man**, he shall stir up jealousy like a **man of war**: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall **prevail** against his enemies." **In the power** of Him **who rides** forth **conquering and to conquer**, weak, finite man may gain the victory." 4BC, p. 1146*

Jesus (the rider) accomplishes His work through **His people** (the white horse):

*"**God's workers** must gain a far deeper experience. If they will surrender all to Him, **He will work** mightily for them. They will plant the standard of truth upon fortresses till then held by Satan, and with shouts of victory take possession of them. They bear the scars of battle, but there comes to them the comforting message that the **Lord will lead them on conquering and to conquer**". Colporteur Ministry, p. 155*

*"Christ **identifies** His interests with the interests of His faithful people; He suffers in the person of His saints; and whoever touches His chosen ones, **touches Him**." Christian Service, p. 166*

*"The world today is in crying need of a revelation of Christ Jesus **in the person of His saints**. God desires that His people shall stand before the world a **holy** people [purity]. Why? Because there is a world to be saved by the **light [white]** of gospel truth; and as the message of truth that is to call men **out of darkness [black]** into God's marvelous **light [white] is given by the church**, the lives of its members, sanctified by the Spirit of truth, are to **bear witness** to the verity of the messages proclaimed." In Heavenly Places, p. 313*

Scripture uses different symbols to illustrate the intimate relationship between Jesus and His people. Whoever touches His people touches the Lord (see Matthew 25:31-46; Acts 9:4).

- He is the **head** and the church is His body.
- He is the **Shepherd** and his people are the sheep.

- He is the **husband** and his church is the bride (and they are one!).
- He is the sovereign **Commander** and His people are His armies.

Revelation 19 describes the time when the **church militant** will become the **church triumphant**, when the **spiritual victories** of Christ through the church during the Christian dispensation, become the **literal victory** of Jesus and His church at the second coming:

Revelation 19:11, 12:

*“Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a **white horse**. And He who **sat on him** was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He **judges and makes war**.¹² His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were **many crowns**. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself.”*

The Color White

Futurists/Dispensationalists believe that the white horse symbolizes a **future antichrist** that will pass himself off as Christ. However, there is no evidence in the text that suggests such a view.

George Eldon Ladd wrote the following about the meaning of the **color white** in the book of Revelation:

*“In the Revelation, white is always a **symbol of Christ**, or of something associated with Christ, or of **spiritual victory**. Thus the exalted Christ has white hair white as wool (1:14); the faithful will receive a white stone with a new name written on it (2:17); they are to wear white garments (3:4, 5, 18); the twenty-four elders are clad in white (4:4); the martyrs are given white robes (6:11) as is the great numberless throng (7:9 13); the son of man is seen on a white cloud (14:14); he returns on a white horse accompanied by the armies of heaven who are clad in*

white and ride white horses (19:11, 14); in the final judgment, God is seen seated on a white throne (20:11)."

White is a symbol of **purity** (Psalm 51:7; Psalm 45:3-5; Isaiah 1:18; Daniel 7:9; 12:10) and the apostolic church was a pure church both in **doctrine** and in **lifestyle**.

However, white is also the color of **light** and light symbolizes the **Word of God** (Matthew 17:2 [white as the light]; Psalm 119:105; compare Revelation 12:1 with Revelation 19:8 where the **white raiment** is the **glory of the sun**). During the white horse period, the church is **pure** and the **light of the world** (Matthew 5:16).

In obedience to the rider's command, the earliest church (the horse) witnessed in Jerusalem, in Judea, in Samaria and unto the uttermost ends of the earth (Acts 1:7, 8). The church won victory after victory and the gospel went to the entire Roman Empire in a single generation:

The white horse stands in contrast to the **black horse of darkness**. When the church loses its purity of doctrine and lifestyle it becomes a black horse.

Ellen White described the purity and holiness of the apostolic church:

*"The early Christians were indeed a **peculiar people**. Their **blameless deportment** and **unswerving faith** were a continual reproof that disturbed the sinner's peace. Though few in numbers, without wealth, position, or honorary titles, they were a terror to evildoers wherever their **character** and **doctrines** were known. Therefore, they were hated by the wicked, even as the ungodly Cain hated Abel. For the same reason that Cain slew Abel, did those who sought to throw off the restraint of the Holy Spirit, put to death God's people. It was for the same reason that the Jews rejected and crucified the Savior—because the **purity** and **holiness** of His character was a constant rebuke to their selfishness and*

corruption. From the days of Christ until now His faithful disciples have excited the hatred and opposition of those who love and follow the ways of sin.” GC, p. 46

The Bow

2 Kings 13:17 underlines that the bow and arrow represent God’s **deliverance in battle**.

“The arguments of the apostles alone, though clear and convincing, would not have removed the prejudice that had withstood so much evidence. However, the **Holy Spirit** sent the arguments home to hearts with divine power. The **words of the apostles** [now that the seven spirits had been sent into all the earth (Revelation 5:6), the apostles shoot the arrows and the Spirit through the ministration of the angels guides them to the heart] were as **sharp arrows** of the Almighty, convicting men of their terrible guilt in rejecting and crucifying the Lord of glory.” AA, p. 45

“God does not send messengers to flatter the sinner. He delivers no message of peace to lull the unsanctified into fatal security. He lays heavy burdens upon the conscience of the wrongdoer, and pierces the soul with **arrows of conviction**.” DA, p. 104

“The **words of Christ** were **as sharp arrows**, which went to the mark and wounded the hearts of His hearers. Every time He addressed the people, whether His audience was large or small, His words took saving effect upon the soul of someone.” GW, pp. 150, 151

“The Pharisee felt no conviction of sin. The **Holy Spirit** could not work with him. His soul was encased in a self-righteous armor which the **arrows** of God, barbed and true-aimed by **angel hands**, failed to penetrate.” Christ Object Lessons, p. 158

The Crown

The word for crown here is *stephanos*. With **few exceptions**, the *stephanos* is the crown that is given to one who has gained the victory after a struggle.

Revelation 2:10:

*“Do not fear any of those things which you are **about to suffer**. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the **crown of life**.”*

James 1:12:

*“Blessed is the man who **endures temptation**; for when he has been approved, he will receive the **crown of life** which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”*

2 Timothy 4:7-8:

*“I have fought the **good fight**, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Finally, there is laid up for me the **crown of righteousness**, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”*

1 Corinthians 9:24-27:

*“Do you not know that those who **run in a race all run**, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. ²⁵ And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an **imperishable crown**. ²⁶ Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. ²⁷ But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.”*

Conquering and to conquer

The literal translation of the phrase is “overcoming in order that he might overcome.” We must link this phrase with the messages to the seven churches where at the end of each message we find the dictum: “to him that overcomes.” We must also link the phrase with Revelation 5:5 where Jesus overcame. As Jesus overcame while He was on earth and gained the victory in the end, so His church must overcome during the period of the seven seals and receive the crown of life at the end.

The word for ‘overcome’ in Revelation 6:2 and in the context of the seven churches is the same. Thus, the white horse represents the **God’s faithful people in the churches who overcome**. This indicates that the white horse represents the **faithful in the churches**.

The white horse symbolizes the apostolic church that went forth under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to **defeat the kingdom of Satan** and to extend the kingdom of Jesus. Acts 2:41 and Acts 4:4 exemplify these remarkable conquests:

Acts 2:41:

*“Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about **three thousand** souls were added to them.”*

Acts 4:4:

*“However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about **five thousand**.”*

Acts 6:7:

*Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples **multiplied greatly** in Jerusalem, and a **great many** of the priests were obedient to the faith.*

Colossians 1:6, 23; Romans 1:8; Acts 17:6 tell us that the disciples of Jesus took the gospel to the whole world in a single generation:

Colossians 1:6, 23 NIV:

*“**All over the world** this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth.”*

*“This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to **every creature under heaven**, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.”*

Romans 1:8:

*“First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout **the whole world**.”*

Acts 17:6:

*“But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, “These who have turned **the world upside down** have come here too.”*

Concerning these remarkable conquests, Ellen White wrote:

*“The commission that Christ gave to the disciples, they fulfilled. As these messengers of the cross **went forth [first seal language]** to proclaim the gospel, there was such a revelation of the **glory [related to white in the Bible]** of God as had never before been witnessed by mortal man. By the co-operation of the divine Spirit, the apostles did a work that **shook the world**. To every nation was the gospel carried in **a single generation**.” AA, P. 593*

During the Christian Dispensation, the faithful church fights a spiritual war against spiritual enemies in the enemy's spiritual territory with a spiritual armor and spiritual weapons. The purpose of the war is to conquer human hearts (Ephesians 6:10-18; Romans 13:11-14; 2 Corinthians 10:1-6; 1 Timothy 6:12; 2 Timothy 4:7, 8). It involves God's people attempting to convince the devil's soldiers to desert his army and join Christ's army. So to speak, God's people proclaim that *"if you want to be a winner, dessert the devil's army and come over to the Lord's side."*

Revelation 19:11-21 describes the time when the sequence of the seals reaches its climax. When Jesus comes mounted on a white horse, God will answer the pleas of all the martyrs who cried out for justice (Revelation 19:1, 2). Revelation 19:11 again brings to view a **white horse** and a **rider** who makes **war** against Satan and his armies. The rider no longer has the *stephanos* but rather a *diademata* (19:12). The crown of the victor has become the **crown of the king**.

Revelation 19:11-21 depicts a **literal war**. It will be a war between Christ and the heavenly armies and the kings, the beast and the false prophet and their armies. After the latter rain has fallen and the loud cry proclaimed, the whole world will be on one side or the other of the conflict. On God's side are those who follow the Lamb and on the other side those who follow the beast (Revelation 14:14-20). At this point probation will close and Satan will have full control of the finally impenitent (Revelation 15:5-8). Satan will influence his 'armies' to implement a **literal death decree** against God's people. Jesus will then **literally take the battlefield** for his people and will **literally destroy their enemies** (Revelation 19:11-14).

*"Every form of evil is to spring into intense activity. **Evil angels** unite their powers with **evil men**, and, as they have been in constant conflict and attained an experience in the best modes of deception and battle, and have been strengthening for centuries, they will not yield the last great final contest without a desperate struggle. All the world will be on **one side or the other of the question**. The battle of Armageddon will be fought, and that day must find none of us sleeping.*

*Wide awake we must be, as wise virgins having oil in our vessels with our lamps.
What is this?--Grace. Grace!*

*The power of the Holy Ghost must be upon us and the **Captain** of the Lord's host
will stand at the **head of the angels** of heaven to direct the battle. 8MR, P. 347*



ANCHOR SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

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LESSON #10 – THE SECOND SEAL: THE RED HORSE

Meaning: The Red Horse represents the persecutions against the church by the pagan Roman emperors until Constantine’s Edict of Toleration ended the persecution in the year 313 AD. The red horse is parallel to the second church, Smyrna.

“When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, “Come and see.” ⁴ Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.” (Revelation 6:3, 4)

As mentioned before this is the period of the church of Smyrna. There is much ‘death language’ in the message to the church of Smyrna. In fact, the name means “bittersweet myrrh”, a substance used to embalm the dead. Jesus presented Himself to this church as “the one who was dead and is alive forevermore (Revelation 2:8). Jesus encouraged the members of Smyrna to be faithful unto death (Revelation 2:10) and promised that the faithful would not be hurt by the second death (Revelation 2:11). The ten days of Smyrna are the ten years of Diocletian’s persecution from 303-313 AD.

We find Ellen White's comments on the second seal in the chapter titled: *"Persecution in the first centuries"* GC, pp. 39-48.

Revelation 12:11 describes the faithfulness of those who overcame (the very word "conquering" that is used in connection with the first seal) *"by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony and they did not love their lives even unto death."*

The Color Red

In the Bible the color red represents bloodshed. When the sword takes away peace from the earth the result is war and bloodshed (Isaiah 63:2; Nahum 2:3; Revelation 17:1-6).

The Sword that takes away peace

The sword symbolizes the Bible:

Hebrews 4:12, 13:

"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. ¹³ And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account."

Ephesians 6:17:

"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

Isaiah 49:2:

*"And He has made **My mouth like a sharp sword**; in the shadow of His hand He has hidden Me, and made Me a polished shaft; in His quiver He has hidden Me."*

Repeatedly, the Bible emphasizes that the preaching of the gospel **brings peace** to those who accept its message:

Isaiah 9:6:

*"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder and His name will be called, Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, **Prince of Peace**."*

Romans 10:14, 15:

*"How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who **preach the gospel of peace**, who bring glad tidings of good things!"*

Ephesians 6:14, 15:

*"Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and having shod **your feet** with the preparation of the **gospel of peace**."*

The big question at this point is this, if the sword here is the Bible, why does it take away peace from the earth. The answer is simple. When sinners heed the message of the Bible, it brings personal peace. However, when sinners reject its message they rise to take away the peace of those who proclaim it. That is to

say, the Sword of the Spirit (Hebrews 4:12, 13) brings in its train the sword of persecution from those who reject it.

The conquests of the first horse led to persecution under the second. The devil, deeply concerned about the many defections from his army (Revelation 2:10) launched a deadly persecution against those who were conquering the subjects of his kingdom through the preaching of the gospel.

The key text to explain the meaning of the sword in the second seal is **Matthew 10:34-39**. These verses contain the same three words that appear in the second seal: **earth**, **peace** and **sword**:

*"Do not think that I came to bring peace on **earth**. I did not come to bring **peace** but a **sword**.³⁵ For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law';³⁶ and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.'³⁷ He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.³⁸ And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.³⁹ He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it."*

The sword not only represents the Bible, but also the legitimate punitive power of the state to punish those who transgress civil law:

Romans 13:1-5:

"Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.² Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.³ For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same.⁴ For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do

evil, be afraid; for he **does not bear the sword in vain**; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil."

The wicked emperors and their subjects **illegitimately** used the sword of the state against God's faithful people for preaching the gospel of the Bible. The preaching of the gospel brings peace to the receivers but awakens war from the rejectors.

Ellen White explained the relationship between the first seal (the white horse) and the second seal (the red horse):

*"The gospel is a message of peace. Christianity is a system that, received and obeyed, would spread **peace** [key word in the second seal], harmony, and happiness throughout the earth. The gospel presents to them principles of life that are wholly at variance with their habits and desires, and they **rise in rebellion against it**. They hate the **purity** [first seal] that reveals and condemns their sins, and they **persecute and destroy** those who would urge upon them its just and holy claims. It is in this sense—because the exalted truths it brings occasion hatred and strife—that the gospel is called a **sword** [key word in the second seal]. GC, p. 46*

Ellen White vividly described the relationship between the triumphs of the gospel and the ensuing persecution with the sword:

*"The powers of earth and hell **arrayed themselves** [war language] against Christ in the person of His followers. Paganism foresaw that should the **gospel triumph** [white horse and war language], her temples and altars would be swept away; therefore she summoned her **forces** [war language] to destroy Christianity. The **fires of persecution** [second seal] were kindled. Christians were stripped of their possessions and driven from their homes. They "endured a great fight of afflictions." Hebrews 10:32. They "had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment." Hebrews 11:36. Great numbers sealed their testimony with their **blood** [red]. Noble and slave, rich and*

poor, learned and ignorant, were alike **slain** without mercy.” GC, pp. 39, 40; see also GC, p. 42 where the blood of Christians is spoken of as seed.

*“In vain were Satan's efforts to destroy the church of Christ by **violence** [**red horse**]. The great **controversy** [**war language**] in which the disciples of Jesus yielded up their lives did not cease when these faithful **standard-bearers** [**war terminology**] fell at their **post** [**war language**]. By defeat, they **conquered** [**same word that appears in the white horse**]. God's workmen were **slain**, but His work went steadily forward. The gospel continued to spread and the number of its adherents to increase [**the church went out conquering and to conquer**].” GC, p. 41*

*“Thousands were imprisoned and slain, but others sprang up to fill their places. And those who were martyred for their faith were secured to Christ and accounted of Him as **conquerors** [**white horse language**]. They had fought the good **fight** [**military language**], and they were to receive the **crown of glory** [**the victor's crown of the first seal**] when Christ should come.” GC, p. 42*

*“The early Christians were indeed a **peculiar** people. Their **blameless** deportment and unswerving faith were a continual **reproof** that **disturbed** the **sinner's peace**. Though few in numbers, without wealth, position, or honorary titles, they were a **terror** to evildoers wherever their **character** and **doctrines** were known. Therefore, the wicked **hated** them, even as **ungodly Cain** hated Abel. For the same reason that Cain slew Abel, did those who sought to throw off the restraint of the Holy Spirit, **put to death** God's people. It was for the same reason that the Jews rejected and crucified the Savior—because the **purity** and **holiness** of His character was a constant **rebuke** to their selfishness and corruption. From the days of Christ until now His faithful disciples have excited the **hatred** and **opposition** of those who love and follow the ways of sin.” GC, p. 46*

There are several instances in Scripture that illustrate this **pattern** of persecution following revival, reformation and preaching.

Example #1: Ezekiel 36, 37: After a powerful revival and reformation in Israel Gog and Magog come against Israel in chapters **38 and 39**.

Ezekiel 36:26, 27:

"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them."

Ezekiel 37:11-14:

"Then He said to me, 'Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, 'Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!' ¹² Therefore prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God: "Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. ¹³ Then you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. ¹⁴ I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken it and performed it," says the Lord.'"

Ezekiel 38:18-23:

"And it will come to pass at the same time, when Gog comes against the land of Israel," says the Lord God, "that My fury will show in My face. ¹⁹ For in My jealousy and in the fire of My wrath I have spoken: 'Surely in that day there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel, ²⁰ so that the fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, the beasts of the field, all creeping things that creep on the earth, and all men who are on the face of the earth shall shake at My presence. The mountains shall be thrown down, the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground.' ²¹ I will call for a sword against Gog throughout all My mountains," says the Lord God. "Every man's sword will be against his brother. ²² And I will bring

him to judgment with pestilence and bloodshed; I will rain down on him, on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, flooding rain, great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. ²³ Thus I will magnify Myself and sanctify Myself, and I will be known in the eyes of many nations. Then they shall know that I am the Lord."

Example #2: After revival and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Joel 2:28-32 the wicked gather for war against God's people in chapter 3. There is a pattern here. Revival and the preaching of the gospel brings persecution in its train.

Joel 2:28-32:

"And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. ²⁹ And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will **pour out My Spirit** in those days. ³⁰ "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke. ³¹ The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, **before** the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. ³² And it shall come to pass That whoever **calls on the name of the Lord** shall be saved for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be **deliverance**, as the Lord has said, among the **remnant** whom the Lord calls."

Joel 3:9-17: (Revelation 14:14-20 picks up on this scene and universalizes it—see below)

"Proclaim this among the nations: "**Prepare for war!** Wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near, let them come up. ¹⁰ Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weak say, 'I am strong.'" ¹¹ Assemble and come, **all you nations**, and gather together all around. Cause **Your mighty ones** to go down there, O Lord. ¹² "Let the nations be wakened, and come up to the **Valley of Jehoshaphat**; for there I will sit to **judge all the surrounding nations**. ¹³ Put in the **sickle**, for the **harvest is ripe**. Come, go down; for the **winepress** is full, the vats overflow —for their **wickedness is great**." ¹⁴

*Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. ¹⁵ The **sun** and **moon** will grow dark, and the **stars** will diminish their brightness. ¹⁶ The Lord also **will roar** from Zion, and **utter His voice** from Jerusalem; the heavens and earth **will shake**; but the Lord will be a **shelter for His people**, and the strength of the children of Israel. ¹⁷ "So you shall know that I am the Lord your God, dwelling in **Zion My holy mountain**."*

Example #3: (note a more detailed sequence above):

After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2), Peter and John brought healing to a paralytic (3:1-11). After healing him, Peter presented a sermon from God's word at Solomon's Portico (3:12-26). This grieved the religious leaders but brought five thousand souls into the kingdom (4:1-4). Further preaching by Peter led to additional threats (4:5-22). In Acts 5:12 further preaching led to imprisonment threats (Acts 5:17-20). The Sanhedrin summoned Peter and John to trial again where they spoke boldly (Acts 5:28-32) As a result the leaders wanted to kill them (Acts 5:33). Then Gamaliel spoke some very wise words where he used **warfare terminology**:

*"And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; ³⁹ but if it is of God, you cannot **overthrow** it--lest you even be found to **fight** against God." (Acts 5:28-30)*

After this the Peter and John were beaten and considered it an honor to suffer shame for the name (Acts 5:40).

Example #4: The Sanhedrin arrested Stephen (Acts 6:12-7:1) and God filled him with the Spirit (Acts 7:55) to preach a powerful sermon describing the history of Israel culminating with the arrival of Jesus (Acts 7:2-53). This enraged the leadership and they encouraged the mob to stone the Lord's servant (Acts 7:54-60).

Example #5:

Immediately after the proclamation of the three angels' messages (Revelation 14:6-12) and the world is divided into two groups, the wicked gather against God's people outside the Holy City (Revelation 14:14-18). However, the heavenly armies trample the winepress and deliver God's people (Revelation 14:19, 20). Revelation 19:11-21 amplifies the winepress scene.

It is significant that at the time of the apostle Paul the **Roman Empire wielded the sword** (Romans 13:1-5). The Roman Empire killed **Peter** by crucifixion, **Paul** by decapitation and **James** with the sword (Acts 12:1, 2). The slaying of James with the sword come immediately after a description of the **exponential growth** of the church (Acts 11:21, 24).

All of the apostles suffered martyrdom save John whom the Roman Empire exiled to Patmos. When the church reached the end of the period of the second seal (313 AD), it was weary of persecution. It longed for a respite. Satan knew that the church was persecution weary and had a strategy in place. The danger of compromise lurked around the corner.

ADDENDUM: CHAIN REACTION

Introduction

In this study, we will look at seven inseparable sequential events in Acts 1-5. We shall find that each event leads 'naturally' to the next.

Seven steps in our Study

- The condition of the apostles before Christ's passion.
- The active wait of the apostles for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the Upper Room.
- The reception of the power.
- Speaking boldly with the power.
- The exponential church growth because of preaching with power.
- Satan's loss of his subjects by the thousands because of the preaching with power.
- Persecution and joy for the privilege of suffering for the Name.

Step #1: A Group of Misfits

Let us examine the agendas and attitudes of the disciples before Jesus' death:

They had a mean streak: James and John (sons of thunder) offered to make fire come down from heaven to consume the Samaritan villages. If Jesus had installed James and John to His right and left, they would have ruled by force.

Luke 9:53-54:

"But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem. ⁵⁴ And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?"

They served Jesus for reward: The disciples were constantly concerned about the **reward they would receive** for leaving all to serve Jesus. Their attitude was, "we have left it all, what's in it for us?"

Matthew 19:27:

*"Then Peter answered and said to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore **what shall we have?**"*

They were concerned about their own dignity and status:

John 13:6, 8:

"Then He came to Simon Peter and Peter said to Him, "Lord, are You washing my feet?" "You shall never wash my feet."

They struggled for position and power: All of them wanted to be the greatest in the kingdom:

Mark 9:33, 34:

*"Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, "What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?" ³⁴ But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves **who would be the greatest.**"*

They desired the highest position: James and John asked their **mother** to persuade Jesus to place them in the two highest positions in the kingdom. We know this because Jesus then asked **them** if they were able to drink the cup and be baptized with the baptism, to which **they** replied 'yes we can':

Matthew 20:20-28:

²¹ "And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom."

The disciples were interested in their own self-preservation: They forsook Jesus in the Garden because they wished to save their own lives:

Mark 14:50:

"And they all forsook him, and fled."

Peter was embarrassed to be associated with Jesus:

Mark 14:71:

*"Then he began to **curse** and **swear**, "I do not know this Man of whom you speak!"*

Summary: Each disciple was looking out for **number one**. Each had their own **personal agenda**. They were looking to save their **own lives**, their **own reputation**, their **own self-interest**, their **own position** and their own **financial security**.

The disciples were **radically different** from one another:

- **Simon the Zealot** was a terrorist.

- **Judas** was a shrewd administrator who had a high opinion of himself and thought of the others as ignoramuses.
- **Matthew** was a hated tax collector.
- **James and John** were sons of thunder with a short fuse.
- **Peter** was an outspoken, violent and foul-mouthed fisherman who put his tongue in fourth gear before putting his brain in first.
- **Thomas** was a philosopher who doubted what he could not see.

What a combination of **misfits**! It appeared impossible to unite all of these men into **one body** with a **common agenda**!

Jesus Prayed for Unity: Yet Jesus on **Thursday evening** prayed to His Father that they might become **one in mind, heart and action**.

John 17:20-23:

*"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; ²¹ that they all **may be one**, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also **may be one** in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. ²² And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that **they may be one** just as We are one: ²³ I in them, and You in Me; that **they may be made perfect in one**, and that **the world may know** that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me."*

Step #2: The 'active' Wait for the Power

The secret to missionary success is in **actively waiting** for the power, and then working. The ten days before Pentecost, the disciples were not merely **sitting around** idly waiting. They were **doing something** while they **waited**!

Matthew 28:19-20: Before Jesus ascended to heaven the Father gave Him all power in heaven and on earth. However, the disciples needed **to wait** to receive the power from Jesus in order to be witnesses:

*"All authority **has been given to Me** in heaven and on earth [**the Father gave Him the power when he went to heaven on resurrection morning**]. ¹⁹ **Go therefore** and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen."*

Acts 1:4, 8: Jesus told His disciples to **wait for the power**

*"And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, **but to wait** for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me ⁸ But you shall **receive power** when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

John 20:21-23: Jesus gave the disciples the **emptying Spirit** on the **day of His resurrection** before Pentecost. It is impossible to fill what is already full:

*"So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." ²² And when He had said this, He **breathed on them**, and said to them, "Receive **the Holy Spirit**. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are [**have been**] forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are [**have been**] retained."*

Ten Days before Pentecost:

Something highly unusual happened **among the disciples** during those **ten days** between the **ascension** and **Pentecost**:

Acts 1:14: **Active in prayer** and supplication

*"These all **continued** with **one accord** in **prayer and supplication**, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers."*

Ellen White described what happened in the Upper Room during those ten days:

Acts 2:1:

*“When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were **all** with **one accord** in one place.”*

After the Day of Pentecost, they revealed in their behavior the spirit they had experienced in the Upper Room:

Acts 2:42: Persevered in **doctrine**, **communion**, breaking bread and prayer

*“And they continued steadfastly in the **apostles' doctrine** and **fellowship**, in the breaking of bread, and in **prayers**.”*

Acts 2:45: They got rid of their **property** when they **saw a need**. Their **focus had entirely shifted** from self to Christ. Their time, talents, money, strength was now invested to **save souls**

“... and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.”

Acts 2:46, 47: They persevered **as one**, went **to the temple** each day and celebrated meetings in homes with **simplicity of heart**:

*“So continuing **daily** with **one accord** in the **temple**, and **breaking bread** from house to house, they ate their food with **gladness and simplicity of heart**,⁴⁷ **praising God** and **having favor** with all the people. **And** the Lord **added to the church daily** those who were being saved.”*

Clearly, their focus had experienced a seismic change. All had **one Lord, one heartbeat, one focus**. Their center of attention had **shifted** from self to Jesus and others.

They spent the ten days before Pentecost praying, studying, ironing out their differences and coming into unity. When Pentecost came, they were **one body** with **many members** coming **together in unity**.

*“As the disciples waited for the fulfillment of the promise, they **humbled their hearts** in true repentance and **confessed their unbelief**. As they called to **remembrance the words** that Christ had spoken to them before His death, they understood more fully their meaning. Truths that had passed from their memory were again brought to their minds, and these they repeated to one another. They **reproached themselves** for their misapprehension of the Savior. Like a procession, scene after scene of His wonderful life passed before them. As they **meditated upon** His pure, holy life they felt that no toil would be too hard, no sacrifice too great, if only they could bear witness in their lives to the loveliness of Christ's character. Oh, if they could but have the past three years to live over, they thought, how differently they would act! If they could only see the Master again, how earnestly they would strive to show Him how deeply they loved Him, and how sincerely they sorrowed for having ever grieved Him by a word or an act of unbelief! However, they were comforted by the thought that **they were forgiven** and they determined that, so far as possible, they would atone for their unbelief by bravely confessing Him before the world.*

*The disciples prayed with **intense earnestness** for a fitness to meet men and in their daily intercourse to speak words that would lead sinners to Christ. **Putting away all differences**, all desire for the supremacy, they came **close together** in Christian fellowship. They drew **nearer and nearer to God**, and as they did this, they realized what a privilege had been theirs in being permitted to associate so closely with Christ. **Sadness filled their hearts** as they thought of how many times they had grieved Him by their slowness of comprehension, their failure to*

understand the lessons that, for their good, He was trying to teach them". AA, p. 36, 37

Step #3: Receiving the Power

After their hearts were empty of self, they received the infilling of the Holy Spirit **without measure** (Acts 2:1-4). God imparted the gift of tongues to so that they could share the gospel in the languages of the nations:

Acts 2:1-4:

*"When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with **one accord** in one place. ² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ Then there appeared to them divided **tongues, as of fire**, and one sat upon each of them. ⁴ And they were **all filled** with the Holy Spirit and began to **speak with other tongues**, as the Spirit gave them utterance."*

Step #4: The Preaching Jesus with Power

Peter preached **one sermon** on the Day of Pentecost and this **one sermon** led to the conversion and baptism of **3000 souls**. This was not the **thousand days of reaping** but the day of reaping thousands.

The apostles were **now fearless**:

Acts 4:13:

*"Now when they saw the **boldness** of Peter and John, and perceived that they were **uneducated [agrammatos]** and **untrained [idiotes]** men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus."*

Acts 4:19-20:

*"But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. ²⁰ For **we cannot but speak** the things which we have **seen and heard**."*

Acts 4:29, 31:

*"Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with **all boldness** they may speak **Your word**, ³⁰ by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus." ³¹ And when they **had prayed**, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all **filled with the Holy Spirit**, and they spoke the **word of God with boldness**."*

Step #5: The Results: The conversion of Thousands

Acts 1:15: 120

*"And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about **a hundred and twenty**)."*

Acts 2:41, 42: 3,000

*"Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about **three thousand souls** were added to them. ⁴² And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers."*

Acts 4:4: 5,000

*"However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about **five thousand**."*

Acts 4:32: Multitude

*“Now the **multitude** of those who **believed** were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.”*

Acts 5:14: Multitudes

*“And believers were **increasingly added** to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women.”*

Acts 6:7: Number of priests and people multiplied greatly

*“Then the word of God spread, and the **number** of the disciples **multiplied greatly** in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.”*

Acts 9:31: Churches multiply

*“Then the **churches** throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were **multiplied**.”*

Acts 14:1: A great multitude in Iconium believed

*“Now it happened in Iconium that they went together to the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke that a **great multitude** both of the Jews and of the Greeks **believed**.”*

Acts 21:20: Many myriads

*"And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord and they said to him, "You see, brother, how **many myriads** of Jews there are who have **believed**, and they are all zealous for the law."*

They **no longer cared** for money, power, reputation, dignity, position or life itself. Their center of focus was upon proclaiming Jesus at all costs!

*"What was the result of the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost? The **glad tidings** of a risen Savior were carried to the **uttermost parts** of the inhabited world. As the disciples proclaimed the message of redeeming grace, hearts yielded to the power of this message. The church beheld **converts flocking to her from all directions**. **Backsliders** were **reconverted**. Sinners united with believers in seeking the pearl of great price. Some who had been the **bitterest opponents** of the gospel became its champions." *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 48*

The apostles needed no mimes, concerts, dramas, magic shows, contemporary Christian music, continental breakfasts or coffee to attract the crowds. They had Jesus, the Word and the Spirit and multitudes responded!

Step #6: Satan was losing his Subjects

*"His **unlikeness to the world** provoked the bitterest hostility. Because He would give no license for the **exercise of the evil passions of our nature**, He aroused the **fiercest opposition and enmity**. So it is with **all who will live godly** in Christ Jesus. Between righteousness and sin, love and hatred, truth and falsehood, there is an irrepressible conflict. When one presents the love of Christ and the beauty of holiness, he is **drawing away the subjects** of Satan's kingdom, and the prince of evil is **aroused to resist it**. Persecution and reproach await all who are imbued with the Spirit of Christ. The character of the persecution changes with the times, **but the principle**--the spirit that underlies it--is the same that has slain the*

chosen of the Lord ever since the days of Abel.” Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings, p. 29

Step #7: Persecution followed

“The early Christians were indeed a peculiar people. Their blameless deportment and unswerving faith were a continual reproof that disturbed the sinner's peace. Though few in numbers, without wealth, position, or honorary titles, they were a terror to evildoers wherever their character and doctrines were known. Therefore they were hated by the wicked, even as Abel was hated by the ungodly Cain. For the same reason that Cain slew Abel, did those who sought to throw off the restraint of the Holy Spirit, put to death God's people. It was for the same reason that the Jews rejected and crucified the Savior--because the purity and holiness of His character was a constant rebuke to their selfishness and corruption. From the days of Christ until now His faithful disciples have excited the hatred and opposition of those who love and follow the ways of sin.” The Great Controversy, p. 46

The Flow of Events in Acts 3-5

Acts 3: Peter and John healed a paralytic.

Acts 4:3: The Sanhedrin arrested Peter and John and held in custody overnight.

Acts 4:8-13: The following day, Peter spoke before the Sanhedrin:

“Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: ⁹ If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, ¹⁰ let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before

you whole. ¹¹ This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' ¹² Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Acts 4:13: The Sanhedrin realized that Peter and John had been with Jesus:

"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated [agrammatoi] and untrained [idiootai] men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus."

Acts 4:20: The leaders deliberated among themselves and then commanded Peter and John not to speak in the name of Jesus to which Peter answered:

"For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

Acts 4:21-30: The religious leaders threatened and released Peter and John and they went to their own and rendered a report

Acts 4:31: The believers then prayed:

"And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness."

Chapter 5: The disciples are preaching and healing again and are arrested and put in jail but the angel let them out and commanded them to preach in the temple court.

Peter and John were arrested once again and taken before the Sanhedrin and the high priest said: *"Did we not command you not to preach in the name of Jesus?"* to which Peter answered: "We ought to obey God rather than men."

Acts 5:33:

"When they heard this, they were furious and plotted to kill them."

Gamaliel then gave his wise advice, using war terminology:

Acts 5:41, 42:

*"So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were **counted worthy to suffer shame** for His name. ⁴² And **daily in the temple**, and in **every house**, they **did not cease teaching and preaching** Jesus as the Christ."*

*"The history of the early church testified to the fulfillment of the Savior's words. The powers of **earth and hell** arrayed themselves against Christ in the person of His followers. **Paganism foresaw** that should the gospel triumph, her temples and altars **would be swept away**; therefore she summoned her forces **to destroy Christianity**. The **fires of persecution** were kindled. Christians were stripped of their possessions and driven from their homes. They "endured a great fight of afflictions." Hebrews 10:32. They "had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment." Hebrews 11:36. Great numbers sealed their testimony **with their blood**. Noble and slave, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, were alike **slain without mercy**. These persecutions, beginning under Nero about the time of the martyrdom of Paul, continued with greater or less fury for centuries. Christians were **falsely accused** of the most dreadful crimes and declared to be the cause of great calamities--**famine, pestilence, and earthquake**. As they became the **objects of popular hatred** and suspicion, informers stood ready, for the sake of gain, to betray the innocent. They were condemned as **rebels against the empire**, as **foes of religion**, and **pests to society**. Great numbers were thrown to wild beasts or burned alive in the amphitheaters. Some were crucified; others were covered with the skins of wild animals and thrust into the arena to be torn by dogs. Their punishment was often made the chief entertainment at public fetes. Vast multitudes assembled to **enjoy***

***the sight** and greeted their dying agonies with laughter and applause.” GC, pp. 39, 40*

Paul’s last words:

2 Timothy 4:6-8:

“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

Peter’s last request:

*“Peter, as a Jew and a foreigner, was condemned to be scourged and crucified. In prospect of this fearful death, the apostle remembered his great sin in denying Jesus in the hour of His trial. Once so unready to acknowledge the cross, he now counted it a joy to **yield up his life for the gospel**, feeling only that, for him who had denied his Lord, to die in the same manner, as his Master died was too great an honor. Peter had sincerely repented of that sin and Christ had forgiven him, as is shown by the high commission given him to feed the sheep and lambs of the flock. However, he could never forgive himself. Not even the thought of the agonies of the last terrible scene could lessen the bitterness of his sorrow and repentance. As a last favor, he entreated his executioners that he might be nailed to the cross with his head downward. The request was granted, and in this manner died the great apostle Peter.” AA, pp. 537, 538*

The last words of Polycarp bishop of Smyrna:

“For 86 years I have been His slave, and He has done me no wrong; how can I blaspheme my king who has saved me?”

The last words of Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch:

“Let me be eaten by the wild beasts through whom I can reach the presence of God. I am God’s wheat and I am ground by the teeth of wild beasts so that I may be found pure bread of Christ. Instead, coax the wild beasts to be my grave, and to leave none of my body, so that when I have fallen asleep I may not be burdensome to anyone.”

Tertullian:

“The oftener we are mown down by you, the more in number we grow; the blood of Christians is seed.”

Step #7: Application to us

2Timothy 3:12: Every true Christian will suffer persecution:

“Yes and all [no exceptions] who desire [choose] to live godly in Christ Jesus will [not might] suffer persecution.”

John 17:14:

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

James 4:4:

“Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”

1 John 2:15-17:

***"Do not love the world or the things in the world.** If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever."*

There is a fundamental misunderstanding about the meaning of the word 'worldly'. What characterizes a worldly person? Worldliness means that a person is more concerned with the **here and now** than with the **sweet by and by**. It means that a person is **earth-focused**. The **clothes** we wear, the **houses** we live in, the **cars** we drive, the **entertainment** we choose, the way we **spend our time**, how we use our **money**, how we use **our strength** reveals whether we are earthly or heavenly focused.

Do we have time for **work**, **play**, **television**, and **shopping** but little or none for **Bible study**, **prayer**, coming to **church** on time, coming to **prayer meeting**, **witnessing**? Worldliness is an earthly orientation.

*"There is another and more important question that should engage the attention of the churches of today. The apostle Paul declares that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." **2 Timothy 3:12**. **Why** is it, then, that persecution seems in a great degree to slumber? The **only reason** is that the church has **conformed to the world's standard** and therefore **awakens no opposition**. The religion which is current in our day is not of the **pure and holy character** that marked the Christian faith in the days of **Christ and His apostles**. It is only because of the spirit of **compromise with sin**, because the **great truths** of the word of God are so **indifferently regarded**, because there is so little **vital godliness** in the church, that Christianity is apparently so popular with the world. Let there be a **revival** of the faith and power of the **early church**, and the spirit of persecution will be **revived**, and the fires of persecution will be **rekindled**." GC, p. 48*

Satan must know that the promised revival is **soon to occur** because he is **tearing the world apart** and the church apart. Further, he is causing a **counterfeit revival** even in Adventist churches, with the objective of blaming **a revived and reformed** people of the calamities that are falling upon the earth.



ANCHOR SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

“Revelation’s Seven Seals: Studies in Revelation 4-8”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #11 - THE THIRD SEAL: THE BLACK HORSE

Meaning: The third seal represents the period when Constantine favored the Christian church and as a result persecution ceased and the world entered the church.

*“When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, “Come and see.” So I looked, and behold, a **black** horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of **scales** in his hand. ⁶ And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, “A quart of **wheat** for a denarius, and three quarts of **barley** for a denarius; and do not harm the **oil** and the **wine**.” Revelation 6:5, 6*

The Symbols

- The color **black**
- The **scales**
- The **wheat and barley**
- The **oil and wine**

Historical Context

- The **white horse**: Describes the victories of the early church.
- The **red horse**: Describes the imperial persecutions in the early centuries.
- The **black horse**: Infiltration of the church by the world.

Satan's **two methods** against God's people:

- **Persecution** as exemplified in the story of Cain and Abel.
- **Infiltration** as exemplified in the story of the flood.
- When Satan cannot overcome the church by persecution, he corrupts it from within. His philosophy is, 'if you can't fight them, join them'.

The Third Church: Pergamum

The third seal is parallel to the period of the third church, Pergamum:

- **Ephesus**: The Apostolic church
- **Smyrna**: The persecuted church
- **Pergamum**: The compromising church

Satan's throne was in Pergamum (Revelation 2:13). The third seal is the transition period between the 'conversion' of the emperor, **Constantine**, (313 AD), and the rise of the papacy to supremacy (538 AD). Thus, Pergamum is the **connecting link** between the pagan Roman Empire and Papal Rome (Revelation 13:2). During this period the **restrainer** was removed (study Romans 13:1-5 where the neuter and masculine gender are used) so that the papacy could fully reveal itself.

Balaam is a key figure in the description of the third church and the third seal. During this time, the doctrine of **Balaam** (Revelation 2:14) entered the church.

In the **Old Testament story**, Balaam did his utmost to curse Israel from the outside but he could not, because there was no iniquity in Israel. Satan could not conquer the church from the outside so he infiltrated it with **idolatry** and **fornication**. Idolatrous pagan customs came into the church at this time and the church committed spiritual fornication with the state. These **two sins** were the very ones that Israel practiced on the borders of Canaan and the church of the fourth century embraced when persecution ceased (see Numbers 23:8-10, 21-23; 25:1, 2).

The Color Black

Ellen White describes the period of the third seal in the chapter titled: “**An Era of Spiritual Darkness**” (GC, pp. 49-60; see especially pp. 55, 57, 60). In the next chapter, Ellen White underlined that the darkness grew ever deeper because the papacy undertook a war against the Bible (pp. 61, 62, 63).

Jesus is the **incarnated Word of God** (John 1:1-3) and where the Word is, there is **light and life** (John 1:4, 5; I John 1:5-7). The Bible identifies **light** with the color white (Psalm 104:1, 2 with Daniel 7:9; Matthew 17:2). The **written Word** of God is also **light** (Psalm 119:105). During the period of the **white horse**, God’s people proclaimed the Word of God which is light to the world (**John 9:5; Matthew 5:16**). God’s Word is the original light and when it shines on God’s people, they reflect the light to others. Where the **Word of God** is **absent** there is **darkness** or **blackness**.

The Bible uses the color **black** synonymously with **darkness**. Light and white of the first horse stand in contrast to darkness and black of the third:

Isaiah 50:3:

*“I clothe the **heavens** with **blackness**, and I make sackcloth their covering.”*

Jude 12-13: Blackness and darkness are **synonymous**:

*“These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; ¹³ raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the **blackness of darkness** forever.”*

Proverbs 7:9:

*“In the twilight, in the evening, in the **black and dark** night”.*

Jeremiah 4:28:

*“For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be **black** because I have spoken. I have purposed and will not relent, nor will I turn back from it.”*

The way of the righteous is light and the way of the wicked is darkness:

Proverbs 4:18, 19:

*“But the path of the just is as the **shining light**, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is as **darkness**: they know not at what they stumble.”*

Ellen White also used black and darkness synonymously:

*“God desires His people to be **light** bearers to a world lying in midnight **darkness**. But if they refuse to go forward in the **light** which He causes to shine on their pathway, the **light** will finally become to them **darkness**; and instead of being **light** bearers to the world, they themselves will be lost in the **blackness** that surrounds them.” Counsels on Health, pp. 445, 446*

*“The hour of hope and pardon was fast passing [**for the Jewish Theocracy**]; the cup of God's long-deferred wrath was almost full. The cloud that had been gathering through ages of **apostasy and rebellion**, now **black** with woe, was about to burst upon a guilty people.” GC, p. 20*

*“He calls upon his servants to receive from the Holy Spirit his sanctifying power that the **light** may shine forth in clear, distinct rays, amid the constantly increasing **moral darkness**, which is becoming as **black as sackcloth** of hair over our world. . . .” Spaulding Magan, p. 153*

Creatures of the night roam and thrive in the darkness. **Bats, rats, roaches, germs** are in the realm of darkness. The black horse stands in **contrast** to the white horse. During the period of the white horse God's people radiated the light of God's word. The black horse represents darkness that came in from a **rejection** of God's word. Where God's word is not, there is darkness or blackness. Black represents **sin**, **apostasy**, **error**, **heresy** and **human traditions**.

Another symbol for God's Word is bread (Deuteronomy 8:3, 4; Matthew 4:4). During the third seal, there was not only a scarcity of light but also of **bread**. This is the reason why wheat and barley during this period were extremely expensive.

When human traditions suppress the word of God the result is darkness or blackness and the result of the darkness is famine, pestilence in the period of the **fourth horse**.

In short, both **light** and **bread** symbolize the Word of God (Matthew 4:4; Isaiah 55:2, 3, 10, 11; John 6:48-58, 63. Where there is no light and no bread there is death. **Amos 8:11, 12** predicts a time when there will be famine in the land, not for bread but for the Word of God.

Scales, Barley and Wheat

Revelation 6:6

"And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine."

The purpose of the scales in the third seal was to weigh grain. Elsewhere in Scripture, the scale or balance can represent judgment (as in Daniel 5:27), but not in the third seal. Barley (early spring harvest) and wheat (late spring harvest) were the staple crops that Israel used to make bread. These grains were very scarce during the period of the third horse. The famine during the period of the third horse will intensify and bring about famine and death during the period of the fourth.

Revelation 6:6 describes a scarcity of bread because the wheat and barley were extremely expensive. A denarius was the daily wage of a common laborer. Thus, a laborer was only making enough to purchase one quart of wheat and three quarts of barley. According to the Roman historian Cicero, the price mentioned by John would have been 8 to 16 times higher than normal. During the third seal, there was famine for bread in the land. Barley was the staple used to feed the very poor and the animals. It is no coincidence that the fourth horse is pale because the result of famine is death. J. A. Seiss explained:

*"In ordinary times, a denarius would buy twenty-four choenixes of barley; but here a denarius will buy but three—the scanty allowance for a day's subsistence for a slave. The arrival of things at such a pass, accordingly argues a severity of **hard times**, distress, and want, almost beyond the power of imagination to depict." J. A. Seiss, The Apocalypse: Exposition of the Book of Revelation, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1998 by Biblesoft.*

Amos 8:11, 12:

*"Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord God, "That I will send a **famine** on the land, not a famine of **bread**, nor a thirst for **water**, but of hearing the **words of the Lord**.¹² They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the Lord, but shall **not find it**."*

Oil and Wine

The **wine or libation** was a symbol of the blood of Jesus and the **oil** is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Ellen White makes the following important statement:

*"In order to secure man to Himself and ensure his eternal salvation, Christ left the royal courts of heaven and came to this earth, endured the agonies of sin and shame in man's stead, and died to make him free. In view of the infinite price paid for man's redemption, how dare any professing the name of Christ **treat with indifference one of His little ones**? How carefully should brethren and sisters in the church guard every word and action lest they **hurt the oil** and the **wine**! How patiently, kindly, and affectionately should they deal with the purchase of the blood of Christ!" 5T, p. 614*

To hurt God's people is to despise the blood of Jesus and to offend the Holy Spirit (Zechariah 2:8; Matthew 25:40; Mark 9:41; Acts 9:4, 5).

Luke 10:34:

*"So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on **oil and wine**; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him."
NKJV*

Zechariah 2:8:

*For thus says the Lord of hosts: "He sent Me after glory, to the nations which plunder you; for he **who touches you** touches the **apple of His eye**."*

Matthew 25:40:

"And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'"

Mark 9:41:

"For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward."

Acts 9:4, 5:

*"Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you **persecuting Me**?"⁵ And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "**I am Jesus**, whom **you are persecuting**. It is hard for you to kick against the goads."*

Ellen White on the Third Seal

As noted before, Ellen White described this period in a chapter of *The Great Controversy* titled, 'An Era of Spiritual Darkness'. In several statements in the chapter, she refers to the darkness that came into the church after Constantine's 'conversion' to Christianity:

*"The accession of the Roman Church to power marked the beginning of the **Dark Ages**. As her power increased, the **darkness** deepened." *GC*, p. 55*

*"The **darkness** seemed to grow denser." GC, p. 57*

*"But "the noon of the papacy was the **midnight** of the world."--J. A. Wylie, The History of Protestantism, book 1, chapter 4. The **Holy Scriptures** were almost unknown, not only to the people, but to the priests." GC, p. 60*

*"The world had passed its **midnight** [because of Wycliffe]. The hours of **darkness** were wearing away, and in many lands appeared tokens of the coming dawn." GC, p. 79*

It is significant that Ellen White dedicates three pages to the issue of the change of the Sabbath during this era of spiritual darkness because Sunday worship entered the church during the period of Constantine GC, pp. 52-54.

1 John 2:8-11 explains that those who are in darkness hate their brother and want to kill him. The darkness of the third horse leads those who are in darkness to want to kill those who are in the light. The darkness and famine of the third seal leads to death and the grave in the fourth.

*"The spirit of **compromise** and **conformity** was restrained for a time by the **fierce persecutions** [red horse] which the church endured under paganism. But as **persecution** [red horse] **ceased**, and Christianity entered the courts and palaces of kings, she laid aside the humble simplicity of Christ and His apostles for the pomp and pride of pagan priests and rulers; and in place of the requirements of God, she substituted **human theories and traditions**. The nominal conversion of **Constantine**, in the early part of the fourth century, caused great rejoicing; and the world, **cloaked** with a form of righteousness, walked into the church. Now the work of **corruption** rapidly progressed. Paganism, while appearing to be **vanquished** [by the white horse of the first seal], became the **conqueror** [under the third seal]. Her spirit controlled the church. Her doctrines, ceremonies, and superstitions were incorporated into the faith and worship of the professed followers of Christ." GC, pp. 49, 50*

Notably, Ellen White compared the church during this period with what happened at the time of Balaam:

*“Satan therefore laid his plans to war more successfully against the government of God by planting his banner in the Christian church. If the followers of Christ could be **deceived** and led to **displease** God, then their strength, fortitude, and firmness would fail, and they would **fall an easy prey**.” GC, p. 42*

*“The great adversary now endeavored to gain by **artifice** [under the third seal] what he had failed to secure by **force** [under the second seal]. **Persecution** [under the second seal] ceased, and in its stead were substituted the **dangerous allurements** of temporal prosperity and worldly honor [under the third seal]. Idolaters were led to receive a part of the Christian faith, while they rejected other essential truths. They professed to accept Jesus as the Son of God and to believe in His death and resurrection, but they had no conviction of sin and felt no need of repentance or of a change of heart. With some **concessions** on their part they proposed that Christians should make **concessions**, that **all might unite** on the platform of belief in Christ.” GC, p. 42*

*“Others were in favor of **yielding** or **modifying** some features of their faith and **uniting** with those who had accepted a part of Christianity [a very real danger today], urging that this might be the means of their full conversion. That was a time of deep anguish to the faithful followers of Christ. **Under a cloak** of pretended Christianity, Satan was insinuating himself into the church, to corrupt their faith and turn their minds from the **word of truth**.” GC, p. 43*

*“But there is no union between the Prince of **light** and the prince of **darkness**, and there can be no union between their followers. When Christians consented to unite with those who were but half converted from paganism, they entered upon a path which led **further and further from the truth**.” GC, p. 45*

Why is there no persecution of the church today? Simply because we do not have the spirit and power of the early church:

*“There is another and more important question that should engage the attention of the churches of today. The apostle Paul declares that ‘all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.’ 2 Timothy 3:12. Why is it, then, that persecution seems in a great degree to slumber? The **only reason** is that the church has **conformed to the world's standard** and therefore awakens no opposition. The religion that is current in our day is not of the pure and holy character that marked the Christian faith in the days of Christ and His apostles. It is only because of the **spirit of compromise** with sin, because the great truths of the word of God are so **indifferently regarded**, because there is so **little vital godliness** in the church, that Christianity is apparently so popular with the world. Let there be a **revival** of the faith and power of the **early church**, and the spirit of **persecution** will be **revived**, and the fires of persecution will be rekindled. GC, p. 48*



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LESSON #12 - THE FOURTH SEAL: THE PALE HORSE

Meaning: The fourth seal represents the period of papal dominion during the ‘dark ages’. The scarcity of God’s Word and of rain led to spiritual famine, pestilence and death. In addition, the apostate church literally killed the martyrs who did not agree with the traditions of men.

“When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, “Come and see.” ⁸ So I looked, and behold, a pale horse and the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death [pestilence], and by the beasts of the earth.” (Revelation 6:7, 8)

Symbols and Expressions

- Color pale (*chloros*: The color of this horse is really a greenish pale as when a young shoot comes out of a tree. It is the paleness of death).
- Death and Hades (when a person dies, the grave follows).

- **Fourth part** of the earth (the devastating power of the fourth horse and its rider is not universal).
- **Famine** (scarcity because of a scarcity of God's word).
- **Pestilence** (in New Testament Greek the word *thánatos* technically means 'death'. However, in 30 of the 50 times it appears in the Greek Old Testament (LXX) the Hebrew word *deber* is translated "pestilence". To say that the fourth horse kills with death would be redundant. Death by the sword and famine brings pestilence or disease in its train and ultimately leads to death and the grave.
- **Wild beasts** (wicked leaders and nations who were inimical to God's people and behaved like wild beasts).

The Old Testament Background

In Old Testament times, when Israel **broke the covenant**, **apostatized** from the truth and assimilated the pagan customs of the surrounding nations, God would send the very same **four judgments** that are mentioned in connection with the fourth horse: **sword**, **famine**, **pestilence** and **wild beasts** (see Leviticus 26:21-26; Ezekiel 14:21).

Because Israel in the Old Testament period were God's **literal people** living in the **literal land** of Canaan, these judgments were literal. However, under the fourth seal (as well as in the others) we are dealing with **spiritual Israel** in a **spiritual land** (the Christian church) and therefore we need to interpret these calamities in a **symbolic manner** (see Daniel 11:28, 30, 32 where we are told that the Papacy trampled on God's holy covenant during the 1260 years).

Death and Hades

The immediate aftermath of death is the place where the dead go, the grave. The word *hades* is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word *Sheol* and it should consistently be translated “the grave”. We find the link between the Hebrew and Greek words in 1 Corinthians 15:54, 55 where the apostle Paul quotes Hosea 13:14 and uses the word *hades* in place of *Sheol*. Furthermore, Peter, in Acts 2:25-27, 31 quotes Psalm 16:8-10 and replaces the word *Sheol* with *hades*. Unfortunately, the King James Version 31 times mistakenly translates the Hebrew word *Sheol* with the word “hell”.

The Old Testament regularly links the concepts of **death** and the **grave** in synonymous parallelism:

Psalm 6: 5:

*“For in **death** there is no remembrance of You; in the **grave** who will give You thanks?”*

Psalm 89:48:

*“What man can live and not see **death**? Can he deliver his life from the power of the **grave**?”*

Psalm 116:3:

*“The pains of **death** surrounded me, and the pangs of **Sheol** laid hold of me; I found trouble and sorrow.”*

Isaiah 38:18:

*“For **Sheol** cannot thank You, **death** cannot praise You; those who go down to the pit cannot hope for Your truth.”*

Isaiah 28:15:

*"Because you have said, "We have made a covenant with **death**, and with **Sheol** we are in agreement."*

Hosea 13:14:

*"I will ransom them from the power of the **grave**; I will redeem them from **death**. O **Death**, I will be your plagues! O **Grave**, I will be your destruction!"*

In the New Testament, the word *hades* appears 12 times (Matthew 11:23; 16:18; Luke 10:15; Acts 2:25-27, 31; Revelation 1:17, 18; 6:8; 20:13-15) and in every instance except one, the word should be translated "grave". The lone exception is the allegory of the rich man and Lazarus where Jesus was using the beliefs of the Pharisees about *hades* to make a point.

Acts 2:25-27, 30-31:

*"For David says concerning Him [in Psalm 16:8-10]: 'I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken. ²⁶ Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; moreover my flesh also will rest in hope. ²⁷ For You will not leave my soul in **Hades**, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see **corruption**. . . ³⁰ Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, ³¹ he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in **Hades**, nor did His flesh see **corruption**."*

The key question at this point is this, what caused this church to die and go to the grave? The answer is that **four factors** led to death and the grave:

The Sword

The key verses to understand the symbolic meaning of the sword in the fourth seal are in **Romans 13:1-4** and **Revelation 13:10, 14**. As we have seen, more often than not, when the sword of the Spirit convicts of sin (Hebrews 4:12, 13) it awakens the sword of persecution on the part of those who wish to suppress it (see for example the commentary on the third seal—Matthew 10:34-37).

Romans 13:1-4:

*“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. ² Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. ⁴ For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for **he does not bear the sword** in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to **execute wrath on him who practices evil.**”*

Note: In apocalyptic prophecy, symbols are fluid. That is, they take on different meanings depending on the context in which they appear. The sword can represent the Word of God (Hebrews 4:12, 13; Ephesians 6:17). However, the sword can also represent the punitive power of the state to punish transgressors of civil law. During the period of the fourth horse, the apostate papal system used the sword of the state to persecute and kill those who disagreed with its doctrines and practices. As a result, the martyrs cried out for justice under the fifth seal. At the end of the 1260 years in 1798, the sword of the state turned on the papacy and gave it the deadly wound:

Revelation 13:9-10:

*"If anyone has an ear, let him hear. ¹⁰ He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who **kills with the sword** must be **killed with the sword**. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints."*

The New King James Version of Revelation 6:8 tells us that **power** [the proper translation of *exousia* is 'authority'] **'was given'** to death and the grave to kill with the sword. It is hardly a coincidence that the little horn **'was given'** power to make war against the saints and to overcome them for time, times and the dividing of time (Daniel 7:25). Likewise Revelation 13: 7 tells us that the beast **'was given'** power to make war against the saints and to overcome them. The expression 'was given' connects the fourth rider with the Papal church.

Famine and Pestilence (death)

In **symbolic terms**, famine comes when the Holy Spirit, speaking through the Word of God is scarce. During the Dark Ages, there was no rain (Revelation 11:6), and therefore bread (the Word of God) was scarce. The result was famine (spiritual hunger). Famine, in turn, led to malnutrition and malnutrition led to pestilence and ultimately to spiritual death. The prophet Isaiah explained the symbolic meaning of **rain, bread and the Word**:

Isaiah 55:10-11:

*"For **as** the **rain** comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but **water** the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and **bread** to the eater, ¹¹ **so** shall My **word** be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."*

Deuteronomy 32:2:

*"Let my **teaching** drop as the **rain**, my **speech** distill as the **dew**, as raindrops on the tender herb, and as showers on the grass."*

Hosea 6:3:

*"Let us know, let us pursue the **knowledge** of the LORD. His going forth is established as the morning; he will come to us like the **rain**, like the latter and former **rain** to the earth."*

The prophet **Amos** explained the symbolic meaning of **famine**:

*"Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord GOD, "That I will send a **famine** on the land, not a **famine** of bread, nor a thirst for **water**, but of hearing the **words of the LORD**.¹² They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, seeking the **word of the LORD**, but shall not find it."*

The Wild Beasts

The wild beasts represent the **hatred of the wicked** for Christ and His people. Notice the following biblical examples:

Psalms 74:18, 19:

*"Remember this, that the **enemy** has reproached, O LORD, and that a **foolish people** has blasphemed Your name.¹⁹ Oh, do not deliver the life of Your turtledove to the **wild beast**! Do not forget the life of Your poor forever."*

Psalm 7:1, 2:

*"LORD my God, in You I put my trust; save me from all those who **persecute** me; and deliver me, ² lest they tear me like a **lion, rending me in pieces**, while there is none to deliver."*

Psalm 10:9-11:

*"He lies in wait secretly, **as a lion** in his den; he lies in wait to **catch** the poor; he **catches** the poor when he draws him into his net. ¹⁰ So he **crouches**, he **lies low**, that the helpless may fall by his strength. ¹¹ He has said in his heart, "God has forgotten; He hides His face; He will never see."*

Psalm 17:9-12:

*"From the **wicked** who oppress me, from my **deadly enemies** who surround me. ¹⁰ They have closed up their fat hearts; with their mouths, they speak proudly. ¹¹ They have now surrounded us in our steps; they have set their eyes, **crouching** down to the earth, ¹² **as a lion** is eager to tear his prey, and like a **young lion** **lurking** in secret places."*

Psalm 22:12, 13:

*"Many bulls have surrounded Me; **strong bulls** of Bashan have encircled Me. ¹³ They gape at Me with their mouths, **like a raging and roaring lion**."*

Proverbs 28:15:

*"Like a **roaring lion** and a **charging bear** is a **wicked ruler** over poor people."*

Zachariah 10:3:

*"My anger is kindled against the **shepherds**, and I will punish the **goatherds** [literally the 'he-goats' but meaning 'the leaders' such as in the NIV]. For the LORD of hosts will visit His flock, the house of Judah, and will make them as His royal horse in the battle."*

Acts 20:29:

*"For I know this: that after my departure **savage wolves** will come in among you, not sparing the flock."*

Matthew 7:15:

*"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are **ravenous wolves**."*

Ellen White also understood that the wild beasts symbolize those who are inimical to Christ and His people.

*"The symbols of earthly governments are **wild beasts**, but in the kingdom of Christ, men are called upon to behold, not a ferocious beast, but the Lamb of God." Review and Herald, August 18, 1896*

*"Like **savage beasts** who have tasted of blood, so were **Saul and Doeg**." (ST Sept. 21, 1888).*

*"When the condemnation of Jesus was pronounced by the judges, a **satanic fury** took possession of the people. The **roar** of voices was like that of **wild beasts**. They made a rush toward Jesus, crying, He is guilty, put him to death! And had it not been for the Roman soldiers, Jesus would not have lived to be hanged upon the cross of Calvary. He would have been **torn in pieces** before his judges, had not*

Roman authority interfered, and by force of arms withheld the violence of the mob.” Spirit of Prophecy, volume 3, p. 122

“At this, the priests and rulers were beside themselves with anger. They were more like **wild beasts of prey** than like human beings. They rushed upon **Stephen**, gnashing their teeth.” Sketches from the Life of Paul, p. 19

“From some hiding place among the tombs two madmen rush upon them [**the disciples**] as if to **tear them in pieces**. Hanging about these men are parts of chains that they have broken in escaping from confinement. Their flesh is torn and bleeding, their eyes glare out from their long and matted hair, the very likeness of humanity seems to have been blotted out. They look more like **wild beasts** than like men.” The Ministry of Healing, p. 95

Regarding the rage of the papacy against the faithful Ellen White wrote:

“As the **ravenous beast** is rendered more furious by the **taste of blood**, so the rage of the **papists** was kindled to greater intensity by the sufferings of their victims.” GC, p. 76

On the death of **Jerome**:

“Their **thirst for blood**, whetted by the death of **Huss**, clamored for **fresh victims**. Only by an unreserved surrender of the truth could Jerome preserve his life. But he had determined to avow his faith and follow his brother martyr to the flames.” GC, p. 112

In **1 Corinthians 15:32** Paul explained that he had fought wild beasts at **Ephesus**. Ellen White explains what Paul meant:

“Paul informed the Corinthians of his trouble in Asia, where, he says, ‘We were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life.’ In his first epistle, he speaks of fighting with **beasts** at Ephesus. He thus refers to

the **fanatical mob** that clamored for his life. They were indeed more like **furious wild beasts** than men." *Sketches from the Life of Paul*, p. 78

The Period of the Church of Thyatira

The period of the **fourth horse** is parallel to the period of the **fourth church**, Thyatira. The Old Testament background to the church of Thyatira is the story of Elijah. Jezebel was the central protagonist during this period (Revelation 2:20-23).

Because Israel **apostatized** from the covenant of the LORD, the **four judgments** of Leviticus 26 befell the people. In the Old Testament story Jezebel employed the civil power of Ahab's **sword** to extend her apostate syncretistic religion that blended the worship of the sun-god Baal with the worship of the LORD (1 Kings 16:30-33). Ahab killed the prophets of the LORD with the sword (1 Kings 19:10, 14). This apostasy led to a severe **drought** where there was no rain for three and a half years (2 Chronicles 7:13, 14; James 5:17). The drought led to **famine** and **pestilence** (1 Kings 18:1-6) and the famine and pestilence in turn led to **death and the grave**.

For a time span of three and a half years, Jezebel slaughtered the prophets of the Lord (1 Kings 18:4) for not embracing her apostate syncretistic religion. She taught God's servants to **fornicate** and practice **idolatry**. Therefore, the blood of God's servants and prophets cried out for justice (1 Kings 9:7).

Prophetically this story of Jezebel was fulfilled during the period of the dominion of the little horn and the beast who massacred the saints of God for three and a half prophetic years (Daniel 7:21, 25; Revelation 13:7).

During this period, the apostate church employed **the sword of the state** to kill dissenters. As a result, the church fled to the wilderness where God nourished her in exile. This was the period when the two witnesses (the Old and New Testaments) prophesied in sackcloth (Revelation 12:6; 13-15; 11:2).

For 1260 prophetic years, God shut up the heavens and there was no rain (Revelation 11:6). As a result, there was spiritual **famine and pestilence** in the church. This famine and pestilence ultimately led to **death and to the grave**.

This horse brought death and the grave for two reasons. First, because there was **spiritual starvation** and **pestilence** (see Amos 8:11, 12) in the church and second, because people died by the **sword** (Revelation 13:10).

During this period, the man of sin suppressed the Bible, forbidding the lay people to read it under pain of death. It was a capital crime even to have a Bible in one's possession. As a result, there was famine for the word of God. This famine led to spiritual pestilence and pestilence led to death and the grave.

Concerning this time of famine, Ellen White wrote:

*"For hundreds of years the circulation of the **Bible was prohibited**. The people were **forbidden to read it** or to have it in their houses and unprincipled priests and prelates interpreted its teachings to sustain their pretensions." GC, p. 51*

*"From earliest childhood the youth [**the Waldensians**] were instructed in the Scriptures and taught to regard sacredly the claims of the law of God. **Copies of the Bible were rare [the bread was scarce]**; therefore its precious words were committed to memory. Many were able to repeat large portions of both the Old and the New Testament." GC, p. 76*

*"The work which the papacy had begun [**during the 1260 years**], atheism completed. The one [**the papacy**] **withheld from the people the truths of the Bible**; the other [**the French Revolution**] taught them to reject both the Bible and its Author. The seed sown by priests and prelates was yielding its evil fruit. 4SP, p. 192*

The vile office of the **Inquisition** (the church using the sword of the state) slew those who studied and obeyed the word of God. During this time, the papal leaders **behaved as wild beasts** toward God's people.

Concerning the violence of this period, Ellen White wrote:

*"In the sixth century the papacy had become firmly established. Its seat of power was fixed in the imperial city, and the bishop of Rome was declared to be the head over the entire church. Paganism had given place to the papacy. The dragon had given to the beast "his power, and his seat, and great authority." Revelation 13:2. And now began the 1260 years of papal oppression foretold in the prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation. Daniel 7:25; Revelation 13:5-7. Christians were forced to choose either to yield their integrity and accept the papal ceremonies and worship or to wear away their lives in dungeons or **suffer death** by the rack, the fagot, or the headsman's ax. . . Persecution opened upon the faithful with greater fury than ever before, and **the world became a vast battlefield**." GC, pp. 54, 55*

*"In the thirteenth century was established that most terrible of all the engines of the papacy--**the Inquisition**. The prince of darkness wrought with the leaders of the papal hierarchy. In their secret councils Satan and his angels controlled the minds of evil men, while unseen in the midst stood an angel of God, taking the fearful record of their iniquitous decrees and writing the history of deeds too horrible to appear to human eyes. "Babylon the great" was 'drunken with the blood of the saints.' The mangled forms of millions of martyrs **cried to God for vengeance** [notice the allusion to the fifth seal] upon that apostate power. GC, pp. 59, 60*

*"The **persecutions** visited for many centuries upon this God-fearing people [**the Waldensians**] were endured by them with a patience and constancy that honored their Redeemer. Notwithstanding the crusades against them, and the **inhuman butchery** to which they were subjected, they continued to send out their missionaries to scatter the precious truth. They were **hunted to death**; yet their blood watered the seed sown, and it failed not of yielding fruit." GC, p. 78*

The Relationship between the Third, Fourth and Fifth Seals

The darkness and scarcity of bread during the third seal intensified under the fourth and led to death and the grave. Concerning this period, Ellen White explained:

*“The accession of the Roman Church to power marked the beginning of the Dark Ages. As her power increased, **the darkness deepened**.” GC, p. 55*

When the church dies spiritually because she does not feed on the word of God, she begins to destroy those who do not share her lack of spirituality. Those who cannot defend their doctrines with the spiritual sword (the Bible); will do so with the literal sword.

The martyrs whom the papacy slew during the period of the fourth horse will now cry out for God to judge and avenge their death. This is the period of the fifth seal, which is the topic we shall study in the next chapter.



ANCHOR SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

“Revelation’s Seven Seals: Studies in Revelation 4-8”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #13 - THE FIFTH SEAL: THE CRY OF THE MARTYRS

Meaning: The blood of the martyrs that the papacy killed during her reign now cry out for justice. God gives these martyrs a white robe and tells them to rest for a while until the number of the end time martyrs is complete.

Revelation 6:9-11:

“When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held and they cried with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.”

Important Questions about this Passage

- What does the word ‘souls’ mean?
- In what sense did the ‘souls’ cry out?
- Where is the altar under which these souls cry out?

- What does the word ‘martyr’ mean?
- **What period** of church history is this scene describing?
- Why did the **papal power** kill these martyrs?
- What do the **white robes** represent?
- Why did God tell the martyrs to **rest for a season**?
- Is there **more than one group** of martyrs?
- When and how did God answer their **plea**?

The Souls under the Altar

How can dead souls cry out? Virtually all non-Adventist scholars believe that this text provides **clear proof** that the soul lives on independently from the body after death. Every commentary non-Adventist commentary that I consulted used this text as proof that the soul lives on after the body is dead. However, is this what the text is really saying?

The Old Testament Background: The Story of Cain and Abel

Genesis 4:3, 4:

*“And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the **fruit** of the ground an offering unto the LORD. ⁴ Abel, he also brought of the **firstlings** of his flock and of the **fat** thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering.”*

Note: Both Cain and Abel brought an **offering** to place on the **altar of sacrifice**. Besides bringing a grain offering, Abel also offered an animal sacrifice. Thus, Abel **obeyed** God and **worshiped** Him as He had commanded. Abel was righteous. The central issue of the story of Cain and Abel was **obedience** and **worship**.

Hebrews 11:4:

*“By faith Abel offered to God a **more excellent sacrifice** than Cain, through which he obtained **witness** [**marturía**] that he was righteous, God testifying [**marturía**] of his gifts; and through it he being dead **still speaks**.”*

Note: Abel’s sacrifice gave **witness**. Remarkably, the word ‘witness’, used twice in this verse, is *marturía* from where we get the word ‘martyr’. Even after his death, Abel’s sacrifice gives witness or testimony of his faithfulness to God.

Genesis 4:8:

*“Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and **killed him**.”*

Genesis 4:10:

*“And He said, “What have you done? The voice of your **brother’s blood cries out** to Me from the ground.”*

Note: Satan was the **ringleader** in Abel’s death: “not as Cain who was **of the wicked one** and murdered his brother, and why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother’s righteous.” (1 John 3:12). The death of Abel was a **great travesty** in justice. Abel the righteous one died, and Cain, the unrighteous one lived! Wicked Cain shed his brother’s blood at the **foot of the altar** of sacrifice (**ST**, January 9, 1896), and Abel’s blood cried out for **vindication** and justice. To all appearances, the unrighteous **won** and righteous **lost**. At some point, the record needed to be **rectified**. The blood of Abel symbolically cried out for reparation.

Hebrews 12:24:

*“To Jesus the Mediator of the **new covenant**, and to the blood of sprinkling **that speaks** better things than that of Abel.”*

Note: The blood of Jesus **speaks** more powerfully than that of Abel. Abel’s blood cried out for justice, however, the blood of Jesus **provides justice**.

We can better understand the cries of the righteous martyrs by reading **imprecatory Psalms** such as **Psalms 79** where God’s people are crying out for justice.

Psalms 79:9-10:

*“Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Your name; and deliver us, and provide atonement for our sins, for Your name's sake! ¹⁰ Why should the nations say, "Where is their God?" Let there be known among the nations in our sight the **avenging of the blood** of Your servants which has been shed.”*

Further Old Testament Background: The Blood under the Altar

There were **two altars** in the sanctuary: The altar of **sacrifice** (in the court) and the altar of **incense** (in the holy place). To which altar is Revelation 6:9-11 referring? To answer this question we must consider the Old Testament **sacrificial service**.

Leviticus 4:7:

*““And the priest shall put some of the blood upon the horns of the altar of sweet incense before the LORD, which is in the tabernacle of the congregation: and shall **pour** all the blood of the bullock **at the bottom of the altar** of the burnt offering, which is **at the door** of the tabernacle of the congregation.”* (cf. Leviticus 4:18, 25, 30, 34; 5:9)

Several important points emerge from this verse:

- The priest poured out the blood of the victim at the **base of the altar** of sacrifice.
- The priest did not offer blood on the altar of **incense**; he only placed incense there.
- The expression “**pour out**” or ‘**shed**’ describes what the wicked do with the blood of the righteous (Revelation 16:6).
- The word “**slain**” is identical to the one used in **Revelation 5:6** to describe the sacrifice of Jesus as a lamb on the cross.
- The altar of sacrifice represents **Christ’s sacrifice on earth** so these souls must be crying out on earth, not in heaven.

In the Old Testament, there is a close connection between the words ‘**soul**’ and ‘**blood**’. When innocent blood (the life) is shed, it symbolically cries out for justice.

Leviticus 17:11:

*“For the **life [nephesh]** of the flesh is in the **blood**; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.”* See also Genesis 9:4.

Deuteronomy 12:23:

*“Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the **blood** is the **life [nephesh]**; and thou mayest not eat the **life [nephesh]** with the flesh.”*

Note: The Bible describes the death of the righteous at the hands of the wicked as an **oblation** or offering. In **John 16:2** Jesus explained that those who would slay His followers would actually believe that they were offering God an **act of worship**. The word “service” in this text is **latrein** (where we get the word **idolatry** from) which is generally translated ‘service’ in the King James Version but actually means ‘worship’.

Revelation 16:6 explains that the wicked **poured out** the blood of God’s people. Once again, this is sacrificial terminology (see Leviticus 8:15; Matthew 23:35; 26:28; 22:20 where the word ‘shed’ is used of sacrifices).

Significantly, Paul refers to his martyr’s death as a **pouring out** of sacrifice (2 Timothy 4:6-8). The death of the righteous at the hands of the wicked was a sweet savor unto God because it revealed the faithfulness of His people (cf. Ephesians 5:2) and won many souls to the kingdom. In the minds of the observers, if Jesus was worth dying for, then He must be worth living for.”

The Reason for their Martyrdom

The martyrs died because of the ‘**word of God**’ and the **testimony** that they held’. The ‘word of God’ refers to their **teachings** and the ‘testimony which they held’ describes their practical **life witness** that revealed the character of Jesus.

The word ‘**martyr**’ literally means ‘one who gives witness or testimony.’ **Revelation 12:11** helps us understand the meaning of this word. This text tells us that the faithful of God overcame the devil by the **word of their testimony** and they did not love their lives even unto the death.

The word ‘testimony’ is translated ‘martyr’ in three New Testament texts. Paul speaks of **Stephen** as God’s martyr (witness) in **Acts 22:20**. Stephen was killed because he revealed Jesus Christ in his **sermon** and in his **demeanor** (cf. Acts 6:15 and chapter 7). In **Revelation 2:13** Jesus referred to **Antipas** as “my faithful martyr (witness), who was slain among you.” **Revelation 17:6**

describes the end time harlot who is guilty of the blood of the ‘martyrs’ (those who give witness) of Jesus.

Ellen White described **Paul’s words and demeanor** as He spoke the word of God before kings and rulers:

*“When before kings and dignitaries of the earth, who held his life in their hands, he quailed not; for he had given his life to God, and it was hid in Christ. He **softened**, by his **courtesy**, the hearts of these men in power, men of fierce temper, wicked and corrupt though they were in heart and life. He did not forget his position, or the importance of the occasion. He was **zealous for the truth, bold in advocating Christ**; but propriety of deportment, the **grace of true politeness**, marked all his conduct. When he stretched out his hand, as was his custom in speaking, the clanking chains caused him no shame or embarrassment. He looked upon them as tokens of honor, and rejoiced that he could suffer for the **word of God** and the **testimony of Jesus Christ**. Surrounded by philosophers, kings, and critics, he was God’s ambassador. His **reasoning** was so clear and convincing that it made the profligate king tremble as Paul dwelt upon **his experience**, showing what had wrought the change in his religious views that aroused the malice of the Jews. **He exalted Jesus Christ** as the world’s Redeemer. **Grace**, like an angel of mercy, makes his voice heard **sweet and clear**, repeating the **story of the cross**, the matchless love of Jesus.” Review and Herald, September 8, 1885*

We can better understand the meaning of these two expressions (‘the Word of God’ and ‘testimony of Jesus’) when we consider the experience of the **apostle John**. **Revelation 1:2, 9** tells us that John was a prisoner on Patmos **because** of ‘the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus’. Regarding this, Ellen White comments:

*“John answered for himself in a clear and convincing manner, and with such simplicity and candor that **his words** had a powerful effect. His hearers were astonished at his **wisdom and eloquence**. However, the **more convincing his testimony**, the deeper was the hatred of his opposers. The emperor Domitian was*

filled with rage. He could neither dispute the reasoning of Christ's faithful advocate, nor match the power that attended his utterance of truth; yet he determined that he would silence his voice. AA, p. 569

Ellen White then explained that Domitian cast John into a cauldron of scalding oil but God preserved his life, and the emperor sent him into exile on the Isle of Patmos. He was thus on Patmos 'for the Word of God and the testimony that he held'. Clearly, the martyrs died because they revealed Jesus in their words and lives.

The Fifth Seal and the Book of Revelation 5

The martyrs that the Inquisition slew during the period of the fourth seal cried out for justice under the fifth. Notice how Ellen White linked the fourth and fifth seals:

"In the thirteenth century was established that most terrible of all the engines of the papacy—the Inquisition. The prince of darkness wrought with the leaders of the papal hierarchy. In their secret councils Satan and his angels controlled the minds of evil men, while unseen in the midst stood an angel of God, taking the fearful record of their iniquitous decrees and writing the history of deeds too horrible to appear to human eyes. "Babylon the great" was "drunken with the blood of the saints." The mangled forms of millions of martyrs cried to God for vengeance [notice the allusion to the fifth seal] upon that apostate power." GC, pp. 59, 60

It is noteworthy that in this statement Ellen White affirms that the angels kept a careful record of the wrongful decisions of earthly courts against God's people.

Notice two other statements where Ellen White writes about the heavenly record keeping:

*“The history of God’s people during the **ages of darkness** that followed upon Rome’s supremacy **is written in heaven**, but they have **little place in human records**. We can find few traces of their existence, **except in the accusations** of their persecutors. It was the policy of Rome to obliterate every trace of dissent from her doctrines or decrees. **Everything heretical, whether persons or writings, she sought to destroy**. Expressions of doubt, or questions as to the authority of papal dogmas, were enough to forfeit the life of rich or poor, high or low. **Rome endeavored also to destroy every record of her cruelty toward dissenters**. Papal councils decreed that books and writings containing such records should be committed to the flames. Before the invention of printing, books were few in number, and in a form not favorable for preservation; therefore there was little to prevent the Romanists from carrying out their purpose. GC, pp. 61, 62*

*“When Rome at one time determined to exterminate the hated sect **[the Waldensians]**, a bull was issued by the pope, condemning them as heretics, and delivering them to slaughter. They were not accused as idlers, or dishonest, or disorderly; but it was declared that they had an appearance of piety and sanctity that seduced “the sheep of the true fold.” Therefore the pope ordered “that malicious and abominable sect of malignants,” if they “refuse to abjure, to be crushed like venomous snakes.”—Wylie, b. 16, chapter 1. Did this haughty potentate expect **to meet those words again?** Did he know that **they were registered in the books of heaven, to confront him at the judgment?**” GC, p. 77*

The question is, **when** will these church leaders have to face the records that the angels wrote during the period of papal supremacy? The answer is in the following statement:

*“There **[outside the New Jerusalem after the millennium]** are **papist priests** and **prelates**, who claimed to be Christ’s ambassadors, yet employed the rack, the dungeon, and the stake to control the consciences of His people. There are the **proud pontiffs** who exalted themselves above God and presumed to change the*

law of the Most High. Those **pretended fathers of the church** have an **account to render to God** from which they would fain be excused. Too late they are made to see that the Omniscient One is jealous of His law and that He will in no wise clear the guilty. They learn now that **Christ identifies His interest with that of His suffering people**; and they feel the force of His own words: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." Matthew 25:40. GC, p. 668

The angels wrote in the **books of heaven** all of the iniquitous acts that the papal system performed against God's people during the dark ages. One day, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah will open the records before the universe and God will judge and avenge the blood of those who died unjustly. That is to say, God will rectify the erroneous verdicts of earthly courts against God's people. The divine Supreme Court of the universe will overturn the decisions of the lower human courts on earth. The wicked priests, prelates and popes will see the sealed book opened and they will remember everything they did to God's people. They will then confess before the universe that they were wrong and God's people were right.

Daniel 7 vividly describes the judgment where the verdicts of human courts will be overturned. Daniel 7:21, 25 describes the papal little horn that persecuted the saints of the Most High for a time, times and the dividing of time. During this period, the papacy mowed down God's people without mercy. The righteous died and the wicked lived! The human court of the Inquisition found God's people guilty and executed them. This was during the period of the fourth horse. The unjust verdicts of human courts had to be rectified and the proper verdict given. This is the reason why the martyrs whom the papacy condemned and slew cried out for God to judge and avenge.

*"Millions have gone down to the grave loaded with infamy because they refused to yield to the deceptive claims of Satan. By **human tribunals** the children of God have been adjudged the vilest criminals. But the day is near when "God is judge Himself." (Ps. 50:6). **Then the decisions of earth shall be reversed.** "The rebuke*

of His people shall He take away." Isa. 25:8. **White robes will be given to every one of them.** (Rev. 6:11.)" *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 179, 180

The purpose of the heavenly judgment in Daniel 7 is to vindicate the cases of those whom the little horn unjustly condemned and slew during the 1260 years. Thus, Daniel 7:26, 27 says:

*'But the court shall be seated, and they shall **take away his [the little horn's] dominion**, to consume and destroy it forever. ²⁷ Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the **saints of the Most High [the same saints that the little horn persecuted, Daniel 7:25]**. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.'*

The book of Revelation 5:1, 2 contains the indelible record of the deeds that the angels recorded during the period of papal supremacy. After the millennium, Jesus, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, will open this book and the wicked oppressors of God's faithful people will remember their evil deeds toward the righteous.

This book not only contains the baleful record of the papal history. It contains the entire history of the human race, including the acts of the religious leaders against Jesus. When the Jewish leadership chose Barabbas over Jesus Ellen White tells us:

*"Thus the Jewish leaders made their choice. Their decision was registered in the book, which John saw in the hand of Him that sat upon the throne, the book that no man could open. In all its vindictiveness **this decision will appear before them** in the day when this book is unsealed by the Lion of the tribe of Judah."* *Christ Object Lessons*, p. 294

This decision will appear before the Jewish leaders after the millennium when they are outside the Holy City:

*“The awful spectacle appears **just as it was**. Satan, his angels, and his subjects have no power to turn from the picture of their own work. **Each actor recalls the part** that he performed. **Herod**, who slew the innocent children of Bethlehem that he might destroy the King of Israel; the base **Herodias**, upon whose guilty soul rests the blood of John the Baptist; the weak, timeserving **Pilate**; the **mocking soldiers**; the **priests and rulers** and the **maddened throng** who cried, “His blood be on us, and on our children!”—**all behold the enormity of their guilt**. They vainly seek to hide from the divine majesty of His countenance, outshining the glory of the sun, while the redeemed cast their crowns at the Savior’s feet, exclaiming: “He died for me!” GC, p. 667*

The Two Stages of the Fifth Seal

The fifth seal makes it clear that the crying out of the martyrs has **two distinct historical stages**—the martyrs of the past (those that the papacy killed during the fourth seal) and the martyrs of the future (those whom the papacy will kill when it resurrects from its deadly wound).

Revelation 6:11, New Century Version

*“Then each one of them was given a white robe and was told **to wait** a short time longer. There were **still some of their fellow servants and brothers and sisters** in the service of Christ who **must be killed as they were**. They had to wait until all of this was finished.”*

Revelation 6:11, Contemporary English Version

*“Then each of those who had been killed was given a white robe and told to rest for a little while. They had to wait until the **complete number** of the Lord’s **other servants and followers** would be killed.”*

The First Stage of the Martyrs: 1260 Years

Daniel 7:25 describes the first stage of martyrs. During this period, the little horn persecuted the saints of the Most High for a time, times and the dividing of time:

*“He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall **persecute the saints of the Most High**, and shall intend to change times and law. Then **the saints shall be given** into his hand for a time and times and half a time.”*

Revelation 13:5, 7 describes this same period as forty-two months during which the beast (the same power as the little horn), made war with the saints and overcame them:

*“And he **was given** a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he **was given** authority to continue for forty-two months. ⁶ Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. ⁷ It **was granted** to him to make **war with the saints** and to **overcome them**. And authority **was given** him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.”*

Historical frame of reference: The **first four churches** parallel the **first four seals**:

- **White Horse** (Ephesus): The **apostolic** church
- **Red Horse** (Smyrna): The church **persecuted** by the Roman emperors
- **Black Horse** (Pergamum): The **compromising** church during the time of Constantine the Great
- **Pale Horse** (Thyatira): The papal church

The Fourth Seal and the Church of Thyatira

Revelation 2:20-23:

*"Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman **Jezebel [the harlot]**, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit **sexual immorality [with the kings of the earth]** and eat things sacrificed to idols. ²¹ And I gave her **time [three and a half times or 42 months]** to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. ²² Indeed I will cast her into a **sickbed [the deadly wound]**, and those who **commit adultery with her** into **great tribulation [the French Revolution]**, unless they repent of their deeds. ²³ I will kill her **children [apostate Protestantism]** with death, and all the churches **[plural]** shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts **[the investigative judgment]**. And I will give to each one of you **according to your works [the reward based on the judgment]**."*

2 Kings 9:22:

*"Now it happened, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, "Is it peace, Jehu?" So he answered, "What peace, as long as the **harlotries** of your **mother** Jezebel and her **witchcraft** are so many?"*

1 Kings 18:4:

*"For so it was, while Jezebel **massacred** the prophets of the Lord, that Obadiah had taken one hundred prophets and hidden them, fifty to a cave, and had fed them with bread and water.)"*

James 5:17:

*"Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for **three years and six months**."*

2 Kings 9:7:

*"You shall strike down the house of Ahab your master, that I may **avenge the blood** of My servants the prophets, and **the blood** of all the servants of the Lord, at the hand of Jezebel."*

White Robes for the First Group of Martyrs

The conferral of the white robe is another way of expressing that the martyrs **formed a character fit for heaven**. In the investigative judgment, God will vindicate before the universe the martyrs who were faithful to Jesus and died for him. The judgment will reveal that they had the righteousness of Jesus in their lives when they died. The investigative pre-advent judgment will not yet empirically confer the robe but it will rather reveal that the martyrs had a right to it when they died. When Jesus returns He will then literally clothe the martyrs in white robes of light. The investigative judgment pronounces the verdict and at the second coming, the verdict is enforced.

Matthew 22:11, 12 clearly teaches that God will assign the robe to the faithful **before** the second coming. The purpose of the pre-advent investigative judgment is to reveal whether people had the white robe of Christ's righteousness. That is to say, God assigns the robe in absentia. When I graduated with my master's degree from the seminary, I lived in Colombia so I could not attend the graduation ceremony in person. However, the university called my name in absentia and later sent me the diploma.

Revelation 3:4, 5:

*"You have a few names even in Sardis who have not **defiled their garments**; and they shall walk with Me **in white**, for they are worthy. ⁵ He who overcomes **shall be** clothed in **white garments**, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels."*

Note: Those who are faithful **already have** unsoiled spiritual white garments. However, when Jesus comes, the overcomers will be clothed in literal white garments of light such as those that covered Adam and Eve. When Adam and Eve sinned, they lost their spiritual robes of righteousness and found themselves physically naked. The purpose of the plan of salvation is to cover us first with Christ's spiritual robe of righteousness and then to cover us with a literal robe of light.

When the judgment ends, there will no longer be the opportunity to wash the robes of character. At the close of probation, God will make the awesome pronouncement:

*"He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is **filthy** [notice the laundry analogy], let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous [continue to act righteously] still; he who is holy, let him be holy [continue to behave in a holy manner] still." Revelation 22:11*

*"When Christ shall come, he will **not change the character** of any individual. Precious, probationary time is given to be improved in washing our **robes of character**, and making them white in the blood of the Lamb." Counsels on Education, p. 237*

It is our own responsibility to wash the robes of character. However, the cleansing agent is the blood of Jesus:

Revelation 7:13:

*"And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, 'These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have **washed their robes** [stole], and **made them white** in the blood of the Lamb.'"*

*"The provision has been made for us to wash. The fountain has been prepared at infinite expense, and the burden of **washing rests upon us**, who are imperfect*

before God. The Lord does not propose to remove these spots of defilement **without our doing anything** on our part. **We must wash our robes** in the blood of the Lamb. We may lay hold of the merits of the blood of Christ by faith, and through His grace and power we may have strength to overcome our errors, our sins, our imperfections of character, and come off victorious, having washed our robes in the blood of the Lamb." 3T, p. 183

"The resurrection and ascension of our Lord is a sure evidence of the triumph of the saints of God over death and the grave, and a pledge that heaven is open to those who wash their **robes of character** and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. Jesus ascended to the Father as a representative of the human race, and God will bring those who **reflect His image** to behold and share with Him His glory." The Faith I Live By, p. 51

"The assaults of Satan are strong, his delusions are subtle; but the Lord's eye is upon His people. Their affliction is great, the flames of the furnace seem about to consume them; but Jesus will bring them forth as **gold tried in the fire**. Their **earthliness will be removed**, that through them the image of Christ may be **perfectly revealed**." PK, p. 589

After the judgment process is over and God has vindicated His people, the triumphant church will be clothed in linen white and clean:

Revelation 19:6-8:

"And I heard, as it were, the voice of a **great multitude**, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!"⁷ Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and **His wife** has made herself ready."⁸ And to her it was granted to be arrayed in **fine linen, clean and bright**, for the fine linen is the **righteous acts of the saints**." (cf. Ephesians 5:25-27)

Jesus promised to clothe His faithful followers in white robes. In contrast, notice what the wicked papal oppressors did to **John Huss** just before his martyrdom. When Huss' name comes up in the heavenly court, God will overturn this travesty in justice. God will pronounce a verdict of 'not guilty' in his favor and a sentence of 'guilty' against his wicked oppressors:

*"Sentence having been pronounced, the ceremony of **degradation** began. The bishops **clothed their prisoner in the sacerdotal habit**, and as he took the priestly robe, he said: "Our Lord Jesus Christ was covered with a white robe, by way of insult, when Herod had Him conducted before Pilate." (Ibid., vol. 2, p. 86). The vestments were removed one by one, each bishop **pronouncing a curse** as he performed his part of the ceremony. Finally, "they **put on his head a cap** or pyramidal-shaped miter of paper, on which were painted **frightful figures of demons**, with the word 'Archheretic' conspicuous in front. 'Most joyfully,' said Huss, 'will I wear this crown of shame for Thy sake, O Jesus, who for me didst wear a crown of thorns.'" When he was thus arrayed, "the prelates said, 'Now we **devote thy soul to the devil**.' 'And I,' said John Huss, lifting up his eyes toward heaven, 'do commit my spirit into Thy hands, O Lord Jesus, for Thou hast redeemed me.'" (Wylie, b. 3, chapter 7)." GC, pp. 108, 109.*

The Deadly Wound Concluded the First Stage of the Martyrs

Revelation 13:10:

*"He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with **the sword** must be killed with **the sword**. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints."* (cf. Revelation 13:14)

As noted before in Romans 13:1-4, the sword symbolizes the civil power of Rome. During the three and one half times or forty-two months, the little horn (the beast) used the sword of the state to slay God's people. However, the same

sword of the state wounded the little horn (the beast) at the end of this period. This concluded the period that saw the death of the first group of martyrs.

God told these martyrs to **rest** for a little while. The word 'rest' here refers to the sleep of death! The martyrs cannot literally be crying out and sleeping at the same time unless they are talking in their sleep! Clearly, the word 'rest' is a euphemism for death. Revelation 14:13 uses the same word to describe the condition of those who are dead.

Revelation 14:13:

*"Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the **dead** who **die** in the Lord from now on.' " "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may **rest** from their labors, and their works follow them."*

The Second Stage of Martyrs

Revelation 13:3:

*"And I saw one of his heads as if it had been **mortally wounded**, and his deadly wound **was healed** and all the world marveled and followed the beast."*

After the deadly wound heals, the papacy will persecute a future group of martyrs as it did the martyrs of the past. According to this text, the deadly wound of the beast will heal and it will behave once more **as it did forgone years**: Regarding the healing of the wound, Ellen White wrote:

*"We have no time to lose. Troublous times are before us. The world is stirred with the spirit of war. Soon the scenes of trouble spoken of in the prophecies will take place. The prophecy in the eleventh of Daniel has nearly reached its complete fulfillment. **Much of the history** that has taken place in fulfillment of this prophecy **will be repeated**. In the thirtieth verse, a power is spoken of that "shall*

be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant." [Verses 31-36, quoted.] **Scenes similar** to those described in these words will take place." Manuscript Releases, volume 13, p. 394 (Letter 103, 1904)

"The influence of Rome in the countries that once acknowledged her dominion is still far from being destroyed and prophecy foretells a **restoration of her power**. "I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast." Verse 3. GC, p. 579

"When our nation shall so abjure the principles of its government as to enact a Sunday law, Protestantism will in this act join hands with popery; it will be nothing else that **giving life** [which means that it must have been dead] to the tyranny which has long been eagerly watching its opportunity to **spring again** [which means that the active despotism must have existed before] into **active despotism**." 5T, p. 712

"When the land which the Lord provided as an asylum for his people, that they might worship him according to the dictates of their own consciences, the land over which for long years the shield of Omnipotence has been spread, the land which God has favored by making it the depository of the pure religion of Christ—when that land shall, through its legislators, abjure the principles of Protestantism, and give countenance to Romish apostasy in tampering with God's law—it is then that the final work of the man of sin will be revealed. Protestants will throw their whole influence and strength on the side of the Papacy; by a national act enforcing the false Sabbath, they will **give life** and **vigor** [which means that the corrupt faith of Rome must have been dead for a period] to the corrupt faith of Rome, **reviving** [which means that her tyranny and oppression of conscience were dead for a while] her tyranny and oppression of conscience. Then it will be time for God to work in mighty power for the vindication of his truth." Signs of the Times, June 12, 1893

The Final Group of Martyrs and their Vindication

Revelation 13:11-18 describes the power that will heal the papacy's deadly wound, the United States of America. This beast will do all in its power to honor the first beast.

Revelation 13:11-18:

*"Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and **[1] spoke like a dragon** and he exercises all the **[2] authority of the first beast** in **[3] his presence**, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to **[4] worship the first beast** whose deadly wound was healed. ¹³ He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. ¹⁴ And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do **[5] in the sight of the beast**, telling those who dwell on the earth to **[6] make an image to the beast** who was wounded by the sword and lived. ¹⁵ He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast **to be killed**. ¹⁶ He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, **[7] to receive a mark** on their right hand or on their foreheads, ¹⁷ and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name."*

Revelation 17:1-2, 6:

*"Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the **great harlot [just like Jezebel]** who sits on many waters, ² with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication **[just like Jezebel]**, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication." ⁶ I saw the woman, **drunk with the blood** of the saints and with the **blood of the martyrs** of Jesus **[just like Jezebel]**. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement."*

Revelation 18:23:

*"The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore, and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore. For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your **sorcery** [**translated 'witchcraft' in Galatians 5:20**] all the nations were deceived."*

Revelation 19:1, 2: These verses describe the time when God answers the prayers of the souls under the altar. At this time, the martyrs of the past and the martyrs of the future will receive their reward.

*"After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God! ² For **true and righteous** are His **judgments**, because He **has judged** the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He **has avenged** on her the **blood of His servants** shed by her." (cf. Revelation 18:20, 24)*

Revelation 20:4: The martyrs whom the papacy slew will now have the right to judge those who judged and condemned them. During the thousand years, those whom the papacy beheaded will pronounce judgment upon those who oppressed them:

*"And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I **saw the souls** of those who had been **beheaded** for their **witness to Jesus** and for the **word of God**, who had not **worshiped the beast** or his **image**, and had not received his **mark** on their foreheads or on their hands. And **they lived and reigned** with Christ for a thousand years."*

Daniel 7 and 8 and the Two Stages of the Martyrs

According to Daniel seven and eight, during the three and one half times, the little horn cast down the place of the sanctuary, rose up against the Prince of

the host, took away the daily and threw down the stars/saints. The text tells us that the little horn **prospered**.

In **Daniel 8:13**, one angel asked another a question **[the same basic question of Revelation 6:9-11]**:

*"Then I heard a holy one speaking; and another holy one said to that certain one who was speaking, "How long will the vision be, concerning the daily and the transgression of desolation, the giving of both the **sanctuary** and the **host** to be **trampled underfoot**?"*

In other words, how long until the actions of the little horn are reversed? The answer to the question is that in 1844 God began to reverse the erroneous decisions of earthly courts in the heavenly sanctuary. The judgment begins with the dead (including the martyrs of the 1260 years but also all who claimed Jesus as Savior). In the judgment, God gives the martyrs a white robe and tells them to rest until the rest of the martyrs die as they did. Then God will vindicate both groups of martyrs in the heavenly judgment (in the judgment of the dead beginning in 1844 and the judgment of the living just before the close of probation) and punish the harlot at the second coming.

The words 'judge' and 'avenge' do not refer to the same event. While judging implies the **trial**, the avenging refers to the **punishment** after God pronounces the sentence. In the heavenly judgment, God gives the verdict in favor of the saints and against their oppressors. Then, when Jesus comes, God will actually enforce the verdict by rewarding the saints and punishing their wicked oppressors.

The central theme of Daniel 7 is the vindication of God's faithful martyrs. The little horn persecuted and overcame the saints for 1260 years (Daniel 7:25). However, in 1844, the ancient of days sat on His judgment seat and the heavenly judgment began (7:26). God opened the unerring record books, gave the verdict in favor of the persecuted saints and the time will come when the saints will

receive the kingdom (Daniel 7:26, 27). In other words, God allowed the little horn to do its will 'until' the judge came (Daniel 7:21, 22) after which the kingdom will be given to the saints of the Most High (Daniel 7:27). The persecution during the fourth seal and the crying out of the martyrs during the fifth, parallels the great tribulation of Matthew 24 (Matthew 24:21) as well as the period of the church of Thyatira (Revelation 2:20-23) and the war that the little horn/beast waged upon the saints of God for time, times and the dividing of time (Daniel 7:21, 25; Revelation 13:7)

Summarizing the chronological sequence of the fifth and sixth seals:

The papacy slew the saints of the Most High during the 1260 years and therefore their innocent blood symbolically cried out for justice and vindication. In 1844, God began to examine the case of each one. God assigned to the faithful martyrs white robes and told them to rest (in the grave) until the number of the future martyrs is complete. The Roman Catholic papacy, in union with apostate Protestantism during the little time of trouble preceding probation will slay the rest of the martyrs when the land beast heals the wound of the sea beast. Those who refuse to worship the beast and his image and to receive the mark will be slain (Revelation 20:4). God will then vindicate the end time martyrs and assign them white robes in the final stages of the judgment of the living. Finally, at the coming of Jesus, both groups of martyrs will be avenged and rewarded with eternal life while their wicked oppressors will be punished with death by the plagues (Revelation 19:1, 2; 20:4; 11:18)

The Relationship between the Fifth and Sixth Seals

As the fifth seal has two stages, so does the sixth. The first part of the sixth seal (Revelation 6:12, 13) is the judging part of the fifth seal and the second part of the sixth seal (Revelation 6:14-17) is the avenging part. In between these two events, we have the parenthesis of Revelation 7:1-8, the sealing of the righteous living. The martyrs and the 144,000 are two distinct groups. God will judge the

martyrs who die during the short time of trouble first and then He will judge the 144,000 living saints.

We find God's answer to the cry of the martyrs in Revelation 19:1, 2. The avenging part will take place during the period of the seven last plagues, particularly when the wicked had to drink blood (Revelation 16:5-7) because they shed the blood of the martyrs. In Revelation 20:4, God gives this same group the right to judge their wicked oppressors.

The persecution of the little horn during the 1260 years (Daniel 8:11-13) leads to the question: "How long?" The Signs in the heavens during the first part of the sixth seal announce the beginning of the judgment process (Revelation 6:12-13).

Daniel 11:44 describes the end time martyrs when the papacy resurrects from its deadly wound. In Daniel 12:1 the judgment ends, signs are seen in the heavens revealing that the judgment has ended (Matthew 24:30), Babylon comes to its end (Daniel 11:45) and God's people are delivered and rewarded (Daniel 12:2)

Ellen White and the Timing of the Fifth Seal

Some claim that Ellen White placed the fulfillment of the fifth seal in the future from her day. However, although most of her statements refer to the future it is not by any means true that she exclusively puts this seal in the future. As we have noticed, in GC 59, 60 she applied the cries of the martyrs in Revelation 6:9-11 to the past. I will quote the majority of her statements here and then offer an explanation.

The Cries of the Martyrs from the Past

*"In the thirteenth century was established that most terrible of all the engines of the papacy--**the Inquisition**. The prince of darkness wrought with the leaders of the papal hierarchy. In their secret councils Satan and his angels controlled the minds of evil men, while unseen in the midst stood an angel of God, taking the fearful record of their iniquitous decrees and writing the history of deeds too horrible to appear to human eyes. "Babylon the great" was "drunken with the blood of the saints." **The mangled forms of millions of martyrs cried to God for vengeance upon that apostate power.**" GC, p. 59*

The Cry of the Future Martyrs

*"When the defiance of God's law is almost universal, when his people are pressed in affliction by their fellow men, God will interpose. **Then will the voice be heard from the graves of martyrs, represented by the souls that John saw slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ, which they held**—then the prayer will ascend from every true child of God: "It is time for thee, Lord, to work: for they have made void thy law." The **fervent prayers of his people will be answered**; for God loves to have his people seek him with all the heart, and depend upon him as their deliverer. He will be sought unto to do these things for his people, and he will arise as their protector and avenger. "Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him?" The Review and Herald, December 21, 1897*

*"Roman Catholic principles will be taken under the care and protection of the state. This national apostasy will speedily be followed by national ruin. The protest of Bible truth will be no longer tolerated by those who have not made the law of God their rule of life. **Then will the voice be heard from the graves of martyrs, represented by the souls that John saw slain for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ which they held**; then the prayer will ascend*

from every true child of God, "It is time for thee, Lord, to work: for they have made void thy law." Review and Herald, June 15, 1897

*"When Protestantism shall stretch her hand across the gulf to grasp the hand of the Roman power, when she shall reach over the abyss to clasp hands with spiritualism, when, under the influence of this threefold union, our country shall repudiate every principle of its Constitution as a Protestant and republican government, and shall make provision for the propagation of papal falsehoods and delusions, then we may know that the time has come for the marvelous working of Satan and that the end is near. As the approach of the Roman armies was a sign to the disciples of the impending destruction of Jerusalem, so may this apostasy be a sign to us that the limit of God's forbearance is reached, that the measure of our nation's iniquity is full, and that the angel of mercy is about to take her flight, never to return. The people of God will then be plunged into those scenes of affliction and distress which prophets have described as the time of Jacob's trouble. **The cries of the faithful, persecuted ones ascend to heaven.** And as the blood of Abel cried from the ground, there are voices also crying to God from martyrs' graves, from the sepulchers of the sea, from mountain caverns, from convent vaults: **"How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"** Testimonies for the Church, volume 5, p. 451*

Why does Ellen White place the fulfillment of the fifth seal in the future? The simple reason is that the fifth seal has both a **past** and a **future** fulfillment just like the Roman Catholic Papacy has two stages of dominion, one past (the 1260 years) and the other future (when the deadly wound is healed). The past fulfillment was when the martyrs died during the dark ages and the future fulfillment is when persecutions of the past are revived during the short time of trouble just before the close of probation.

Daniel 11 and the Cry of the Martyrs

Ellen White refers to two stages of persecution in the experience of God's people:

*"It is impossible to give any idea of the experience of the people of God who shall be alive upon the earth when celestial glory and a **repetition of the persecutions of the past** are blended." 9T, p. 16.*

Remarkably, she wrote this statement in the context of the prophecy of Daniel 11 that also refers to two stages for the persecution of God's people. Daniel 11:31-39 highlights the persecution of God's people during the middle ages and verses 40-45 focus on the persecution of the end-time martyrs when the loud cry is proclaimed.

*"We have no time to lose. Troublous times are before us. The world is stirred with the spirit of war. Soon the scenes of trouble spoken of in the prophecies will take place. The prophecy in the eleventh of Daniel has nearly reached its complete fulfillment. **Much of the history that has taken place in fulfillment of this prophecy will be repeated.** In the thirtieth verse a power is spoken of that "shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant." [Verses 31-36, quoted.] **Scenes similar to those** described in these words [in verses 30-36] will take place." Manuscript Releases, volume 13, p. 394 (Letter 103, 1904)*



ANCHOR SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

“Revelation’s Seven Seals: Studies in Revelation 4-8”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #14 - The SIXTH SEAL: SIGNS OF THE JUDGMENT

Revelation 6:12-17:

*“I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a **great earthquake**; and the **sun** became black as sackcloth of hair, and the **moon** became like blood [**not darkened**]. ¹³ And the **stars** of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs [**unripe**] when it is shaken by a mighty wind. ¹⁴ **Then** the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and **every** mountain and island was moved out of its place. ¹⁵ And the kings of the earth [**rulers who govern the nations of the world**], the great men [**high officers of the state**], the rich men [**the socially wealthy**], the commanders [**commanders of armies**], the mighty men [**the great men in battle**], every slave and every free man [**regular everyday citizens**], hid themselves [**they are found naked according to Genesis 3:8; Revelation 16:15 and hide like Adam and Eve after sin**] in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, ¹⁶ and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us [**Hosea 10:8; Luke 23:30**] from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! ¹⁷ For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand? [**Ephesians 6:14; I Peter 5:12; Luke 11:18**]”*

Are the Signs Literal or Symbolic?

Most of the book of Revelation contains symbolic language that must be decoded. However, Seventh-day Adventists believe that the great earthquake and the signs in the sun, the moon were literal events? Why? We find the reason in the meaning of a Greek word that appears four times in Revelation 6:12, 13, the word “**as**” (*hos*).

Ranko Stefanovic explained the meaning of this word:

“... the repeated usage of the word ‘as’ or ‘like’ (Gr. hos) in the text appears to be very significant. The sun becomes black as sackcloth, the moon as blood, the stars of the sky fall as do the figs of the fig tree, and heaven splits as the papyrus scroll. In Greek, this word ‘introduces a figurative analogy to an actual event’ that is compared with something figurative. This suggests that these heavenly signs are intended to be taken literally.” (Ranko Stefanovic, Revelation of Jesus Christ, p. 244)

The Link between the Fifth and Sixth Seals

The plea of the martyrs of the dark ages (“how long until you judge and avenge?”) in Revelation 6:10 finds its answer in Daniel 7:8-10; 8:13, 14 where the process of judgment begins to exonerate them from the faulty verdicts of earthly courts. According to these passages in Daniel, the trampling of the sanctuary and of God’s people would last until the conclusion of the 2300 days where the process of vindicating the sanctuary and its worshipers would begin. The signs in Revelation 6:12, 13 are the earthly announcement that the vindicating judgment is about to begin.

It is noteworthy that the **sixth church** (the open door to the most holy place), the **sixth seal** (the sealing the 144,000) and the **sixth trumpet** (the vision of

the Ark of the Covenant) all point to the events connected with the **investigative judgment** in the most holy place of the sanctuary.

The sixth seal mentions two earthquakes. One transpires at the beginning of the sixth seal and the other at its end. Verse 12 describes the one at the beginning and verse 14 describes the one at the end. Revelation 16:18, 20 further amplifies the second earthquake as cataclysmic and global event. That is to say, the earthquake in Revelation 6:14 is the same one as in Revelation 16:18, 20 where the context is the seventh plague. The earthquake in Revelation 6:12 is preliminary and local. The one in Revelation 16:18 will be global and the greatest in history. Only the greatest earthquake in history could remove mountains and islands from their places on a global scale.

Purposes of the Signs

The signs of Revelation 6:12, 13 play several specific functions.

- **First**, they announce that the great tribulation is about to end (Matthew 24:29).
- **Second**, they serve as an omen of the fall of the papal power.
- **Third**, they serve to draw attention to the approaching judgment in 1844.
- **Fourth**, they serve as indicators of the beginning of the time of the end.
- **Finally**, they announce the soon coming of Jesus (see below on the meaning of 'soon').

Critics both within and without the Seventh-day Adventist Church argue thus: "How is it possible to believe that events that took place over 250 years ago are signs of the soon coming of Jesus? Isn't this stretching credulity to its limit?" On the surface, this argument seems persuasive until we look at the number of these years in the context of a broader perspective.

Let us suppose for the sake of argument that I am going to take a six thousand mile trip. When I start the trip, we would all agree that my destination is very distant. When I am halfway there, the destination is still a long way off. However, would you not agree that when I am 250 miles from my destination, my arrival is near? After all, 250 years of 6,000 years of history is only 4%!

The late C. Mervyn Maxwell in his excellent book, Magnificent Disappointment, pp. 91, 92 (published in 1994) puts 1844 and the nearness of the second coming in perspective:

“We need a change of perspective. Instead of looking back to 1844 and finding it around 150 years in the past, let us go back to the beginning of human history and view 1844 as almost six thousand years in the future. . . From the perspective of Eden at the beginning of earth’s six thousand years, the remaining distance between 1844 and the 1990s is hardly discernible. These 150 years between 1844 and the 1990s represent only one-fortieth, 2.5 percent, of human history. More than 97 percent of human history took place prior to 1844. Yes, we are indeed in the end time. The final judgment began only yesterday, as it were. Christ’s second advent is coming soon.”

The enemies of traditional Adventism and of Ellen White have frequently pointed out that there have been other great earthquakes, dark days and star showers in history. They argue: “What makes the Lisbon Earthquake of 1755, the Dark Day of 1780 and the Leonid Star Shower of 1833 so unique? The answer is fourfold: **Location, order, time and intensity.**

- **Location:**

It is not coincidental, that these signs occurred in **Europe** and the **United States**. Europe was significant because there the papacy would receive the deadly wound that would mark the end of the 1260 year tribulation. The United States was significant, (especially New England) because

there the message of the judgment would be proclaimed powerfully by the Millerites beginning in the 1830s. C. Mervyn Maxwell well explained:

“The location of the classic signs was highly significant. They happened in Europe and America primarily, where people were studying the Bible and pondering the prophecies. A dark day in the Sahara Desert or a star shower over New Guinea would have said little in those days about the second coming of Christ to cannibal headhunters or Muslim nomads. Events need not be universal to deliver a global message. A few square miles at Hiroshima and Nagasaki were sufficient to announce the atomic age. A stable in Bethlehem ushered in the Christian era. Only a few hundred people saw Jesus after His resurrection—but they told others.” Magnificent Disappointment, pp. 93, 94.

- **Order:**

These phenomena occurred in history precisely in the chronological order described in Revelation 6. The Lisbon earthquake occurred in **1755**, the Dark Day and moon like blood occurred in **1780** and the star shower took place in **1833**. Show me one other instance in human history where these phenomena have taken place in this precise order within a period of less than one hundred years! The order of these signs led people to study the prophecies.

- **Time:**

These signs occurred precisely at the right **time**, immediately before the 1260-year tribulation came to an end and just before the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning the fall of the papacy (1798) and the beginning of the judgment (1844).

- **Intensity:**

Concerning the **intensity** of these signs C. Mervyn Maxwell has well stated:

“As recently as 1980, the widely respected seismologist, G. A. Eiby, in chapter 11 of his book Earthquakes, ranked the Lisbon earthquake as ‘the largest shock ever’ and reckoned that it may well have reached an almost incredible 9.0 on the Richter scale, seven times stronger than the 1906 San Francisco earthquake... The dark day of May 19, 1780 has not been equaled in North America in the two hundred years that have since come and gone. The Leonid shower of November 13, 1833 gave birth to a new branch of astronomy. . . Like the Lisbon earthquake and the famous dark day, it too has not been matched, in spite of the scientific expectations that it would be.” Magnificent Disappointment, p. 93

Ellen White and the Sixth Seal

Ellen White explains the **first part** of the sixth seal is in The Great Controversy, pp. 304, 333. On page 304 she quotes Revelation 6:12 and on page 333 she quotes Revelation 6:13. However, she does not quote Revelation 6:14-17 (the **second part** of the sixth seal) until pages 641, 642. What is the reason for the 300-page gap between her comments on verses 12, 13, and her remarks on verses 14-17? In order to comprehend this long parenthesis between the first and last part of the sixth seal, we must remember some things we studied under the fifth seal:

- The **papacy** has **two stages of power**—one **past** (during the 1260 years) and one **future** (at the very end of time).
- Therefore the **tribulation** also has **two stages**—one **past** and one **future**. The past stage of the tribulation was the greatest in history as to

length. The future stage is the greatest as to **intensity.** Regarding the first period of persecution Ellen White wrote:

“For more than a thousand years such persecution as the world had never before known was to come upon Christ's followers. Millions upon millions of His faithful witnesses were to be slain.” DA, p. 631

- The **signs in the heavens** have **two stages.** The first group of cosmic signs announces the end of the first period of tribulation and the soon-to-begin “judging” portion of the fifth seal. The second set of cosmic signs announces the end of the second tribulation period and the “avenging” portion of the fifth seal. In between these two points of time, we have the vindicating judgment of the martyrs and the sealing of the 144,000 living saints.
- The first stage of the signs took place in **1755, 1780** and **1833.** These signs announced that the **first stage** of persecution by the papacy was about to end and the vindicating **judgment** was about to begin. These signs are referred to in Revelation 6:12, 13 and Joel 2:31
- The second stage of the signs will take place immediately before the second coming of Jesus and will mark the **deliverance** of the saints from the **second stage** of persecution by the papacy. Revelation 6:14-17 describes these signs.

Two Sets of Signs

Will the signs of Revelation 6:12, 13 have another fulfillment in the future? No! In Joel 2:31 and in Revelation 6:12, 13 we have two important details that distinguish these signs from the ones in the future:

- **First**, according to Joel 2:31 the signs of Revelation 6:12, 13 occur **“before”** the great and terrible day of the Lord.
- **Second**, in the signs of Revelation 6:12, 13 the moon looks as **blood** and the **stars fall** from heaven. However, in the signs of Revelation 6:14-17, which occur at the second coming, the moon and the stars do not give their light.

Joel 2:10, 11; 3:15, 16 and Matthew 24:30 refer to a **second** ‘great earthquake’ and set of signs in the heavenly bodies that will be fulfilled **when Jesus comes**. These signs will occur as Jesus is preparing to leave heaven for earth. The darkening of the sun, moon and will announce the coming of Jesus. There will be a cosmic, global earthquake as well, in heaven and on earth that will announce His departure from heaven. The two sets of signs are different.

- **Revelation 6:12-13**: These verses describe the moon becoming **like blood**, not its darkening. The text also tells us that the stars fell from heaven. These preliminary signs are not the same ones, as those in Matthew 24 when the voice of God will move the sun, moon and stars out of their places. As a result, the planet will be in darkness during the millennium.

*“I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great **earthquake**; and the **sun** became **black** as sackcloth of hair, and the **moon** became **like blood**.¹³ And the **stars** of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind.”*

- The signs in Revelation 6:12, 13 are similar to those in **Joel 2:31** (also Acts 2:20). In these verses the sun is darkened and the moon is turned into blood, **before** the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord:

*“The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the **moon into blood**, **before** the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.”*

- **Joel 2:10, 11** depicts **different signs** than those in Revelation 6:12, 13 and Joel 2:31. In the Joel passage the earth and the heavens tremble, the sun and the moon grow dark and the stars do not shine. Verses 1-11 describe the second coming of Jesus, as does Revelation 6:14-16. Notice that Joel 2:11 ends with the same question as does Revelation 6:17. These signs occur in the context of the second coming of Jesus

*"The **earth quakes** before them, the **heavens tremble**; the sun and moon grow **dark**, and the stars **diminish their brightness**.¹¹ The Lord gives voice before His army, for His camp is very great; for strong is the One who executes His word. For the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; **who can endure it?**"*

- **Joel 3:15, 16**: These verses **do not** describe the same signs spoken of in Revelation 6:12, 13. The text tells us that the heavens and the earth will **shake** and the sun and moon will be **dark** and the stars will **not shine**. The stars sure did shine on November 13, 1833 when they fell from heaven!

*"The sun and moon will **grow dark**, and the stars will **diminish their brightness**.¹⁶ The Lord also will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; the heavens and earth **will shake**; but the Lord will be a **shelter** for His people [**because the wicked want to destroy them**], and the strength of the children of Israel."*

- **Isaiah 13:10-13**: This passage is **not parallel** to Revelation 6:12, 13. In these verses the sun, the moon and the stars **grow dark**. This did not happen in 1755, 1780 and 1833. When Jesus comes, the voice of God will move the heavens and the earth out of their places:

*"Behold, the day of the Lord comes, cruel, with both **wrath and fierce anger**, to lay the **land desolate**; and He will **destroy its sinners** from it."¹⁰*

*For the stars of heaven and their constellations will **not give their light**; the sun **will be darkened** in its going forth, and the moon will **not cause its light to shine**.¹¹ "I will **punish the world** for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will halt the arrogance of the proud, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.¹² I will make a mortal **more rare than fine gold**, a man more than the golden wedge of Ophir.¹³ Therefore I will **shake the heavens**, and the **earth will move** out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts and in **the day of His fierce anger**."*

- Revelation 6 describes the signs in the **very order** in which they historically occurred:

- ✓ The great **earthquake** (1755)
- ✓ The darkening of the **sun** (1780)
- ✓ The **moon** becoming like **blood** (1780)
- ✓ The **stars falling** from heaven (1833)

- **Inevitable conclusion to the previous discussion:**

The signs in Joel 2:31, Acts 2:20 and Revelation 6:12, 13 are different from the ones in Matthew 24:30; Joel 2:10, 11; Joel 3:15, 16 and Isaiah 13:10ff.

- There is a difference between the expression "**the time of the end**" and "**the end of time**." While the signs in Revelation 6:12, 13 announced that the history of the planet was entering upon the **time of the end**, the signs in Matthew 24:30 (and parallel passages in Mark and Luke) announce the **end of time**. Notice the entire passage of Matthew 24:29-31:

*"Immediately **after the tribulation** of those days the **sun will be darkened**, and the **moon will not give its light**; the stars **will fall from***

heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ **Then** the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹ And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

- Who are the powers of the heavens in Matthew 24:29? **Genesis 1:16** tells us that the sun was made to rule the day and the moon and the stars were made to rule the night. Early Writings, p. 41 explains very well what will happen with the heavenly bodies when Jesus comes:

*"I saw that when the Lord said 'heaven,' in giving the signs recorded by **Matthew, Mark, and Luke**, He meant heaven, and when He said "earth" He meant earth. The powers of heaven are the sun, moon, and stars. **They rule** in the heavens. The powers of earth are those that rule on the earth. The powers of heaven will be shaken at the voice of God. Then the **sun, moon, and stars** will be moved out of their places. They will not pass away, but be shaken by the voice of God. EW, p. 41*

The heavens and the earth will be without form and void during the millennium because of the plagues and the global earthquake and the heavens will have no light (see Jeremiah 4:23ff) because the sun, moon and the stars will be moved out of their orbits.

Ellen G. White and the Signs

- As we have stated before, Ellen White quotes Revelation 6:12, 13 in The Great Controversy, **pages 304, 333** and applies them to the signs that took place in 1755, 1870 and 1833.
- Ellen White does not quote Revelation 6:14-17 until **pages 641, 642**:

*“The King of kings descends upon the cloud, wrapped in flaming fire. The heavens are rolled together as a scroll, **the earth trembles** before Him, and **every mountain and island is moved out of its place** [Revelation 6:14]. . . ‘And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?’ Revelation 6:15-17.*

- Why did Ellen White separate verses 12, 13 from verses 14-17 by over three hundred pages? Clearly because she knew, there would be a long time **parenthesis** between the events of verses 12 and 13 and 14-17.
- The principle at work here is that there are **signs that mark the end of the two stages of the tribulation**. In both cases the signs indicate that God has intervened to **deliver his people and to bring the tribulation to an end**—in the first instance from the oppression of the 1260 years and in the second instance from the oppression of the Time of Jacob’s Trouble.
- There is thus a close connection between the fifth and sixth seals. In the fifth seal, there are **two groups of martyrs**, one past and one future. The **signs in the sixth seal** (6:12, 13) are an announcement that the period of **oppression of the first group** of martyrs is **about to end**. On the other hand, the signs of Revelation 6:14-17 are an announcement that the **oppression of the second group** has **come to an end** because God’s people are going to be delivered by the voice of God which causes the cosmic, global earthquake and moves the sun, the moon and the stars out of their places.

Let us now take a careful look at how Ellen White explained the signs that took place in 1755, 1780 and 1833 AD:

*"Prophecy not only foretells the **manner and object** of Christ's coming, but presents **tokens** by which men are to know when it is near. Said Jesus: "There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars." Luke 21:25. "The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory." Mark 13:24-26. The revelator thus describes the **first of the signs to precede** the Second Advent: "There was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood." Revelation 6:12." GC, p. 304*

The Meaning of Luke 21:25, 26

What about the signs in Luke 21:25, 26? Here are the verses:

*"And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the **sea and the waves roaring**; ²⁶ men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the **powers of heaven will be shaken**."*

- Seventh-day Adventist evangelists frequently used these verses to describe the present turmoil in the world. However, a close look at the context indicates that these verses are describing what will occur at the very end of human history as an announcement of the second coming of Jesus.
- We must be careful not to take these verses out of their context. They are not referring to the **present distress** among the nations. They are actually referring to the distress that comes when God's voice moves the sun, moon and stars **out of their places**.

- When God utters His voice in deliverance of His people, **it shakes** the heavens and the earth. The sea is lashed in its fury and the whole earth heaves and swells like the waves of the sea. Mountain chains and islands disappear:

*“The **mountains shake** like a reed in the wind, and ragged rocks are scattered on every side. There is a roar as of a coming tempest. The **sea is lashed into fury**. There is heard the shriek of a hurricane like the voice of demons upon a mission of destruction. The whole earth heaves and swells **like the waves of the sea**. Its surface is breaking up. Its very foundations seem to be giving way. **Mountain chains** are sinking. **Inhabited islands** disappear. The **seaports** that have become like Sodom for wickedness are swallowed up by the angry waters.”*

Here Ellen White is using the language of **Luke 21:25, 26** to describe what will take place when God delivers His people at the second coming. The waves of the **tsunami that hit** Lisbon were child’s play compared with the waves of the sea that will engulf the world!

- *“There are troublous times before us; the judgments of God are coming upon our world. The nations of the earth **are to tremble**. There will be trials and **perplexities** on every hand; men’s hearts **will fail them for fear** and what shall we do in that day? Though the earth shall **reel to and fro** like a drunkard and be removed like a cottage [language from Isaiah 24:20], if we have made God our trust, He will deliver us.” Sons and Daughters of God, p. 354*

The Sixth and Seventh Seals According to Ellen White

- In GC, pp. 613-634: Ellen White describes the **time of trouble** such as never was in since there was a nation. This is parallel to the great tribulation spoken of in the first phrase of **Matthew 24:29**.
- In GC, pp. 635-637 she describes the signs in the sun, moon and stars in the chapter titled **God's People Delivered**. This is parallel to the second part of **Matthew 24:29**. She is following the **same order** as Matthew 24:29-31 where we have the great tribulation and the signs in the sun, the moon and the stars.
- As Jesus descends from heaven, the living saints ask the question: Who shall be able to stand? **[the final verse of the sixth seal]** Followed by a period of awful silence **[the seventh seal in Revelation 8:1]**:

*"Before His presence 'all faces are turned into paleness;' upon the rejecters of God's mercy falls the terror of eternal despair. 'The heart melteth, and the knees smite together, . . . and the faces of them all gather blackness.' Jeremiah 30:6; Nahum 2:10. The righteous cry with trembling: **"Who shall be able to stand?"** [Words of the sixth seal] The angels' song is hushed, and there is a **period of awful silence** [the silence in heaven of the seventh seal]." GC, p. 641*

- A few pages later Ellen White describes the arrival of Jesus and the **sending of His angels** to gather His **elect** (GC, p. 645) which is parallel to **Matthew 24:31**.
- *"The living righteous are changed "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." At the voice of God, they were glorified; now they are made immortal and with the risen saints are caught up to meet their Lord in the air. **Angels***

"gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other [Matthew 24:31]."

The Great Lisbon Earthquake

A few years ago while visiting Portugal a pastor gave me a nighttime tour of Lisbon. I was greatly surprised to see that there are still ruins all across the city caused the Lisbon earthquake and the ensuing fire and tsunami. One ruined building that especially caught my attention was the cathedral where hundreds died as the roof caved in. The roof of the cathedral fell on the worshipers who were celebrating All Saints Day, November 1, 1755.

Great Lisbon earthquake occurred at about 9:40 in the morning. All five cathedrals were full of worshipers who were celebrating All Saints' Day. According to survivors, the initial shock lasted about two minutes and according to estimates, reached an intensity of 9.0 on the Richter scale. There were actually three shocks over a 10-minute period, the second of which was the strongest. The second shock lasted about three and a half minutes, an inordinate length. The initial shock demolished most of the city and killed thousands. People who escaped the collapsing buildings fled to the open waterfront thinking it safer only to be engulfed 40 minutes later by a 60-foot tsunami.

Sir Charles Lyell reported that gigantic fissures tore through the center of Lisbon some of which were as wide as **15 feet**. **Fire** mysteriously leaped out of cracks in the ground. Estimates indicate that some 90,000 persons perished in Lisbon alone. However, in North Africa the cities of Fes and Meknes were also leveled, with a high loss of life. The quake was felt as far away as Strasbourg (1,100 miles away). Rivers and lakes were disturbed all the way to Scandinavia some 1,500 to 2,000 miles away. At about 6:00 p.m. a tsunami hit the island of Barbados in the Caribbean, some 4,000 miles away.

The earthquake destroyed **85% of the buildings** in Lisbon and about 90,000 persons died. There were two major aftershocks on December 11 and 23 causing additional death and suffering. The cataclysm covered a region of 1.3 million miles in Europe and Africa. Thousands died in Morocco and Algeria.

Ellen G. White describes the Lisbon earthquake

*"Prophecy not only foretells the manner and object of Christ's coming, but presents tokens by which men are to know when **it is near**. Said Jesus: "There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars." Luke 21:25. "The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory." Mark 13:24-26. The revelator thus describes **the first** of the signs **to precede** the Second Advent: "There was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood." Revelation 6:12.*

*These signs were witnessed before the opening of the nineteenth century. In fulfillment of this prophecy, there occurred in the year 1755, the most terrible earthquake that has ever been recorded. Though commonly known as the earthquake of Lisbon, it extended to the greater part of Europe, Africa, and America. It was felt in **Greenland**, in the **West Indies**, in the island of **Madeira**, in **Norway** and **Sweden**, **Great Britain** and **Ireland**. It pervaded an extent of not less than **four million square miles**. In **Africa**, the shock was almost as severe as in Europe. A great part of **Algiers** was destroyed; and a short distance from **Morocco**, a village containing eight or ten thousand inhabitants was swallowed up. A vast wave swept over the **coast of Spain** and Africa engulfing cities and causing great destruction.*

*It was in Spain and Portugal that the shock manifested its extreme violence. At Cadiz, the inflowing wave was said to be **sixty feet high**. **Mountains**, "some of the largest in Portugal, were impetuously shaken, as it were, from their very*

foundations, and some of them opened at their summits, which were split and rent in a wonderful manner, huge **masses of them being thrown down** into the adjacent valleys. Flames are related to have issued from these mountains." Sir Charles Lyell, *Principles of Geology*, page 495.

At Lisbon "a sound of thunder was heard underground, and immediately afterwards a violent shock threw down the greater part of that city. In the course of about **six minutes, sixty thousand persons perished**. The sea first retired, and laid the bar dry; it then rolled in, rising **fifty feet or more** above its ordinary level." "Among other extraordinary events related to have occurred at Lisbon during the catastrophe, was the subsidence of a new quay, built entirely of marble, at an immense expense. A great concourse of people had collected there for safety, as a spot where they might be beyond the reach of falling ruins; but suddenly the quay sank down with all the people on it, and not one of the dead bodies ever floated to the surface." Charles Lyell, *Principles of Geology*, page 495.

"The shock" of the earthquake "was instantly followed by **the fall of every church and convent**, almost all the large public buildings, and more than one fourth of the houses. In about two hours after the shock, **fires broke out** in different quarters, and raged with such violence for the space of nearly three days, that **the city was completely desolated**. The earthquake happened on a holyday, when the churches and convents were full of people, very few of whom escaped." *Encyclopedia Americana*, article, "Lisbon," note (ed. 1831). "The **terror of the people** was beyond description. Nobody wept; it was beyond tears. They ran hither and thither, delirious with horror and astonishment, **beating their faces and breasts**, crying, 'Misericordia! **The world's at an end!**' Mothers forgot their children, and ran about loaded with crucified images. Unfortunately, many ran to the churches for protection; but in vain was the sacrament exposed; in vain did the poor creatures embrace the altars; images, priests, and people were buried in one common ruin." It has been estimated that ninety thousand persons lost their lives on that fatal day." *GC*, pp. 304, 305

The Testimony of other Authors

*"The Lisbon earthquake of November 1, 1755, appears to have put both the theologians and philosophers on the defensive ... At twenty minutes to ten that morning, Lisbon was firm and magnificent, on one of the most picturesque and commanding sites in the world—a city of superb approach, placed precisely where every circumstance had concurred to say to the founders: Build here! In **six minutes** the city was in ruins ... **Half the world** felt the convulsion ... For many weeks, as we see in the letters and memoirs of that time, people in distant parts of Europe went to bed in alarm, relieved in the morning to find that they had escaped the fate of Lisbon one more night." James Parton, Life of Voltaire, volume 2, pp. 208, 209*

*"The effects were distributed over very nearly **four millions of square** English miles of the earth's surface, and greatly surpassed anything of the kind **ever recorded in history**." J. Nourse, The History and Philosophy of Earthquakes, London, (1757), p. 334*

*"Almost all the palaces and large churches were rent down, or part fallen, and scarce one house of this vast city is left habitable. Everybody that was not crushed to death ran out into the large places, and those near the river ran down to save themselves by boats, or any other floating convenience, running, crying, and calling to the ships for assistance; but whilst the multitude were gathered near the riverside, the water rose to such height that it overflowed the lower part of the city, which so terrified the miserable and already dismayed inhabitants, who ran to and fro with dreadful cries, which we heard plainly on board, that it **made them believe the dissolution of the world was at hand**; everyone **falling on his knees and entreating** the Almighty for His assistance ... By two o'clock the ships' boats began to ply, and took multitudes on board ... The fear, the sorrow, the cries and lamentations of the poor inhabitants are inexpressible; **every one begging pardon**, and embracing each other, crying. **Forgive me, friend, sister!** Oh! What will become of us! Neither water nor land will protect us, and the third element, fire, seems now to **threaten our total destruction!** As in effect, it*

happened. The conflagration lasted a whole week." Letter of a ship's captain to a ship's owner in, Thomas Hunter, Historical Account of Earthquakes, (1756) pp. 72-74

"In Africa, this earthquake was felt almost as severely as it had been in Europe. A great part of the city of Algiers was destroyed. Many houses were thrown down at Fez and Mequinez, and multitudes were buried beneath their ruins. Similar effects were realized in Morocco. Its effects were likewise felt at Tangier, at Tetuan, at Funchal in the Island of Madeira; ... it is probable ... that all Africa was shaken by this tremendous convulsion. At the North, it extended to Norway and Sweden; Germany, Holland, France, Great Britain, and Ireland were all more or less agitated by the same great and terrible commotion of the elements." Robert Sears, Wonders of the World, p. 58.

Sir Charles Lyell wrote the following graphic description of the event:

*"In no part of the volcanic region of Southern Europe has so tremendous an earthquake occurred in modern times as that which began on the 1st of November, 1755, at Lisbon. A **sound of thunder** was heard underground and immediately afterwards a violent shock threw down **the greater part of that city**. In the course of about **six minutes, sixty thousand persons** perished. The sea retired, and laid the bar dry; it then rolled in, rising **fifty feet** above ordinary level. ... Among other extraordinary events related to have occurred at Lisbon during the catastrophe was the subsidence of a new quay, built entirely of marble, at an immense expense. A great concourse of people had collected there for safety, at a spot where they might be beyond the reach of falling ruins; but suddenly the quay sank down with all the people on it, and not one of the dead bodies ever floated to the surface. Sir Charles Lyell, Principles of Geology, p. 495*

*"The mountains of Arrabida, Estrella, Julio, Marvan, and Cintra, being some of the largest in Portugal, were **impetuously shaken**, as it were, **from their very foundations**; and some of them opened at their summits, which were split and rent in a wonderful manner, huge masses of them being thrown down into the*

subjacent valleys. **Flames** are related to have issued from these mountains, which are supposed to have been electric; they are also said to have **smoked**; but vast clouds of dust may have given rise to this appearance... The **great area** over which this Lisbon earthquake extended is very remarkable. The movement was most violent in Spain, Portugal, and the north of Africa; but **nearly the whole of Europe**, and even the **West Indies**, felt the shock on the same day. A seaport called St. Ubes, about twenty miles south of Lisbon, was engulfed. At Algiers and Fez, in **Africa**, the agitation of the earth was equally violent, and at the distance of eight leagues from Morocco, a village, with the inhabitants to the number of about eight or ten thousand persons, together with all their cattle, were [was] swallowed up. Soon after, the earth closed again over them. The **shock was felt at sea**, on the deck of a ship to the west of Lisbon, and produced very much the same sensation as on dry land. Off St. Lucar [s], the captain of the ship 'Nancy' felt his vessel shaken so violently that he thought she had struck the ground, but, on heaving the lead, found a great depth of water. Captain Clark, from Denia, in latitude 36° 24' N., between nine and ten in the morning, had his ship shaken and strained as if she had struck upon a rock. Another ship, forty leagues west of St. Vincent, experienced so violent a concussion that the men were thrown a foot and a half perpendicularly up from the deck. In Antigua and Barbados, as also in Norway, Sweden, Germany, Holland, Corsica, Switzerland, and Italy, tremors and slight oscillations of the ground were felt.

The **agitation of lakes, rivers, and springs** in Great Britain was remarkable. At Loch Lemmond, in Scotland, for example, the water, without the least apparent cause, rose against its banks, and then subsided below its usual level. The greatest perpendicular height of this swell was two feet four inches. It is said that the movement of this earthquake was undulatory, and that it traveled at the rate of **twenty miles a minute**. A great wave swept over the coast of Spain, and is said to have been **sixty feet at Cadiz**. At Tangier, in Africa, it rose and fell eighteen times on the coast; at Funchal, in Madeira, it rose full **fifteen feet** perpendicular above high-water mark, although the tide, which ebbs and flows there seven feet, was then at half ebb. Besides entering the city and committing great havoc, it overflowed other seaports in the island. At Kinsale, in Ireland, a body of water

*rushed into the harbor, whirled round several vessels, and **poured into the market-place**." A.R. Spofford and Charles Gibbon, The Library of Choice Literature, Vol. VII, pp. 162, 163*

The Dark Day

Ellen White's Description:

*"Twenty-five years later appeared the next sign mentioned in the prophecy—the darkening of the sun and moon. What rendered this more striking was the fact that **the time of its fulfillment** had been definitely pointed out. In the Savior's conversation with His disciples upon Olivet, after describing the long period of trial for the church—the 1260 years of papal persecution, concerning which He had promised that the **tribulation should be shortened**—He thus mentioned certain events to precede His coming, and fixed the time when **the first of these should be witnessed**: "In those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light." Mark 13:24. The 1260 days, or years, terminated in 1798. A quarter of a century earlier, persecution had almost wholly ceased. Following this persecution, according to the words of Christ, the sun was to be darkened. On the 19th of May, 1780, this prophecy was fulfilled.*

*"Almost, if not altogether alone, as the **most mysterious** and as yet **unexplained phenomenon** of its kind, . . . stands the dark day of May 19, 1780—a most **unaccountable** darkening of the whole visible heavens and atmosphere in **New England**."--R. M. Devens, *Our First Century*, page 89.*

An eyewitness living in Massachusetts describes the event as follows:

"In the morning the sun rose clear, but was soon overcast. The clouds became lowery, and from them, black and ominous, as they soon appeared, lightning flashed, thunder rolled, and a little rain fell. Toward nine o'clock, the clouds became thinner, and assumed a brassy or coppery appearance, and earth, rocks, trees, buildings, water, and persons were changed by this strange, unearthly light.

A few minutes later, a **heavy black cloud spread over the entire sky** except a narrow rim at the horizon, and it was as dark as it usually is at nine o'clock on a summer evening. . . .

"Fear, anxiety, and awe gradually filled the minds of the people. Women stood at the door, looking out upon the dark landscape; men returned from their labor in the fields; the carpenter left his tools, the blacksmith his forge, the tradesman his counter. **Schools were dismissed**, and tremblingly the children fled homeward. Travelers put up at the nearest farmhouse. 'What is coming?' queried every lip and heart. It seemed as if a hurricane was about to dash across the land, or as if it was **the day of the consummation of all things.**"

"Candles were used; and hearth fires shone as brightly as on a moonless evening in autumn. . . . **Fowls retired to their roosts** and went to sleep, cattle gathered at the pasture bars and lowed, **frogs peeped**, birds sang their evening songs, and **bats flew about**. But the human knew that night had not come. . . .

"Dr. Nathanael Whittaker, pastor of the Tabernacle church in Salem, held religious services in the meeting-house, and preached a sermon in which he maintained that **the darkness was supernatural**. Congregations came together in many other places. The texts for the **extemporaneous sermons** were invariably those that seemed to indicate that the darkness was consonant **with Scriptural prophecy**. . . . The darkness was most dense shortly after eleven o'clock."--The Essex Antiquarian, April, 1899, vol. 3, No. 4, pp. 53, 54. "In most parts of the country it was so great in the daytime, that the people **could not tell the hour** by either watch or clock, nor dine, nor manage their domestic business, without the light of candles. . . .

"The extent of this darkness was **extraordinary**. It was observed as far east as Falmouth. To the westward it reached to the farthest part of Connecticut, and to Albany. To the southward, it was observed along the seacoasts; and to the north as far as the American settlements extend."--William Gordon, **History of the Rise, Progress, and Establishment of the Independence of the U.S.A.**, vol. 3, p. 57.

The intense darkness of the day was succeeded an hour or two before evening, by a partially clear sky, and the sun appeared, though it was still obscured by the **black, heavy mist**. "After sundown, the clouds came again overhead, and it grew dark very fast." "Nor was the darkness of the night less uncommon and terrifying than that of the day; notwithstanding there was almost a full moon, **no object was discernible** but by the help of some artificial light, which, when seen from the neighboring houses and other places at a distance, appeared through a kind of **Egyptian darkness** that seemed almost impervious to the rays."--Isaiah Thomas, Massachusetts Spy; or, American Oracle of Liberty, vol. 10, No. 472 (May 25, 1780). Said an eyewitness of the scene: "I could not help conceiving at the time, that if every luminous body in the universe had been shrouded in impenetrable shades, or struck out of existence, the darkness could not have been more complete."--Letter by Dr. Samuel Tenney, of Exeter, New Hampshire, December, 1785 (in Massachusetts Historical Society Collections, 1792, 1st series, vol. 1, p. 97). Though at nine o'clock that night the moon rose to the full, "it had not the least effect to dispel the deathlike shadows." After midnight the darkness disappeared, and **the moon**, when first visible, had the **appearance of blood**.

May 19, 1780, stands in history as "The Dark Day." **Since the time of Moses** no period of darkness of equal **density**, **extent**, and **duration**, has ever been recorded. The description of this event, as given by eyewitnesses, is but an echo of the words of the Lord, recorded by the prophet Joel, twenty-five hundred years previous to their fulfillment: "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come." **Joel 2:31**.

Christ had bidden His people watch for the **signs** of His advent and rejoice as they should behold the **tokens** of their coming King. "When these things begin to come to pass," He said, "then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." He pointed His followers to the budding trees of spring, and said: "When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand." Luke 21:28, 30, 31." **GC**, pp. 306-309

Testimony of Other Writers

The great astronomer Herschel wrote:

"The dark day of North America was one of those wonderful phenomena of nature which will always be read with interest, but which philosophy is at a loss to explain."

Samuel Williams who did extensive scientific research of the dark day had this to say:

"The time of this extraordinary darkness was May 19, 1780. It came on between the hours of ten and eleven A. M., and continued until the middle of the next night, but with different appearances at different places. . .

The degree to which the darkness arose was different in different places. In most parts of the country, it was so great that people were unable to read common print, determine the time of day by their clocks or watches, dine, or manage their domestic business, without the light of candles. In some places, the darkness was so great that persons could not see to read common print in the open air, for several hours together; but I believe this was not generally the case.

The extent of this darkness was very remarkable. Our intelligence in this respect is not so particular as I could wish; but from the accounts that have been received, it seems to have extended all over the New England States. It was observed as far east as Falmouth [Portland, Maine]. To the westward, we hear of its reaching to the furthest parts of Connecticut, and Albany. To the southward, it was observed all along the seacoasts, and to the north as far as our settlements extend. It is probable it extended much beyond these limits in some directions, but the exact boundaries cannot be ascertained by any observations that I have been able to collect.

With regard to its **duration**, it continued in this place at least **fourteen hours**; but it is probable this was not exactly the same in different parts of the country.

The **appearance** and **effects** were such as tended to make the prospect extremely dull and gloomy. Candles were lighted up in the houses; **the birds**, having sung their evening songs, disappeared, and became silent; the **fowls retired to roost**; the cocks were crowing around, as at break of day; objects could not be distinguished but at a very little distance; and everything bore the appearance and **gloom of night**." Samuel Williams, Hollis Professor of Mathematics and Philosophy at the University of Cambridge, Massachusetts, in Memoirs of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences to the End of the Year 1783, (1785)volume 1, pp. 234, 235

"The darkness of the following evening was probably as gross as ever has been observed **since the Almighty fiat gave birth to light**. . . I could not help conceiving at the time, that if every luminous body in the universe had been shrouded in impenetrable shades, or struck out of existence, the darkness could not have been more complete. **A sheet of white paper** held within a few inches of the eyes, was equally invisible with the blackest velvet." Samuel Tenney, in Collections of Massachusetts Historical Society for the year 1792, volume 1, pp. 97, 98

"The Dark Day, May 19, 1780 -- so-called on account of a remarkable darkness on that day extending over all New England ... The obscuration began about ten o'clock in the morning, and continued till the middle of the next night, but with difference and duration in different places ... The true cause of this remarkable phenomena is not known." Noah Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, Vocabulary of the Names of Noted ... Persons and Places, ed. 1869, 1882 & 1883

"About eleven o'clock the darkness was such as to demand our attention, and put us upon making observations. At half past eleven, in a room with three windows, twenty-four panes each, all open toward the southeast and south, **large print**

could not be read by persons of good eyes." Samuel Tenney, in Collections of the Massachusetts's Historical Society for the Year 1792, Vol. I, pp. 97-98

"About one o'clock a glint of light which had continued to this time in the east, shut in, and the **darkness was greater** than it had been for any time before ... We dined about two, the windows all open, and two candles burning on the table. In the time of the greatest darkness, some of the ... fowls went to their roost. **Cocks crowed** in answer to one another as they commonly do in the night. **Woodcocks**, which are night birds, whistled as they do **only in the dark**. **Frogs peeped**. In short, there was the appearance of **midnight at noonday**." Correspondent's report from Ipswich Hamlet, Massachusetts, Boston's Gazette and Country Journal, May 29, 1780

"Perhaps it never was **darker since** the children of Israel left the house of bondage. This **gross darkness** held till about one o'clock, although the moon had full'd but the day before." Report from Salem, Boston's Gazette and Country Journal, May 30, 1780

"During the whole time a sickly, **melancholy gloom** overcast the face of nature. Nor was the darkness of the night less uncommon and terrifying than that of the day; notwithstanding there was almost a full moon, **no object was discernible**, but by the **help of some artificial light**, which when seen from the neighboring house and other places at a distance, appeared through a kind of **Egyptian darkness**, which seemed almost impervious to rays." Isaiah Thomas, Massachusetts Spy; or 'American Oracle of Liberty, Vol. 10, No. 472, May 25, 1780

"This unusual phenomenon excited the fears and apprehensions of many people. Some considered it as a **portentous omen of the wrath of Heaven** in vengeance denounced against the land, others as the immediate **harbinger of the last day**, when 'the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light.' The Boston Independent Chronicle of June 8, 1780 quoted from Thomas's Massachusetts Spy. See also 'Some Memorials of Edward Lee' in The Publications of the American Tract Society, Vol. XI, p. 376

*"Various have been the sentiments of people concerning the designs of Providence in spreading the unusual darkness over us. Some suppose it **portentous of the last scene**. I wish it may have some good effect on the minds of the wicked, and that they may be excited to prepare for that solemn day." The Boston Independent Chronicle of June 8, 1780 quoted from Thomas's Massachusetts Spy. See also 'Some Memorials of Edward Lee' in The Publications of the American Tract Society, Vol. XI, p. 376*

*That the darkness was **not caused by an eclipse** is manifest by the various positions of our system at that time; for the moon was more than one hundred fifty degrees from the sun all that day." Dr. Samuel Stearns, who had been appealed to because of his knowledge in "philosophy and astronomy", in a letter printed in the Independent Chronicle, June 22, 1780.*

Dr. Stearns continues in good King James English:

*"The **primary cause** must be imputed to Him that walketh through the circuit of heaven, who stretcheth out the heaven like a curtain, who maketh the clouds his chariot, who walketh upon the wings of the wind. **It was He**, at whose voice the stormy winds are obedient, that commanded these exhalations to be collected and condensed together, that with them He might darken both the day and the night; which darkness was, perhaps, **not only a token of His indignation against the crying iniquities and abominations** of the people, but an omen of **some future destruction**." Dr. Samuel Stearns, who had been appealed to because of his knowledge in "philosophy and astronomy", in a letter printed in the Independent Chronicle, June 22, 1780*

*"The legislature of Connecticut was then in session in Hartford. A very general opinion prevailed that the **Day of Judgment was at hand**. The House of Representatives, being unable to transact their business, adjourned. A proposal to adjourn the council [a second legislative body called the Governor's Council] was under consideration. When the opinion of Colonel Davenport was asked, he answered, 'I am against an adjournment. The day of judgment is either*

approaching or it is not. If it is not, there is no cause for an adjournment; if it is, I choose to be found doing my duty. I wish therefore that candles may be brought." Timothy Dwight of Yale College, contemporary, wrote this account according to John W. Barber, Connecticut Historical Collections, p. 403

"The Dark Day, May 19, 1780 - so called on account of a remarkable darkness on that day extending over **all New England** ... **The true cause of this phenomenon is not known**. ... The dark day in Northern America was one of those wonderful phenomena of nature which will always be read of with interest, but which **philosophy is at a loss to explain**." Gage's History of Rowley, Massachusetts

Ellen White on the Falling of the Stars

"In 1833, two years after Miller began to present in public the evidences of Christ's soon coming, the **last of the signs** appeared which were promised by the Savior as tokens of His second advent. Said Jesus: "The stars shall fall from heaven." Matthew 24:29. And John in the Revelation declared, as he beheld in vision the scenes that should herald the day of God: "The stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind." Revelation 6:13. This prophecy received a **striking and impressive fulfillment** in the great meteoric shower of November 13, 1833. That was the most extensive and wonderful display of falling stars **that has ever been recorded**; "the whole firmament, over all the United States, being then, for hours, in fiery commotion! No celestial phenomenon has ever occurred in this country, since its first settlement, which was viewed with such intense admiration by one class in the community, or with **so much dread and alarm by another**." "Its sublimity and awful beauty still linger in many minds. . . . Never did rain fall much thicker than the meteors fell toward the earth; east, west, north, and south, it was the same. In a word, **the whole heavens seemed in motion**. . . . The display, as described in Professor Silliman's Journal, was seen **all over North America**. . . . From two o'clock until broad daylight, the sky being perfectly **serene and cloudless**, an incessant play of dazzlingly brilliant luminosities was kept up in the whole

heavens." R. M. Devens, American Progress; or, The Great Events of the Greatest Century, chapter 28, pars. 1-5

"No language, indeed, can come up to the splendor of that magnificent display;... no one who did not witness it can form an adequate conception of its glory. It seemed as if the whole starry heavens **had congregated at one point** near the zenith, and were simultaneously shooting forth, with the velocity of lightning, to every part of the horizon; and yet they were not exhausted--thousands swiftly followed in the tracks of thousands, **as if created for the occasion**."--F. Reed, in the *Christian Advocate and Journal*, Dec. 13, 1833. "A more correct picture of a **fig tree casting its figs** when blown by a mighty wind, it was not possible to behold."--"The Old Countryman," in Portland Evening Advertiser, Nov. 26, 1833.

In the *New York Journal of Commerce* of November 14, 1833, appeared a long article regarding this wonderful phenomenon, containing this statement: "No philosopher or scholar has told or recorded an event, I suppose, like that of yesterday morning. **A prophet eighteen hundred years ago foretold it exactly**, if we will be at the trouble of understanding stars falling to mean falling stars. . . in the only sense in which it is possible to be literally true." Thus was displayed the last of those signs of His coming, concerning which Jesus bade His disciples: "When ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." Matthew 24:33. **After these signs**, John beheld, as the **great event next impending**, the heavens departing as a scroll, while the earth quaked, mountains and islands removed out of their places, and the wicked in terror sought to flee from the presence of the Son of man. Revelation 6:12-17.

Many, who witnessed the falling of the stars, looked upon it as a **herald of the coming judgment**, "an awful type, a sure forerunner, **a merciful sign**, of that **great and dreadful day**." --"The Old Countryman," in *Portland Evening Advertiser*, Nov. 26, 1833. Thus the attention of the people **was directed to the fulfillment of prophecy**, and many were led to give heed to the warning of the second advent." GC, pp. 333, 334

The Falling of the Stars

It began between **two and four o'clock** in the morning and continued until daybreak. It extended **all over North America** and as far south as Mexico and the Island of **Jamaica**.

Lucy Reese lived in Lookout Georgia on November 13, 1833. She says:

*"I was fourteen years old at the time the stars fell. It seemed to me like a **shower of rain**. The people were **greatly frightened**, and there was much reading of the Bible because they thought the **judgment had come**."*

Rose Grace was living in Marion, Alabama:

*"I was seventeen years old when the stars fell. I watched them a long time. They appeared to go out when they were about ten feet from the ground. Everybody **thought that the judgment day** had come. I told them if that was so it was **too late to pray**."*

Henry Lewis, a slave of Harrisburg, Kentucky was nineteen years old at the time:

"It seemed as if the starry heavens were coming down. I was about twelve miles from home with a horse I had stolen from my master, but when I returned they were all so excited and engaged in prayer that I slipped the horse into the stable and escaped detection."

Caroline Walker of Vicksburg Mississippi:

*"The world looked like it was all in **a light blaze**, and continued so until the day began to dawn. From every direction on the plantation, I could hear **screams, and cries** that the judgment day had come. It was an **awful night**."*

Richmond Smith of Vicksburg, Mississippi:

*"I was living at that time in Putnam County, Georgia. Was nineteen years old. Was awakened by the voice of one crying, 'The time is come.' Everybody felt that it was **the judgment** and that the **end of the world** had come."*

Sanford Williams was living in Louisville, Kentucky:

*"I was playing the violin for a dance at the time. One of the ladies went to the door, and screamed, '**the judgment, the judgment day is come**,' and fainted. Another ran to the door, and said about the same words and fell lifeless. Then I went to the door, playing my violin as I went. When I saw the stars all falling, I threw down my violin and cried, 'O Lord, O Lord, **have mercy on me and save me this night and I will serve you until I die**.' In every direction I could hear men, women, and children screaming '**The judgment day is come**.'"*

Professor Olmstead, of Yale College says:

*"The meteors did not fly at random over all parts of the sky, but appeared to **emanate from a point** in the constellation of **Leo**, near a star called Gamma Leonis, in the bend of the sickle.*

*"After collecting and collating the accounts given in all the periodicals of the country, and also in numerous letters addressed either to my scientific friends or to myself, the following appeared to be the leading facts attending the phenomenon. The shower pervaded nearly the **whole of North America**, having appeared in nearly equal splendor from the British possessions on the north, to the **West India Islands** and **Mexico** on the south, and from sixty one degrees of longitude east of the American coast, quite to the **Pacific Ocean** on the west. Throughout this immense region, the **duration was nearly the same**. The meteors began to attract attention by their unusual **frequency and brilliancy**, from nine to twelve o'clock in the evening; were most striking in their appearance from two to five; arrived at their maximum, in many places, about four o'clock;*

and continued until rendered invisible by the light of day." Denison Olmstead, The Mechanism of the Heavens, p. 328

Thomas Milner, the English Scientist, who called the 'Falling of the Stars' the most splendid on record (p. 139):

*"In many districts, the mass of the population were terror-struck, and the more enlightened were awed at contemplating so vivid a picture of the **apocalyptic image**—that of the stars of heaven falling to earth, even as a fig tree casting her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind." Thomas Milner, *The Gallery of Nature*, London, 1852, p. 140. See also "The Old Countryman", in *Portland's Evening Advertiser*, November 26, 1833*

*"On the night of November 12-13, 1833, a **tempest of falling stars** broke over the earth. North America bore the brunt of its pelting. From the **Gulf of Mexico to Halifax**, until daylight with some difficulty put an end to the display, the sky was scored in every direction with shining tracks and illuminated with majestic fireballs." Agnes M. Clerke, *History of Astronomy in the Nineteenth Century*, (1902) p. 328, 329*

*"Once for all, then, as the result of the star fall of 1833, the study of **luminous meteors became an integral part of astronomy**." Agnes M. Clerke, *History of Astronomy in the Nineteenth Century*, (1902) p. 329*

*"Though there was no moon, when we first beheld them their brilliancy was so great that we could, at times, **read common-sized print** without much difficulty, and the light which they afforded was much whiter than that of the moon, in the clearest and coldest night, when the ground is covered with snow. The air itself, the face of the earth, as far as we could behold it,--all the surrounding objects, and the very countenances of men, wore the aspect and hue of death, occasioned by the continued, pallid glare of these **countless meteors**, which in all their grandeur flamed 'lawless through the sky.' Letter from Bowling Green, Missouri,*

to Professor Silliman, in American Journal of Science and the Arts, volume XXV (1834), p. 382

*“In any direction, the scene could not be compared more aptly to anything than a distant **shower of fire**, whose particles were falling sparsely to the earth. Frequently one larger and more luminous than the rest would shoot across the heavens producing a flash like vivid lighting. Towards the approach of daylight the sky began to be obscured with clouds, and these substances appeared less frequent, but did not disappear till long after the light of the morning had arisen, and were seen as long as stars were visible.” New Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette (semiweekly), volume 1, number 104, Concord, Saturday, November 16, 1833.*

*“Probably the most remarkable of all the meteoric showers **that have ever occurred** was that of the Leonids, on the night [night following] November 12, 1833. The number at some stations was estimated as high as **200,000 an hour for five or six hours**. ‘The sky was as full of them as it ever is of snowflakes in a storm,’ and, as an old lady described it, looked ‘like a **gigantic umbrella**.’ [Page 469]. . .*

In 1864 Professor Newton of New Haven showed by an examination of the old records that there had been a number of great meteoric showers in November, at intervals of thirty-three or thirty-four years, and he predicted confidently a repetition of the shower on November 13 or 14, 1866. The shower occurred as predicted, and was observed in Europe; and it was followed by another in 1867, which was visible in America, the meteoric swarm being extended in so long a procession as to require more than two years to cross the earth’s orbit. Neither of these showers, however, was equal to the shower of 1833. The researches of Newton, supplemented by those of Adams, the discoverer of Neptune, showed that the swarm moves in a long ellipse with a thirty-three-year period.

A return of the shower was expected in 1899 or 1900, but failed to appear, though on November 14-15, 1898, a considerable number of meteors were seen, and in

the early morning of November 14-15, 1901, a well-marked shower occurred, visible over the whole extent of the United States, but best seen west of the Mississippi, and especially on the Pacific Coast. At a number of stations several hundred Leonids were observed by the eye or by photography, and the total number that fell must be estimated by tens of thousands. The display, however, seems to have nowhere rivaled the showers of 1866-1867, and these were not to be compared with that of 1833." Charles A. Young, Ph. D. (Professor of Astronomy at Princeton University) Manual of Astronomy, (1902), pp. 471, 472

"Scientific study of the orbits of shooting stars began after the occurrence of the most brilliant meteoric shower on record,--that of November 13, 1833. This spectacle that excited the greatest interest among all beholders, and was looked upon with **consternation** by the ignorant, many of whom thought that the **end of the world had come**, was witnessed generally throughout North America, which happened to be the part of the earth facing the meteoric storm. **Hundreds of thousands** of shooting stars fell in the course of two or three hours. Some observers compared their number to the **flakes of a snowstorm**, or to the **raindrops** in a shower." The Encyclopedia Americana, article "Meteors or Shooting Stars."

"I witnessed this gorgeous spectacle, and was **awe-struck**. The air seemed filled with bright descending messengers from the sky. It was about daybreak when I saw this sublime scene. It was not without the suggestion at that moment that it might be the **harbinger of the coming Son of man**; and in my state of mind I was prepared to hail him as my friend and deliverer. I had read that the stars should fall from heaven, and they were now falling: I was suffering much in my mind, and I was beginning to look away to heaven from the rest denied me on earth." Testimony of a slave: Frederick A. Douglass. Seventh-day Adventist Bible Students' Source Book, p. 164

"Everybody felt that **it was the judgment**, and that the **end of the world had come**," and "In every direction I could hear men, women, and children **screaming**, 'The judgment day is come!' "The attention of astronomers in Europe, and all over

the world, was, as may be imagined, strongly roused by intelligence of this celestial display on the Western continent." Rev. Thomas Milner, The Gallery of Nature, London, (1852), p. 141.

*"The morning of November 13, 1833, was rendered memorable by an exhibition of the phenomenon called shooting stars, which was probably more extensive and magnificent than any similar one hitherto recorded. . . Probably no celestial phenomenon has ever occurred in this country, since its first settlement, that was viewed with so much **admiration and delight** by one class of spectators, or with so much **astonishment and fear by another class**. For some time after the occurrence, the 'meteoric phenomenon' was the principal topic of conversation in every circle." Denison Olmsted, Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy at Yale College, in the American Journal of Science and Arts, Vol. XXV, (1834), pp. 363-364.*

The astronomer, Professor Simon Newcomb declared this phenomenal exhibition of 'falling stars' to have been *"the most remarkable one ever observed."* Simon Newcomb, Astronomy for Everybody, p. 280

*"The stars fell 'even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.' Here is the **exactness of the prophet**. The falling stars did not come **as if from several trees** shaken, **but from one**. Those that appeared in the east fell toward the east; those that appeared in the north fell toward the north; those which appeared in the west fell toward the west; and those which appeared in the south (for I went out of my residence into the park) fell toward the south; and they fell **not as ripe fruit falls**; far from it; but **they flew**, they **were cast**, like the unripe fig, which at first refuses to leave the branch, and when it does break its hold, flies swiftly, straight off, descending; and in the multitude falling, some cross the track of others, as they are thrown with more or less force, but each one **falls on its own side of the tree**. Such was the appearance of the above phenomenon to the inmates of my house. I walked to the park with two gentlemen of Pearl Street, feeling and confessing that this scene had never been figured to our minds by any book or mortal, **save only by the prophet**. Henry Dana Ward,*

correspondent for the New York Journal of Commerce, November 14, 1833, volume 8, No. 534, p. 2

The Second Stage of the Sixth Seal

As stated before, the question of the martyrs in the fifth seal had to do with **two** events that are related, yet separate, “judging and avenging”. The first part of the sixth seal has to do with the first part of this plea by the beginning of the judgment in heaven. That is to say, in 1844 God began the judgment process in heaven to vindicate the saints that the little horn oppressed for three and a half times. Part one of the sixth seal (6:12, 13) deals with the “judge” aspect. The great earthquake and the signs in the heavens in the sixth seal announced the approach of this stage (6:12, 13).

The second part of the sixth seal (6:14-17) deals with the second part of the martyrs’ plea, that is, the “avenge” aspect. We can see this clearly in Revelation 6:17. The Lamb will pour out His wrath upon those who oppressed His people during the second stage of persecution.

In between the two stages of the sixth seal, the judgment of Revelation 7:1-8, takes place. First, God vindicates the martyrs whom the little horn slew during the 1260 years (as well as all those who have professed the name of Jesus) and then, at the very end of this heavenly judgment process, God will judge and seal the 144,000 living saints. For the living saints the sealing of the 144,000 is the judging phase (Revelation 7:1-8) and the reward given to the great multitude is the avenging stage (Revelation 7:9-17).

*“As the books of record are opened in the judgment, the lives of all who have believed on Jesus come in review before God. Beginning with those who **first lived** upon the earth, our Advocate presents the cases of each successive generation, and **closes with the living**.” GC, p. 483*

Ellen White wrote about the second part of the sixth seal (the “avenging” part) in The Great Controversy, pp. 641, 642. Here, Ellen White quotes Revelation 6:14-17 (see also Hebrews 12:25-27; Joel 3:16; Jeremiah 25:30-33; Isaiah 2:19-21; Isaiah 34:4; Psalm 2:2-4). Revelation 19:3-10 presents a great multitude standing victoriously in heaven. Revelation 19:1, 2 clearly indicates that at this point the avenging has already taken place. At this point, God has judged the harlot and avenged His people. Revelation 19:17, 18 makes reference to the same groups of people as Revelation 6:15, 16.

Notice the following quotation from the chapter *God’s People Delivered* in the book The Great Controversy:

*“Before His presence “all faces are turned into paleness;” upon the rejecters of God’s mercy falls the terror of eternal despair.” The heart melteth, and the knees smite together, and the faces of them all gather blackness.” Jeremiah 30:6; Nahum 2:10. The righteous cry with trembling: “**Who shall be able to stand?**” [The conclusion of the sixth seal] The angels’ song is hushed, and **there is a period of awful silence [the half hour of silence of the seventh seal]**. Then the voice of Jesus is heard, saying: “My grace is sufficient for you.” The faces of the righteous are lighted up, and joy fills every heart. And the angels strike a note higher and sing again as they draw still nearer to the earth.*

*The King of kings descends upon the cloud, wrapped in flaming fire. The heavens are rolled together as a scroll, the earth trembles before Him, and **every mountain and island is moved out of its place [the second part of the sixth seal in Revelation 6:14]**. “Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people.” Psalm 50:3-4.*

“And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the

mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" Revelation 6:15-17 [the second part of the sixth seal].

*The derisive jests have ceased. Lying lips are hushed into silence. The clash of arms, the tumult of battle, "with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood" (Isaiah 9:5), is stilled. Nought now is heard but the voice of prayer and the sound of weeping and lamentation. The cry bursts forth from lips so lately scoffing: "**The great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?**" [The last words of the sixth seal] The wicked pray to be **buried beneath the rocks of the mountains** [language of the sixth seal] rather than meet the face of Him whom they have despised and rejected." GC, pp. 641, 642*

Comments on Revelation 6:17

Revelation 6:17 ends with a question "For the great day of His wrath has come and who shall be able to stand?"

What does the word 'stand' mean? In several verses of the New Testament, the word appears as an **antonym of 'fall'**. Examples:

- A **kingdom divided** against itself cannot stand (Mark 3:24, 25).
- Satan at the beginning **did not stand in the truth** (John 8:44).
- He that thinks that he stands let him **take heed lest he fall** (1 Corinthians 10:12).
- **Ephesians 6:11-13**

*"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able **to stand** against the*

wiles of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, **to stand**."

- **2 Timothy 2:19:**

"Nevertheless the **solid foundation** of God **stands**, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ* **depart from iniquity**."

- **Luke 21:36:**

"Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and **to stand** before the Son of Man."

Revelation 6:17 ends with a pointed question and the answer to the question is in the **following chapter**—the 144,000 will be able to stand!

Revelation 7:1-4: This passage **emphasizes the sealing** of the 144,000 but does not bring to view **their character**:

"After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, **holding the four winds** of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having **the seal of the living God** and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the **servants of our God** on their foreheads." And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed."

This passage comes from **Ezekiel 9** where God's own professed people were committing abominations. The sealing took place among God's **professed people**. Only those who **sighed and cried** were sealed.

Revelation 14:1-5: A description of the **character** of the living saints:

*"Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His **Father's name** written on their **foreheads**. And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They **sang as it were a new song** [they went through the experience of Israel at the Red Sea] before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for **they are virgins**. These are the ones who follow the Lamb **wherever He goes**. These were redeemed from among men, being first fruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found **no deceit**, for they are **without fault** before the throne of God."*

- The **follow the Lamb** wherever He goes
- **Father's name** on their foreheads (name is an indication of character)
- They sing a **new song**. They are alive in the **final deliverance from certain death**
- They were **not defiled** with women
- There was **no deceit** in their mouths
- They are **without fault** before the throne of God

The Same Question in other Places

Revelation 6:17 is **not the only place** where the question is asked and answered. There are **other texts** and in each case, the answer highlights the **sterling character** of the faithful.

Joel 2:11

*"The LORD gives voice before His army, for His camp is very great; for strong is the One who executes His word. For the day of the LORD is **great and very terrible, who can endure it?**"*

The following verses provide the answer in terms of the **Day of Atonement**:

*"Now, therefore," says the LORD, "**Turn** to Me with all your heart, with **fasting**, with **weeping**, and with **mourning**." So **rend your heart**, and not your garments; **return** to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm. Who knows if He will turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him--A grain offering and a drink offering For the LORD your God? Blow the **trumpet** in Zion, consecrate a **fast**, call a sacred **assembly**: **Gather** the people, **sanctify** the congregation, **assemble** the elders, **gather** the children and nursing babes; let the bridegroom go out from his chamber, and the bride from her dressing room. Let the priests, **who minister** to the LORD, **weep** between the porch and the altar; let them say, "**Spare Your people**, O LORD, and do not give Your heritage to reproach, that the nations should rule over them. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'"*

Isaiah 33:14-16:

Verse 14: The **question**:

*"The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness has seized the hypocrites: "**Who** among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? **Who** among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"*

Verses 15, 16: The answer: A **holy lifestyle**:

*“He who **walks righteously** and **speaks** uprightly, he who **despises the gain** of oppressions, who gestures with his hands, **refusing bribes**, who stops his **ears** from **hearing** of bloodshed, and shuts his **eyes** from seeing evil: ¹⁶ He will dwell on high; his **place of defense** will be the fortress of rocks; **bread** will be given him, his **water** will be sure.”*

Psalm 15:

Verse 1: The **question**

*“LORD, **who** may abide in Your tabernacle [**the sanctuary**]? **Who** may dwell in Your holy hill [**Zion**]? ”*

Verses 2-5: The **answer**: A holy lifestyle

*“He who **walks** uprightly, and **works** righteousness, and **speaks** the truth in his heart; ³ he who **does not** backbite with his tongue, **nor does** evil to his neighbor, **nor does** he take up a reproach against his friend; ⁴ In whose eyes a vile person is despised, but he **honors** those who fear the LORD; he who **swears** to his own hurt and does not change [**does not break his promises**]; ⁵ he who does not put out his **money at usury**, nor does he take a **bribe** against the innocent. He who **does** these things shall **never be moved** [**who shall be able to stand?**]”*

Psalm 24:3-6: The angelic throng first sang this song when Jesus ascended to heaven with the first fruits (DA, pp. 833-835). However, they will sing it once more, when the Father welcomes His children home.

#1: The **question**

Verse 3:

*“**Who** may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or **who** may stand in His holy place?”*

#2: The **answer**: A holy lifestyle

Verses 4-6:

*“He who has **clean hands** and a **pure heart**; who has not lifted up his soul to an **idol**, nor **sworn** deceitfully. ⁵ He shall receive blessing from the LORD, and **righteousness from the God** of his salvation. ⁶ This is Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him, who seek Your face.”*

#3: The **entrance**:

Verses 7-10:

*“Lift up your heads, O you gates and be lifted up, you everlasting doors and the King of glory shall come in!! ⁸ Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty **in battle**. ⁹ Lift up your heads, O you gates! Lift up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. ¹⁰ Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory.”*

#4: The **welcome**:

*“The sacrifice of our Savior has made ample provision for every repenting, believing soul. We are saved because God loves the purchase of the blood of Christ; and not only will He pardon the repentant sinner, not only will He permit him to **enter heaven**, but He, **the Father** of mercies, will **wait at the very gates of heaven to welcome us**, to give us an **abundant entrance** to the mansions of the blest. Oh, what love, what wondrous love the Father has shown in the gift of His Beloved Son for this fallen race! And this Sacrifice is a channel for the outflow of His infinite love, that all who believe on Jesus Christ may, like the prodigal son, receive full and free restoration to the favor of Heaven.” ZBC, p. 950*

Nahum 1:6, 7:

*"**Who can stand** before His indignation? And who can endure the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out **like fire**, and the **rocks** are thrown down by Him.
7 The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who trust in Him."*

Malachi 3:1-3:

*"Behold, I send My messenger, and he will **prepare the way** before Me and the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come **to His temple**, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. "Behold, He is coming," says the Lord of hosts.
2 "But **who can endure the day of His coming** and **who can stand when He appears**? For He is like a refiner's fire and like launderers' soap. 3 He will sit as a **refiner** and a **purifier** of silver; He will **purify** the sons of Levi, and **purge** them as gold and silver, **that** they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness."*

Ellen White applied this passage to the end time generation:

*"Says the prophet: "Who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." Malachi 3:2, 3. **Those who are living** upon the earth when the **intercession of Christ shall cease** in the sanctuary above are to stand in the sight of a holy God **without a mediator**. Their robes must be **spotless**, their characters **must be purified** from sin by the blood of sprinkling. Through the **grace of God** and their **own diligent effort**, they must be **conquerors in the battle with evil**. While the investigative judgment is going forward in heaven, while the sins of penitent believers are being removed from the sanctuary, there is to be a special work of purification, of **putting away of sin**, among God's people upon earth. This work is more clearly presented in the messages of Revelation 14." GC, p. 425*

Isaiah 54:10 and **Psalms 46** contain comforting promises for those who will live during the period when the islands and mountains are dislocated.

Isaiah 54:8-10:

*"With a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you," says the Lord, your Redeemer. ⁹ "For this is like the waters of Noah to Me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah would no longer cover the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you. ¹⁰ For the **mountains shall depart** and the **hills be removed**, but My kindness shall not depart from you, nor shall My covenant of peace be removed," says the Lord, who has mercy on you."*

Psalms 46:1- 11: This Psalm inspired Martin Luther's *A Mighty Fortress*:

*"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help **in trouble**. ² Therefore we will not fear, even though the **earth be removed**, and though the **mountains be carried into the midst of the sea**; ³ though its waters **roar and be troubled**, though the **mountains shake** with its swelling. Selah ⁴ There is a river whose streams shall make glad the **city of God**, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High. ⁵ God is in the midst of her, **she shall not be moved**; God shall help her, just at the break of dawn. ⁶ The **nations raged**, the kingdoms were moved; He **uttered His voice**, the **earth melted**. ⁷ The Lord of hosts is with us; the **God of Jacob** is our **refuge**. Selah. ⁸ Come, behold the works of the Lord, who has made desolations in the earth. ⁹ He makes **Wars cease** to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariot in the fire. ¹⁰ Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth! ¹¹ The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."*

The Lamb's Wrath

We usually think of a lamb as tame and harmless and perceive the death of Jesus as the Lamb of God as an act of salvation. How then are we to understand the wrath of the Lamb? Has anyone actually seen a wrathful lamb? In the introductory vision to the seals Jesus was introduced first as the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5) and then as the Lamb as though it had been slain (Revelation 5:6). How are we to understand this paradoxical description of Jesus as Lamb and Lion?

Ellen G. White explained the relationship between the saving Lamb and the destroying Lion:

*“The Lion of Judah, so terrible to the **rejectors** of His grace, will be the Lamb of God to the **obedient and faithful**. The **pillar of fire** that speaks terror and wrath to the transgressor of God's Law, is a token of light and mercy and deliverance to those who have kept His commandments. The arm strong to **smite the rebellious** will be strong to deliver the loyal.” Sons and Daughters of God, p. 358*

In another place, Ellen White explained that the death of Christ brings both **salvation and judgment**:

*“The death of Christ brings to the **rejecter** of His mercy the wrath and judgments of God unmixed with mercy. This is the **wrath of the Lamb**.” Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, volume 5, p. 1107*

In the Garden and on the Cross **Jesus drank the cup** of the wrath of God **without mixture** (Matthew 26:39-42; John 18:11) for every human being who has ever drawn breath. Those who receive Jesus as personal Savior will not have to drink the cup because He drank it for them. However, those who reject the Cross of Jesus will have to drink their own cup of wrath without mixture of mercy (Revelation 14:10; 16:19).

Now, if Ellen White quotes Revelation 6:12, 13 in GC, pp. 304, 333 and then quotes Revelation 6:14-17 in GC, pp. 641-642, then the sealing (judgment) must take place in between these two periods and this is exactly the case. It is interesting to study the sequence of chapters between pages 304 and 641 of The Great Controversy. In GC, pp. 304-634 Ellen White portrays William Miller, the three angels' messages, Jesus' work in the most holy place, the sealing, the close of probation and the time of trouble. Then she expounds upon the last part of the sixth seal in GC, pp. 641, 642.

Thus, we must study the fifth and sixth seals together. The sixth seal answers the pleas of the two groups of martyrs in the fifth. From 538-1798 AD God's martyrs were crying out for justice. God gave those white robes and told them to rest a while until the second group of martyrs is complete. In 1844 AD, the process of judging the little horn and throwing out the verdicts of human courts began. The judgment began with the dead who trusted in Jesus (including the martyrs). Then, the judgment of the living will take place at the very end of the judgment. After God judges the dead and the living, He will destroy the little horn at the second coming. Thus, God will have judged the little horn and avenged His people!

Joining Jesus at His Throne

Ellen White quotes Revelation 7:9-17 and 14:1-5 in GC, pp. 648, 649, 665. On page 646, those who **overcame** receive from Jesus the crown, the name and the harp. At this point God's people have joined Jesus on the throne as was promised in Revelation 3:21. They are now on the sea of glass mentioned in Revelation 4:6 (cf. Revelation 15:2-4). We know that at this point God has avenged His people, because in Revelation 20:4 they are judging their oppressors.



ANCHOR SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

“Revelation’s Seven Seals: Studies in Revelation 4-8”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #15 – REVELATION 7 INTERLUDE: THE 144,000 AND THE GREAT MULTITUDE

Is this an important subject to study?

“It is not His will that they shall get into controversy over questions which will not help them spiritually, such as: Who is to compose the hundred and forty-four thousand? This those who are the elect of God will in a short time know without question.” Selected Messages, volume 1, p. 174

“Let us strive with all the power that God has given us to be among the hundred and forty-four thousand. And let us do all that we can to help others to gain heaven.” Review and Herald, March 9, 1905

Issues

- What are the Biblical sources for the 144,000?
- What is the relationship between the 144,000 and the great multitude?
- Who are the 144,000 and at what stage of world history will they live?

- In what **context** do they appear in the book of Revelation?
- Are they **natural Israelites** who live in the Middle East?
- Will Ellen G. White and **Mrs. Hastings** belong to this group?
- Is the **number literal** or symbolic?
- **What is the seal** that the 144,000 will receive?
- What **kind of character** will they possess and how did they develop such a character?
- Why are **Dan and Ephraim** missing from the list?

The 144,000 in Revelation

The **actual number** 144,000 appears only twice in the Bible—Revelation 7:1-8 and Revelation 14:1-5. However, the concept appears in several other places in the book of Revelation and elsewhere in Scripture.

Revelation has **four portraits** of the 144,000 each with its own emphasis:

- **Revelation 7:1-8**: Emphasis falls on the **sealing** of the 144,000 for their **protection** during the time of trouble and at the second coming followed by the jubilatory singing after victory has been gained (Revelation 7:9-17).
- **Revelation 14:1-5**: Emphasis on the **character** of the 144,000.
- **Revelation 15:2-4**: Emphasis on the **victory** of the 144,000 over the beast, his image and his mark.
- **Revelation 19:1-8**: Emphasis on the **jubilatory singing** of the 144,000 because the harlot has been **judged** and God's people have been **avenged**.

The 144,000 in other Scriptures

The 144,000 also appear in other places in Scripture although the specific number does not appear:

- **Enoch** was a type of the 144,000.
- **Elijah** is a type of the 144,000.
- **Ezekiel 9:1-6** provides the backdrop for the sealing in Revelation 7:1-8).
- **Joel 2:1-17**: The second coming in verses 1-11 followed by a description of the preparation.
- **Joel 3** in the context of Revelation 14:14-20.
- Psalm 15: The critical question followed by the answer.
- Psalm 46: God's protective care in the time of trouble.
- Psalm 91: The famous tribulation Psalm.
- Psalm 24:3-6: Sung at the ascension of Jesus and sung again at the second coming.
- Daniel 3: The fiery furnace represents the time of trouble.
- Daniel 6: The entire chapter describes the trials and triumph of the end time generation.
- Exodus 14-15: The deliverance of Israel at the Red Sea and the Song of Moses symbolizes the final deliverance of God's people who sing the Song of Moses and the Lamb.
- Exodus 34:28-35 with Hebrews 12:14-29.
- Zechariah 3 describes the final stages of the Day of Atonement (see PK 582-592).
- Malachi 3:1-5:
- Isaiah 33:12-17
- Nahum 1:6, 7

Chronology from the Close of Probation to the General Resurrection

- The Great Controversy, p. 613: Jesus **stands up** (Daniel 12:1) probation closes and He begins to reign (Daniel 11:2, 3, 4 on the meaning of “stand up”). He lays off His priestly garments (which He wears in in the book of Hebrews) and puts on His kingly robes (spoken of in Revelation 19:11ff).
- The Great Controversy, pp. 613-634: The great **time of trouble** (tribulation) for God’s people ensues (Daniel 12:1).
- The Great Controversy, p. 635: The **death decree** about to be executed (Daniel 11:44).
- The Great Controversy, p. 635, 636: God’s voice delivers the 144,000 from the death decree (Daniel 12:1). The fact that the names of the 144,000 are written in the book indicates that they successfully passed the pre-advent investigative judgment (see, Revelation 22:11, 12).
- The Great Controversy, p. 637: The **special resurrection** (Daniel 12:2) of those who pierced Jesus and those who died in the faith of the third angel’s message.
- The Great Controversy, p. 640: God’s voice announces the **day and hour** of Jesus’ coming.
- The Great Controversy, p. 640, 641: Jesus arrives above the **surface of the earth**.
- The Great Controversy, p. 644: The **general resurrection** of the righteous.

Ellen White's Chronological Portrayal

Let us follow the sequence of events portrayed by Ellen White in chapters 38-40 of The Great Controversy:

CHAPTER 38: THE FINAL WARNING

This chapter describes the final loud cry message (Revelation 18:1-5) accompanied by the power of the latter rain. It also brings to view the final test for the whole world over the mark of the beast and the seal of God. The sealed ones are the 144,000 from the twelve tribes of Israel and yet they are from every nation, kindred, tongue and people. This is Ellen White's commentary on Revelation 7:1-8:

"The Sabbath will be the great test of loyalty, for it is the point of truth especially controverted. When the final test shall be brought to bear upon men, then the line of distinction will be drawn between those who serve God and those who serve Him not. While the observance of the false Sabbath in compliance with the law of the state, contrary to the fourth commandment, will be an avowal of allegiance to a power that is in opposition to God, the keeping of the true Sabbath, in obedience to God's law, is an evidence of loyalty to the Creator. While one class, by accepting the sign of submission to earthly powers, receive the mark of the beast, the other choosing the token of allegiance to divine authority, receive the seal of God." GC, p. 605

"The restraining Spirit of God is even now being withdrawn from the world. Hurricanes, storms, tempests, fire and flood, disasters by sea and land, follow each other in quick succession. Science seeks to explain all these [by the theory of climate change]. The signs thickening around us, telling of the near approach of the Son of God, are attributed to any other than the true cause. Men cannot discern the sentinel angels restraining the four winds that they shall not blow until the servants of God are sealed; but when God shall bid His angels loose

the winds, there shall be such a scene of strife as **no pen can picture.**" 6T, Vol. 6, p. 408.

*"Angels are belting the world, refusing Satan his claims to supremacy, made because of the vast multitude of his adherents. We hear not the voices, we see not with the natural sight the work of these angels, but their hands are linked about the world, and with sleepless vigilance they are **keeping the armies of Satan at bay** till the sealing of God's people shall be accomplished. Maranatha, p. 266.*

*"John sees the **elements of nature**--earthquake, tempest, and political strife--represented as being **held by four angels**. These **winds** are under control until God gives the word to let them go. There is the safety of God's church. The **angels of God** do His bidding, **holding back the winds** of the earth, that the winds should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree, until the servants of God should be **sealed in their foreheads**." Maranatha, p. 266*

CHAPTER 39: THE TIME OF TROUBLE

God seals His faithful ones before the time of trouble (p. 613). When Jesus ceases His intercessions, the four angels release the **winds of strife** (p. 614). There is then a contrast between Satan who **numbers** the world as his subjects (p. 618) and 'the **little company** who keep the commandments of God' (p. 618). While God's people suffer hunger and thirst, they **do not die** (p. 629). Ellen White links the thirst with the waters turned into blood and hunger with the sun that scorches the vegetation (pp. 628, 629). This is the period of the great tribulation (pp. 614, 616). Revelation 7:14 states literally in the Greek that the unnumbered multitude go '**through the tribulation, the great one**' (see Daniel 12:1). Those who go through this tribulation will not die; they will be **alive when Jesus comes** (p. 634).

CHAPTER 40: GOD'S PEOPLE DELIVERED

After the first four plagues (pp. 627, 628) God's sealed ones are **still in danger** (p. 635) but at the outpouring of the **fifth plague of darkness** (p. 636) they are **delivered** by the voice of God (p. 636). The wicked multitudes **are arrested** (the drying up of the River Euphrates) in the sixth plague. The **seventh plague** (p. 636) brings about the **final fall of Babylon** (pp. 636, 637). The **special resurrection** then occurs and those who died in the faith of the third angel stand **with the 144,000** (p. 637). This all happens **before the day and hour** of Jesus' coming is announced (p. 640). Jesus **descends from heaven** (pp. 640-642) and the **wicked ask the question** of Revelation 6:17 (p. 642). Now the **general resurrection** of the righteous takes place (p. 644). The 144,000 then stand victorious in heaven (pp. 648, 649).

It is a significant fact that Ellen White **never quotes** Revelation 7:1-8 (the passage on the sealing of the 144,000) in the chapter titled "God's People Delivered." She only quotes verses from Revelation 14:1-5; 15:2-4 and 7:9-17 (the passage about the great multitude). Why did Ellen White not quote Revelation 7:1-8? Simply because she spoke about the sealing in the chapter, "The Final Warning." Now she is concerned, not with the sealing of the 144,000 but with their deliverance and final victory. In all three passages she quotes, the 144,000 stand victoriously upon the heavenly hill of Zion.

All the 144,000 passages have a **basic order**:

- Wrath (6:17; 13:11-18; 15:1; 19:2)
- Seal (7:1-8; 14:1-5; 15:2, 3; 19:7, 8)
- Deliverance (7:9-17; 14:19, 20; 15:2, 3; 19:11-21)

Ellen White, Mrs. Hastings and the 144,000

Will Ellen White be a member of the 144,000? The evidence clearly indicates she will not:

- If God will translate the 144,000 to heaven from among the living, Ellen White cannot be among them because **she is dead**.
- Ellen White never says that she will be **among** the 144,000. It is always **with** the 144,000.

*"Then the angel said, "You must go back, and if you are faithful, you, **with** the 144,000, shall have the privilege of visiting all the worlds and viewing the handiwork of God." Early Writings, p. 39*

- Ellen White does not fit the description of the 144,000 she herself gives in The Great Controversy, pp. 648, 649

In **1850**, Ellen G. White wrote a letter of condolence to a **brother Hastings** who had just lost his wife:

*"I hardly know what to say to you. The news of your wife's death was to me overwhelming. I could hardly believe it and can hardly believe it now. God gave me a view last Sabbath night that I will write.... **I saw that she was sealed** and would **come up at the voice of God** and stand upon the earth, and would be **with** the 144,000. I saw we need not mourn for her; she would **rest in the time of trouble**, and all that we could mourn for was our loss in being deprived of her company. I saw her death would result in good. Selected Messages, volume 2, p. 263*

God seals the 144,000 during the loud cry just before the close of probation. Further, the 144,000 do not rest during the time of trouble. How could God

have sealed Mrs. Hastings in 1850? According to Ellen White, God will impress His seal on the 144,000 in the same period as the unrighteous receive the mark of the beast.

In Manuscript 51, 1899 Ellen White no one had yet received the mark of the beast. This means that no one had yet received the seal of God either:

*“**No one** has yet received the mark of the beast. The testing time has **not yet come**. There are true Christians in every church, not excepting the Roman Catholic communion. None are condemned until they have had the light and have seen the obligation of the fourth commandment. However, **when the decree shall go forth enforcing the counterfeit Sabbath**, and the **loud cry** of the third angel shall warn men against the worship of the beast and his image, the line will clearly be drawn between the false and the true. Then those who still continue in transgression will receive the **mark of the beast**.”* Evangelism, p. 234

In **1911**, Ellen White made it clear that the seal of God will be received at the very end of time:

*“The Sabbath will be the **great test of loyalty**, for it is the point of truth especially controverted. When **the final test** shall be brought to bear upon men, **then** the line of distinction will be drawn between those who serve God and those who serve Him not. While the observance of the false Sabbath in compliance with the law of the state, contrary to the fourth commandment, will be an avowal of allegiance to a power that is in opposition to God, the keeping of the true Sabbath, in obedience to God's law, is an evidence of loyalty to the Creator. While one class, by accepting the sign of submission to earthly powers, **receive the mark of the beast**, the other choosing the token of allegiance to divine authority, **receive the seal of God**.”* GC, p. 605

The Gospel Seal and the Eschatological Seal

When a person receives Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, he receives the **seal of the Holy Spirit** (see Acts 2:38; Ephesians 1:13, 14; 4:30; 2 Corinthians 1:22).

However, the end time seal is a special seal that God's people will receive just before the close of probation to enable them to stand in the time of trouble. The seal of the early rain begins the proclamation of the gospel and the latter rain seals the crop for the harvest.

The Sealing and the Winds

Both Scripture and Ellen White explain that while Jesus is interceding in the heavenly sanctuary, the winds of strife are restrained. The Holy Spirit restrains the winds through the ministration of the angels. When Jesus changes His garments and intercession ends, the Holy Spirit is **withdrawn** from the earth, which is another way of saying that the angels **cease to hold** the winds.

*"The Lord **is in active communication** with every part of His vast dominions. He is represented as bending toward the earth and its inhabitants. **He is listening** to every word that is uttered. **He hears** every groan; **He listens** to every prayer; **He observes** the movements of every one; He approves or condemns every action. The hand of Christ draws aside the veil which conceals from our eyes the glory of heaven; and we behold Him **in His high and holy place**, not in a state of silence and indifference to His subjects in a fallen world, but **surrounded by all the heavenly host**,--ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, **all waiting to go at His bidding on errands** of mercy and love." *Signs of the Times*, November 17, 1898*

*"The Bible shows us God in **His high and holy place**, not in a state of inactivity, not in silence and solitude, but **surrounded** by ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of holy beings, all **waiting to do His will**. **Through***

these messengers He is in active communication with every part of His dominion. By His Spirit He is everywhere present. Through the agency of His Spirit and His angels He ministers to the children of men. Above the distractions of the earth He sits enthroned; all things are open to His divine survey; and from His great and calm eternity He orders that which His providence sees best.” The Ministry of Healing, p. 417

Ellen White wrote about the moral condition of the world when the angels release the winds:

“When He leaves the sanctuary, darkness covers the inhabitants of the earth. In that fearful time the righteous must live in the sight of a holy God without an intercessor. The restraint which has been upon the wicked is removed, and Satan has entire control of the finally impenitent. God's long-suffering has ended. The world has rejected His mercy, despised His love, and trampled upon His law. The wicked have passed the boundary of their probation; the Spirit of God, persistently resisted, has been at last withdrawn. Unsheltered by divine grace, they have no protection from the wicked one. Satan will then plunge the inhabitants of the earth into one great, final trouble. As the angels of God cease to hold in check the fierce winds of human passion, all the elements of strife will be let loose. The whole world will be involved in ruin more terrible than that which came upon Jerusalem of old.” The Great Controversy, p. 614

“Angels are now restraining the winds of strife, that they may not blow until the world shall be warned of its coming doom; but a storm is gathering, ready to burst upon the earth; and when God shall bid His angels loose the winds, there will be such a scene of strife as no pen can picture.” Education, pp. 179, 180

“The restraining Spirit of God is even now being withdrawn from the world. Hurricanes, storms, tempests, fire and flood, disasters by sea and land, follow each other in quick succession. Science seeks to explain all these. The signs thickening around us, telling of the near approach of the Son of God, are attributed to any other than the true cause. Men cannot discern the sentinel angels restraining

*the four winds that they shall not blow until the servants of God are sealed; but when God shall bid **His angels loose the winds**, there shall be such a scene of strife as no pen can picture.” Testimonies for the Church, volume 6, p. 408*

Are the 144,000 Literal Jews?

Ellen White well understood that the 144,000 sealed ones from the twelve tribes of Israel are **not literal Jews**. Notice the following clear statement where Ellen White intermingles the texts that speak of the 144,000 with those of the numberless multitude and states that the sealed ones will be **from every nation, kindred, tongue and people**:

*“The message of the renewing power of God’s grace will be carried to every country and clime, until the truth shall belt the world. Of the **number of them that shall be sealed [Revelation 14:1]** will be those who have come from **every nation and kindred and tongue and people**. From **every country** will be gathered men and women who will stand **before the throne of God** and before the Lamb, crying, “Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.” **[Revelation 7:10]**. But before this work can be accomplished, we must experience here in our own country the work of the Holy Spirit upon our hearts.” Counsels to Teachers, p. 532*

Clearly, although Revelation 7:4 states that the sealed ones are “of the tribes of the children of Israel,” Ellen White perceptibly understands that these sealed ones are from **every nation, kindred tongue and people [Revelation 7:9]**. Therefore, the sealed ones cannot be literal Jews. The 144,000 are members of spiritual Israel.

The three angels’ messages are God’s **final warning** to ‘every nation, kindred, tongue and people’ (Revelation 14:6). The third angel warns the world about the dangers of worshiping the beast and his image and receiving his mark. It is clear that people from every nation, kindred, tongue and people must be warned to receive the seal of God and refuse the mark of the beast.

In contrast to those from every nation, kindred tongue and people who worship the beast and his image and receive his mark on their foreheads or in the right hand, are those from every nation, kindred, tongue and people who have the Seal of God in their foreheads. If people from every nation, tribe, tongue and people receive the seal of God, they cannot be literal Jews.

The four angels hold the four winds of strife until God's servants are sealed. God places His seal on the foreheads of His people who live in the four corners of the earth. When Jesus returns He will gather his elect from the four winds of heaven (Matthew 24:30). This indicates that God's people lived in all world and not literally in Israel.

There is abundant New Testament evidence that God's covenant people today are members of spiritual Israel.

The Fig Tree Episodes

Matthew 24:32-35:

*"Now learn this parable from the **fig tree**: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. ³³ So you also, when you see **all these things**, know that it is near--at the doors! ³⁴ Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. ³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away."*

Dispensationalists say that the **fig tree** in these verses is a symbol of Israel and that the **budding** is a prophecy concerning the reestablishment of Israel as a nation in **1948**. They teach that this is the **greatest sign** that the coming of Jesus **can be at any moment**, even at the door. Therefore, we need to examine carefully this passage to determine if their interpretation is correct.

First, it is true that in the Old Testament, the **fig tree** and the **vine** are associated with **literal Israel**:

Hosea 9:10:

*"I found Israel like **grapes** [see also **Isaiah 5**] in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the first-fruits on the **fig tree** in its first season. But they went to Baal Peor, and separated themselves to that shame; they became an abomination like the thing they loved."*

Part 1: Israel as a Tree—the message of John the Baptist

The early portion of **Matthew 3:8-10** describes the preaching of John the Baptist to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah. John began his ministry **6 months** before began His. We will find a repetition of the **bold items** in the following passage in parts 2 and 3:

*"Therefore bear fruits worthy of **repentance**,⁹ and do not think to say to yourselves: 'We have **Abraham as our father**.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones [the gentiles].¹⁰ And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore **every tree** which does not bear **good fruit** is **cut down** and thrown into the **fire**."*

Part 2: Israel as a Tree—the first two and a half years of Christ's ministry

Luke 13:1-9: Jesus told this parable **two and a half years** into His ministry. We immediately discern the **parallels** between this parable and the message of John the Baptist (see part 1). I have added some comments in brackets to help clarify the meaning of the parable.

*"There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ² And Jesus answered and said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things?" ³ I tell you, no; but unless you **repent** you will all likewise **perish**. ⁴ Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem?" ⁵ I tell you, no; but unless you **repent** you will all likewise **perish**." ⁶ He also spoke this parable: "A **certain man** [God the Father] had a **fig tree** [Israel] planted in his **vineyard** [the world], and he came seeking **fruit** [the fruit of the Spirit] on it and found **none**. ⁷ Then he said to the **keeper of his vineyard** [Jesus], 'Look, for **three years** [John preached six months and Jesus preached two and a half years] I have come seeking **fruit** on this **fig tree** and find **none**. **Cut it down** [just what John said]; why does it **use up the ground**?' ⁸ However, he answered and said to him, 'Sir, let it alone **this year** [last year of Jesus' ministry] also, until I **dig** around it and **fertilize** it and if it bears **fruit**, well, but if not, after that you can **cut it down**.' "*

The parable leaves us in **suspense**. At this point, we do not know if the fig tree **bore fruit or not** because the story was **still being written** much the same as the story of the older sibling in the narrative of the **prodigal son**.

Part 3: Israel as a Tree—the last week of Christ's earthly ministry

Matthew 21:17-19: The event described in these verses took place just a **few days before the death of Jesus**. The fig tree spoken of in **Luke 13** had not yet borne fruit.

*"Then He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and He lodged there. ¹⁸ Now in the morning, as He returned to the city, He was **hungry**. ¹⁹ And seeing a **fig tree** by the road, He came to it and found **nothing on it but leaves**, and said*

to it, "Let no fruit grow on you **ever again.**" And immediately the fig tree **withered away.**"

Mark 11:12-14: This passage **parallels** Matthew 21:17-19:

*"Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was **hungry** and seeing from afar a fig tree having **leaves**, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. And when He came to it, He found **nothing but leaves**, for it was **not the season** for figs. ¹⁴ In response Jesus said to it, "Let no one eat fruit from you **ever again.**" And His disciples heard it."*

Mark 11:20-21: The fig tree withered away **by the roots**. Once the root of a tree dies, it is finished!

*"Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up **from the roots**. ²¹ And Peter, remembering, said to Him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has **withered away.**"*

In 70 AD, God did cut down **Jerusalem** and burnt it in fire because it bore no fruit. If the fig tree dried up by the roots, how could it have sprouted to new life in 1948?

Matthew 24 and the Fig Tree

Is the fig tree in **Matthew 24** a symbol of the Jewish Nation?

In **Matthew 24:32, 33** it is not only the budding of the fig tree that is a sign that the coming of Jesus is even at the doors, but rather the **collection of all the signs** in the chapter.

“As you see the fig tree bud it is a sign that the summer is near. In the same way [he is using an analogy] when you see all these things [not only the sprouting of the fig tree] know that it is near, even at the doors.”

Jesus was not saying that the budding of the fig tree is the great sign of the imminence of His coming. He is saying that the accumulation of all the signs will help us know that the end is near.

Furthermore, Luke 21:29-31 has the parallel passage. In Luke Jesus did not single out the fig tree as being particularly important. He added “and all the trees.” Jesus said, “When you see these things happening.”

“Then He spoke to them a parable: “Look at the fig tree, and all the trees.³⁰ When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near.³¹ So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near.”

Jesus was saying:

“When you see the fig tree and all of the trees bud you know that the summer is near. Likewise, when you see all of these signs you will know that the end is near.”

Israel as a Vineyard

The Vineyard also symbolizes of Israel. Notice the following parable, also in Matthew 21. Once again, I have added my own explanations in brackets:

Matthew 21:33-46:

*"Hear another parable: There was a certain **landowner [God the Father]** who planted a **vineyard [Israel]** and set a **hedge** around it **[the law]**, dug a winepress in it and built a **tower [the temple]**. And he leased it to **vinedressers [the Jewish leaders]** and went into a **far country [heaven]**.³⁴ Now when vintage-time **drew near**, he sent his servants to the vinedressers **[messengers before the Babylonian captivity]**, that they might receive its fruit.³⁵ However, the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another **[what they did to the prophets]**.³⁶ Again, he sent **other servants [after the captivity until John the Baptist]**, more than the first, and they did likewise to them.³⁷ Then **last of all, he sent his son [Jesus]** to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.'³⁸ "But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him **[the death of Christ]** and seize his inheritance.'³⁹ "So they took him and cast him **out of the vineyard [outside of Jerusalem]** and killed him.⁴⁰ Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?"⁴¹ They said to Him, "He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to **other vinedressers [the Gentiles]** who will render to him the fruits in their seasons."⁴² Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?⁴³ "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be **taken from you [the kingdom no longer belongs to literal Israel]** and given to a nation **[ethne]** bearing the **fruits** of it.⁴⁴ And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder."⁴⁵ Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was **speaking of them**."*

The Nathaniel Experience

John 1:43-48 describes the experience of **Nathanael** in his encounter with Jesus:

*"The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, "Follow Me." ⁴⁴ Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote--Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." ⁴⁶ And Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." ⁴⁷ Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, "Behold, an **Israelite indeed**, in whom is **no deceit**!" ⁴⁸ Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the **fig tree**, I saw you."*

If there are **Israelites indeed**, then there must be Israelites **not indeed**. Why did Jesus single out Nathanael **as an Israelite indeed**? The Greek word for 'indeed' really means **true or genuine**. The **NIV** refers to Nathanael as "a **true** Israelite". This translation is correct as we can see by the fact that the verse ends by saying that there was in Nathanael no **pseudos**. If there are genuine Israelites then there must also be **counterfeit ones**.

Notably, Nathanael was an **Israelite** indeed who sat **under a fig tree** and the fig tree was a **symbol of Israel**. Thus, the reality sat under the symbol—the Israelite indeed was sitting under a tree that represented Israel.

According to verse 46, what made Nathanael an Israelite indeed was that he recognized Jesus as the Son of God, the King of Israel. Who is a true Israelite? One who acknowledges Jesus Christ as the **Messiah**!

John 8 and True Israel

John 8:37-45: In this passage, Jesus contrasted **genuine** Israelites with **counterfeit ones**. The Jews of Christ's day claimed Abraham as their father and yet Jesus said that they were not really his descendants:

*"I know that you are **Abraham's descendants**, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. ³⁸ I speak what I have seen with **My Father**, and you do what you have seen with **your father**." ³⁹ They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "**If [He is implying that they were not]** you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. ⁴⁰ **But [the combination of 'if . . . but' shows they were not children of Abraham]** now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. ⁴¹ You do the deeds of your father." Then they said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father--God." ⁴² Jesus said to them, "**If [once again He denies that they are the children of God because they reject Him]** God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. ⁴³ Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. ⁴⁴ **You are of your father the devil**, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it **[they are Israelite liars unlike Nathanael and therefore they are the devil's children]**."*

Romans 2:28, 29: An **Israelite indeed** receives Jesus as Messiah:

*"For he is not **a Jew** who is one **outwardly**, nor is circumcision that which is **outward** in the flesh; ²⁹ but he is a Jew who is one **inwardly**; and circumcision is*

that of the **heart**, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.”

Romans 9:6-8:

“But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are **not all Israel who are of Israel**, ⁷ **nor are they all children** because they are the seed of Abraham; but, “In Isaac your seed shall be called.” ⁸ That is, those who are the **children of the flesh**, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed.”

Galatians 3:26-29:

“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And **if you are Christ's**, then **you are Abraham's seed**, and heirs according to the promise.”

Philippians 3:3-8:

“For **we are the circumcision**, who **worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus**, and have **no confidence in the flesh**, ⁴ though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: ⁵ circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. ⁷ But what things were gain to me, these **I have counted loss for Christ**. ⁸ Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge

*of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and **count them as rubbish**, that I may **gain Christ**.”*

In **1948**, the Jewish nation was **still rejecting the Messiah** and therefore 1948 could not be a fulfillment of prophecy. God **scattered** Israel at the destruction of Jerusalem **because they rejected the Messiah**. In 1948, the Jewish nation was **still rejecting** Christ and so no fulfillment of prophecy could have taken place at that time.

Ellen White and Israel

Ellen White wrote some choice statements on the identity of the Israel of God today:

*“That which God purposed to do for the world through Israel, the chosen nation, He will finally accomplish through **His church** on earth today. . . Never has the Lord been without true representatives on this earth who have made His interests their own. These witnesses for God **are numbered** among the **spiritual Israel**, and to them will be fulfilled **all the covenant promises** made by Jehovah to His ancient people. . . To **spiritual Israel** have been restored the privileges accorded the people of God at the time of their deliverance from Babylon.” *PK*, pp. 713-715*

*“To Isaiah it was given to make very plain to Judah the truth that **among** the Israel of God were to be **numbered** many who were **not descendants of Abraham** after the flesh.” *PK*, p. 367*

*“The Spirit of God was to be poured out upon all flesh. Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness were to be **numbered** among the **Israel of God**.” *PK*, p. 371*

*“I was shown that those who are trying to obey God and purify their souls through obedience to the truth are God’s chosen people, **His modern Israel**.” *2T*, p. 109*

"The time is not far distant when the test will come to every soul. The observance of the false sabbath will be urged upon us. The contest will be between the commandments of God and the commandments of men. Those who have yielded step by step to worldly demands and conformed to worldly customs will then yield to the powers that be, rather than subject themselves to derision, insult, threatened imprisonment, and death. At that time, the gold will be separated from the dross. True godliness will be clearly distinguished from the appearance and tinsel of it. Many a star that we have admired for its brilliance will then go out in darkness. Those who have assumed the ornaments of the sanctuary, but are not clothed with Christ's righteousness, will then appear in the shame of their own nakedness.

*"Among earth's inhabitants, scattered **in every land**, there are those who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Like the stars of heaven, which appear only at night, these faithful ones will shine forth when darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people. In **heathen Africa**, in the Catholic lands of **Europe** and of **South America**, in **China**, in **India**, in the **islands of the sea**, and in **all the dark corners** of the earth, God has in reserve a firmament of chosen ones that will yet shine forth amidst the darkness, revealing clearly to an apostate world the transforming power of **obedience to His law**. Even now they are appearing in **every nation**, among **every tongue and people**; and in the **hour of deepest apostasy**, when Satan's supreme effort is made to cause "all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond," to receive, under penalty of death, the sign of allegiance to a false rest day, these faithful ones, "blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke," will "shine as lights in the world." Revelation 13:16; Philippians 2:15. The darker the night, the more brilliantly will they shine."*

*"What strange work Elijah would have done in **numbering** Israel at the time when God's judgments were falling upon the backsliding people! He could count only one on the Lord's side. But when he said, "I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life," the word of the Lord surprised him, "Yet I have left Me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal." 1 Kings 19:14, 18*

*"Then let no man attempt to **number Israel today**, but let everyone have a heart of flesh, a heart of tender sympathy, a heart that, like the heart of Christ, reaches out for the salvation of a lost world. PK, pp. 188, 189*

*"Many of these converts from **heathenism** would wish to unite themselves fully with the Israelites and accompany them on the return journey to Judea. None of these were to say, "The Lord hath utterly separated me from His people" (Isaiah 56:3), for the word of God through His prophet to those who should yield themselves to Him and observe His law was that they should thenceforth be numbered among **spiritual Israel—His church on earth**." PK, p. 371*

*"Then it is that the redeemed from among men will receive their promised inheritance. Thus, God's **purpose for Israel** will meet with **literal fulfillment**. That which God purposes, man is powerless to disannul. Even amid the working of evil, God's purposes have been moving steadily forward to their accomplishment. It was thus with the house of Israel throughout the history of the divided monarchy; it is thus with **spiritual Israel today**.*

*"The seer of Patmos, looking down through the ages to the time of this **restoration of Israel** in the earth made new, testified:*

*"I beheld, and lo, a **great multitude**, which no man could number, of all **nations**, and **kindreds**, and **people**, and **tongues** [***notice that these are defined as Israel***], stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.*

"And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts ["living creatures," R.V.], and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshiped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God forever and ever."

*"And I heard as it were the voice of a **great multitude**, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, and alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him." "He is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful." Revelation 7:9-12; 19:6, 7; 17:14." PK, pp. 720, 721*

*"In this our day, we see the **Gentiles** beginning to rejoice with the Jews. There are **converted** Jews who are now laboring in - - - and in various other cities, in behalf of their own people. The **Jews** are coming into the ranks of God's chosen followers, and are being **numbered with the Israel of God** in these closing days. Thus, some of the Jews will once more be **reinstated with the people of God**, and the blessing of the Lord will rest upon them richly, if they will come into the position of rejoicing that is represented in the Scripture, "And again He saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with His people."-- Manuscript 95, 1906. Evangelism, pp. 577, 578*

*"Wherein they were weak, even to the point of failure, the **Israel of God** today, the representatives of heaven that make up the **true church of Christ**, must be strong; for upon them devolves the task of finishing the work that has been committed to man, and of ushering in the day of final awards." PK, p. 74*

*"Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness were to be numbered among the **Israel of God**." PK, p. 371*

Conclusion: If God stamps His seal only on literal Jews, then why would God warn every nation, kindred tongue and people about the dangers of worshiping the beast and his image and receiving his mark? The fact that God warns all nations, kindreds, tongues and peoples about the seal of God and the mark of the beast clearly indicates that it is possible for people from every nation, kindred, tongue and people to receive the seal of God or the mark of the beast. Clearly, then, the sealed ones from the twelve tribes of Israel cannot be literal Jews only!

Literal or Symbolic Number?

To the handful of disappointed pioneers in 1844, the number 144,000 seemed impossibly large while to us it appears incredibly small! In a world that has a population of over nine billion, the number 144,000 is indeed small! Some wonder, "If there will only be 144,000 living saints when Jesus comes, is there any hope that I could belong to that group?"

Are we to understand that all who are faithful and receive the seal of God will be literal Jews? Are we to understand that there will be only 144,000 living saints when Jesus comes? Are we to understand that there will be exactly 12,000 from each literal tribe of Israel? Why would the tribes of Israel be symbolic and the number literal? If the 144,000 were literal Jews, why would Ellen White say that there would be people from every nation, kindred, tongue and people in that group? As we seek to answer these questions, notice the following points:

First, the book of Revelation presents its message in symbolic language. Persons, names, places and numbers are all symbolic. Numbers such as seven, three and a half times, three and a half days, 42 months, 1260 days, 666, two hundred million, are all symbolic. Revelation 7 and 14 (where the 144,000 appear) are saturated with symbols such as the Lamb, winds, trees, tribes of Israel, seal, four corners of the earth, earth, sea, white robes, virgins, first-fruits, etc. Why should we understand the number literally, when these chapters are full of symbols?

Second, if there will only be 144,000 faithful living saints when Jesus comes (not one more and not one less!) then we would have to conclude that God pre-determined, pre-chose or hand-picked them. It is very unlikely that exactly 144,000 would exercise their freedom of choice to be among the living righteous when Jesus comes. This becomes even clearer when we realize that there are exactly 12,000 from each tribe of Israel. What are the odds that exactly 12,000 persons from each of the literal twelve tribes of Israel will be the

living saints when Jesus comes? The fact is that the twelve tribes of literal Israel were lost when Israel went into Assyrian captivity in 722 B. C. The ten tribes of the north intermingled with the surrounding nations. The Samaritans of Christ's day were the result of this amalgamation.

Third, the literal Greek rendering of the number is not "one hundred and forty four thousand" (as if emphasizing the conglomerate group), but rather "one hundred and forty four **thousands**" (with the emphasis on 144 groups of one thousand each). The intensified multiple of the number 12 (which is the number of God's people in all ages--actually $12 \times 12 \times 1000$) would seem to emphasize that this group is composed of the true Israel of God who live at the end of world history.

Fourth, the word for "thousand" (*elep*) does not refer precisely to 1000 people but can mean "family" or "tribe" (Micah 5:2; I Samuel 23:23; I Samuel 10:19). Ellen White also uses the word "thousand" to describe those who are faithful to God among the Israelites.

Fifth, both the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy make it clear that we are to understand Israel today spiritually, not literally. Therefore, it makes sense that if Israel is spiritual then the number must also be spiritual. Why would the number 144,000 be literal while Israel is symbolic?

Sixth, the idea that the unnumbered multitude is composed of the redeemed of all ages is problematic. Revelation 7 is an interlude in the sixth seal and the sixth seal began with the great earthquake (1755 AD), and continued with the dark day and the moon looking like blood (1780 AD) and the falling of the stars from heaven (1833 AD). Bringing in the redeemed of all ages into the picture of the sixth seal is incongruous with the literary context as well as with the events depicted in the sixth seal.

The capstone argument that the 144,000 is a symbolic number is that the 144,000 and the great multitude that no one could number are actually the same group.

The 144,000 and the Great Multitude: The Same Group?

At first sight, it might appear incongruous or even contradictory to say that the 144,000 and the great multitude are the same group. How can this be possible when the number 144,000 is a computable number while the great multitude is beyond computation? The answer lies in the fact that in the book of Revelation the juxtaposition between seeing and hearing is common.

According to **Revelation 1:10** a voice spoke to John that sounded like a trumpet and he **heard** the names of the seven churches in their proper order. However, then John **saw** the seven churches under the illustration of a seven branched candelabrum (Revelation 1:12). So, what John **heard** in verse ten he **saw** in verse 12.

We find another example in the introductory vision to the seals in Revelation 5. Here John first **heard** one of the elders say that the lion of the tribe of Judah would be able to break the seals and to open the scroll (Revelation 5:5). However, then John looked and he **saw** a slain Lamb who had overcome and therefore was qualified to break the seals and open the scroll (Revelation 5:6). As we have previously seen, the Lamb represents Jesus at His **inauguration** as Priest/King of the kingdom of grace. The Lion represents Jesus **at the end** of His sanctuary ministration when the Lamb pours out his wrath (Revelation 6:17). That is to say, the Lamb will then roar as a lion. Thus, the Lamb and the Lion both represent Jesus at two different stages of His saving work.

We can say the same about Revelation 19. In verses 1-9, John **heard** the songs of the great multitude in heaven. However, in verses 11-21 John **saw** Jesus coming with his angel hosts to rescue the multitude from destruction at the hands of Babylon.

A similar phenomenon occurs with the 144,000 and the great multitude. In Revelation 7:1-8, John **heard** about the 144,000. He did not actually see them but only **heard** their names and number (Revelation 7:4-8). However, then John **saw** a great multitude that no one could number (Revelation 7:9). God sealed the 144,000 in Revelation 7:1-8 in order for them to survive the great tribulation (Revelation 7:9-17). The great multitude portrays the same group after they came out victoriously from the tribulation.

Notice the chart on the following below and you will see the chiastic relationship between the great multitude (Revelation 7:9) and the 144,000 (Revelation 7:4). Notice that each phrase that refers to the 144,000 in Revelation 7:4 has its counterpart in the description of the great multitude in Revelation 7:9.

Some commentators have assumed that the tribulation spoken of here refers to the trials and troubles that God's people have gone through in all ages. However, this is not possible. The Greek does not merely say that the great multitude came out of "tribulation" but rather out of 'the tribulation, **the great one**!' This is the same tribulation described in Daniel 12:1 and Matthew 24:21, 29.

Beatrice Neall explained the relationship between the 144,000 and the great multitude as exhibited in the above chart:

"If this reasoning is correct, we can put 'equals' signs between all the items on the list. Israel is the faithful of all nations. The tribes of Israel represent all tribes, peoples, and tongues. The 12,000 from each tribe indicate a full complement of redeemed from each ethnic group. The four winds symbolize the great tribulation [Rev. 7:14], and the 'seal of the living God' (verse 2) corresponds to the robes made white in the blood of the Lamb (verse 14). Best of all, the 144,000 are not a limited group that we have scant hope of belonging to, but a vast multitude who cannot be numbered." (Beatrice Neall, "Good News about the 144,000." Adventist Review, April 2, 1987, pp. 14-15.

Revelation 7:1-8: John “hears”

The Church Militant

1. “I heard” (verse 4)
2. “the number” (verse 4)
3. “one hundred and forty four thousand” (verse 4)
4. “of the sons of Israel” (verse 4)
5. “out of every tribe” (verse 4)
6. “sealed” (verse 4)

Revelation 7:9-17: John “sees”

The Church Triumphant

1. “I looked” (verse 9)
2. “no man could number” (verse 9)
3. “a great multitude” (verse 9)
4. “from every nation (verse 9)
5. “from all tribes and peoples and tongues” (verse 9)
6. “clothed in white robes” (verse 9)

Explanatory Note: In Revelation 7:1, 2 the four angels are holding the four winds so that no harm will come upon the earth, the sea or the trees until God seals the 144,000 in their foreheads. Revelation 7:3-8 tells us that the 144,000 are sealed before the winds are released in order for them to be able to stand during the great tribulation (Revelation 6:17). In Revelation 7:9ff the 144,000 sealed ones have already passed victoriously through the great tribulation (verse 14). This great tribulation is clearly a reference to the final time of trouble that will come upon the earth (Daniel 12:1; Jeremiah 30:6-10; Matthew 24:21, 22, 29).

A careful reading of Ellen White’s commentary on the 144,000 reveals that she **intermingles** the Biblical description of the 144,000 (Revelation 14:1-5) with

the description of the great multitude (Revelation 7:9-17). She seems to indicate that both refer to the same group. Notice how she blends the description of the two groups in The Great Controversy, pp. 648, 649. I have included the Biblical texts she quotes or alludes to in brackets for easy reference:

"Upon the crystal sea before the throne, that sea of glass as it were mingled with fire,--so resplendent is it with the glory of God,--are gathered the company that have "gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name." [Revelation 15:2] With the Lamb upon Mount Zion [Revelation 14:1], "having the harps of God," [Revelation 15:2] they stand, the hundred and forty and four thousand that were redeemed from among men [Revelation 14:4]; and there is heard, as the sound of many waters, and as the sound of a great thunder, "the voice of harpers harping with their harps." [Revelation 14:2] And they sing "a new song" before the throne, a song which no man can learn save the hundred and forty and four thousand [Revelation 14:3]. It is the song of Moses and the Lamb--a song of deliverance [Revelation 15:3]. None but the hundred and forty-four thousand can learn that song [Revelation 14:3]; for it is the song of their experience--an experience such as no other company have ever had. "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." [Revelation 14:1] These, having been translated from the earth, from among the living, are counted as "the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb." [Revelation 14:4] "These are they which came out of great tribulation;" [Revelation 7:14] they have passed through the time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation; they have endured the anguish of the time of Jacob's trouble; they have stood without an intercessor [after the close of probation] through the final outpouring of God's judgments [the seven last plagues]. However, they have been delivered, for they have "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." [Revelation 7:14] "In their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault" [Revelation 14:5] before God. "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them." [Revelation 7:15] They have seen the earth wasted with famine and pestilence, the sun having

power to scorch men with great heat [**Revelation 16:8, 9**], and they themselves have endured suffering, hunger, and thirst. However, "they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." [**Revelation 7:16, 17**]. GC, pp. 648, 649

Even further, Ellen White explicitly wrote that **only** the 144,000 would be able to enter the heavenly temple:

*"And as we were about to enter the **holy temple**, Jesus raised His lovely voice and said, '**Only the 144,000 enter this place**' and we shouted, 'Alleluia.'" Early Writings, p. 19.*

However, Revelation 7:15 tells us that the members of the **great multitude** 'will serve God day and night **in His temple**.' The conclusion is inevitable: The 144,000 (the only ones whom God allows to enter the temple) must be the same group as the unnumbered multitude (who serve God in His temple day and night).

According to Revelation 14:3, 5 the 144,000 **stand before the throne** of God and in Revelation 7:9, 11, 15 the great multitude stands before the throne.

In Early Writings, p. 16 Ellen White describes the 144,000 standing in a **perfect square** upon the sea of glass before the throne while in The Great Controversy, p. 645 she describes a "**unnumbered host** of the redeemed" with ranks "drawn up in the form of a **hollow square**." The conclusion is inevitable: The 144,000 are the same group as the unnumbered multitude.

Revelation 7:16 clearly indicates that the great multitude will be alive during the third and fourth plagues after the close of probation. We know this for sure, because in the third plague, God will turn the fresh fountains of water into blood and in the fourth plague, the sun He will scorch all the vegetation. No doubt, this

caused God's people to thirst and hunger. However, at the end of the tribulation, God's people will be delivered and they shall suffer no more **hunger or thirst** (Revelation 7:16, 17).

The Enoch and Elijah Generation

We do not have the time or space to draw a parallel between Enoch and Elijah and the final generation but some choice statements by Ellen White are in order.

*"**Elijah** was a **type** of the saints who will be living on the earth at the time of the second advent of Christ and who will be "changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump," without tasting of death. 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52. It was as a representative of those who shall be thus translated that Elijah, near the close of Christ's earthly ministry, was permitted to stand with Moses by the side of the Savior on the mount of transfiguration. In these glorified ones, the disciples saw in **miniature a representation** of the kingdom of the redeemed." PK, p. 227*

*"God's people will separate themselves from the **unrighteous practices** of those around them and will **seek for purity** of thought and holy **conformity to His will** until His divine image will be reflected in them. Like **Enoch**, they will be **fitting for translation** to heaven. While they endeavor to instruct and warn the world, they will **not conform to the spirit and customs** of unbelievers but will condemn them by their holy conversation and godly example. Enoch's translation to heaven just before the destruction of the world by a flood **represents the translation** of all the living righteous from the earth before its destruction by fire. The saints will be glorified in the presence of those who have hated them for their loyal obedience to God's righteous commandments." SR, p. 61*

*"Enoch had temptations as well as we. He was surrounded with society no more friendly to righteousness than is that which surrounds us. The atmosphere he breathed was tainted with sin and corruption, the same as ours; yet **he lived a life of holiness**. He was **unsullied** with the prevailing sins of the age in which he*

lived. So may we remain pure and uncorrupted. He was a representative of the saints who live amid the perils and corruptions of the last days. For his faithful obedience to God he was translated. So, also, the faithful, who are alive and remain, will be translated." Maranatha, p. 65

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." For three hundred years Enoch had been seeking purity of heart that he might be in harmony with heaven. For three centuries he had walked with God. Day by day he had longed for a closer union; nearer and nearer had grown the communion, until God took him to Himself. He had stood at the threshold of the eternal world, only a step between him and the land of the blest; and now the portals opened, the walk with God, so long pursued on earth, continued, and he passed through the gates of the holy city, the first from among men to enter there. . . . Maranatha, p. 65



ANCHOR SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

“Revelation’s Seven Seals: Studies in Revelation 4-8”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #16 - THE SEVENTH SEAL: SILENCE IN HEAVEN

The description of the seventh seal is the shortest and mentions a period of **silence** in Heaven for about **half an hour**. There is some discussion among Adventist theologians about the meaning of the expression ‘about half an hour’.

A half hour in symbolic prophetic time is approximately seven and a half days. Some interpreters round off the ‘about’ to seven days and affirm that the second coming of Jesus will take seven days. The silence will presumably ensue because heaven will be empty (see Habakkuk 2:20; Zephaniah 1:7; Zechariah 2:13). Although Ellen White never stated that the second coming would take **seven days** she did write that from the time that Jesus moved from the most holy place to the east, **several days** would pass:

*“And I saw a flaming cloud come where Jesus stood. Then Jesus . . . took His place on the cloud that carried Him to the East, where it first appeared to the saints on earth--a small black cloud that was the sign of the Son of man. While the cloud was passing from the **Holiest to the East**, which took **a number of days**, the synagogue of Satan worshipped at the saint's feet.” Maranatha, p. 287*

Other interpreters believe that the 'half hour' refers to the seven days that God's people will travel from earth to heaven. Ellen White does refer to this journey as taking seven days:

*"We all entered the cloud together, and were **seven days ascending** to the sea of glass, when Jesus brought the crowns, and with His own right hand placed them on our heads. He gave us harps of gold and palms of victory." EW, p. 16*

However, this interpretation falls short because the journey to heaven will be anything but silent:

*"On each side of the cloudy chariot are wings, and beneath it are living wheels; and as the chariot rolls upward, the wheels **cry**, "Holy," and the wings, as they move, **cry**, "Holy," and the retinue of angels **cry**, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty." And the redeemed **shout**, "Alleluia!" as the chariot moves onward toward the New Jerusalem." GC, p. 645*

Neither of these interpretations is satisfactory. When it comes to prophetic time, God does not deal in approximations. Whenever He reveals a period for a prophetic event, it is precise. What, then, is the meaning of 'about half an hour'? The Spirit of Prophecy provides a definitive meaning.

The silence in heaven must bear some relationship to the question in the last part of the sixth seal. The second part of the sixth seal is the avenging portion of the fifth seal. Now God will turn the tables on those who oppressed, persecuted and killed His people. As Jesus descends from heaven the living saints along with those who died in the faith of the third angel's message ask the question, 'who shall be able to stand?' Following the question there is a period of awful silence in heaven:

"Before His presence "all faces are turned into paleness;" upon the rejecters of God's mercy falls the terror of eternal despair." The heart melteth, and the knees smite together, and the faces of them all gather blackness." Jeremiah 30:6; Nahum

2:10. The **righteous cry with trembling**: "Who shall be able to stand?" The angels' song is **hushed**, and there is a **period of awful silence** [this is the half hour of silence of the seventh seal]. Then the voice of Jesus is heard, saying: "My grace is sufficient for you." The faces of the righteous are lighted up, and joy fills every heart. And the angels strike a note higher and sing again as they draw still nearer to the earth." GC, p. 641

As Jesus draws closer to the earth, the wicked will ask the same question:

*"The derisive jests have ceased. Lying lips are **hushed into silence**. The clash of arms, the tumult of battle, 'with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood' (Isaiah 9:5), is **stilled**. Nought now is heard but the voice of prayer and the sound of weeping and lamentation. The **cry bursts forth** from lips so lately scoffing: "The great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" The wicked pray to be buried beneath the rocks of the mountains rather than meet the face of Him whom they have despised and rejected." GC, p. 642*

Notice that the **question** "who shall be able to stand?" is followed immediately by an awful **silence** in heaven. Who can miss the fact that this is a commentary on Revelation 6:17 and 8:1? The question at the end of the sixth seal is followed by silence in heaven in the seventh. In a previous section, we noticed several biblical passages where the same question appears followed by a description of the sterling character of the righteous. Psalm 15:1 is of particular interest because it begins with the question followed by a description of the character of the righteous and then by the statement: 'He who does these things shall never be moved.' In other words, whoever does these things shall be able to stand!

The Unfurling of the Scroll

This section is a review of the section of the introductory vision of Revelation 5.

The **unfurling of the scroll** of Revelation 5 has to do with post-millennial events. At this stage, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah will unfurl the scroll to reveal the doom of the wicked:

The Great Controversy, pp. 666ff describes the white throne judgment. As all nations are before the judgment bar of God, the scroll is finally opened before the whole universe and every tongue will confess and every knee will bow to the supremacy of Jesus (GC, pp. 668, 669; see Philippians 2:5-11 and the relationship to the great panorama. Isaiah 45:23 from where Philippians 2:9-11 comes underlines a context of the judgment, a contrast between the one true God and the pretenders.

In GC, p. 671, the white robed throng that is before the throne sings the song of Revelation 5:12. In GC, p. 678, the **every creature in the universe** sings a final song giving honor and glory to the lamb (Revelation 5:13). This is the moment toward which Revelation 5:12, 13 in the introductory vision pointed. Here 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 will finally be consummated.

Of course, the big question is this: What does the sealed book contain and why would it be so catastrophic for the book to remain sealed?

While the book is sealed, no one can read its contents. An analogous case is the sealed book of Daniel 12:4 where the angel tells John to seal the little book until the time of the end. No one could understand the contents of the book until the time came to remove the seal.

We find some valuable background information in the book of Jeremiah where we find a description of a title deed. The picture is thus: Adam forfeited the title deed to the world, Satan claimed it, and only the Redeemer (*go'el*) could redeem it (buy it back). The scroll contains the entire sweep of the history of salvation. When the Lion of the Tribe of Judah finally opens the book, the universe will see that only Jesus and His followers have the legal right to the possession that Adam lost.

Several scholars have weighed in on the contents of the scroll:

"In order to protect the contents of legal documents (such as deeds of sale, contracts, wills, and letters), a seal impression was normally made with a signet or ring at the end of the written document. The sealing thus functioned in place of a signature, indicating authenticity, validity, authority, ratification, or protection of the document. In order to protect the contents against an inappropriate disclosure, the document would be tied with threads, and then the seal was impressed at the knots on bullae (a blob of clay, wax, or some other soft material) which kept the papyrus scroll folded (Job 38:14). An unbroken impression would indicate that the sealed document had not been opened. Only the owner could break the seals and disclose the contents." Ranko Stefanovic, Revelation of Jesus Christ, p. 197

*"Archeologists have brought to light many documents sealed with two to seven or more seals. For instance, Roman law dictated that a **will or testament** had to be sealed with a minimum of seven seals of witnesses in order to render its contents valid, although some evidence shows that more than seven seals were used on occasion. . . Like any sealed scroll of the time, the scroll of Revelation 5 appears rolled up, tied with a cord, and sealed along the outside edge with seals of wax affixed at the knots. As such, it could not be opened and its contents disclosed **until all of the seven seals were broken**. The breaking of all seven seals is preliminary and preparatory to the actual opening of the scroll and the disclosure of its contents." Ranko Stefanovic, Revelation of Jesus Christ, p. 197, 198*

*"**A will**, according to the Praetorian Testament, in Roman Law bore the seven seals of the seven witnesses on the threads that secured the tablets or parchment (see Smith, Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities, p. 1117). Such a Testament could not be carried into execution till all the seven seals were loosed." R. H. Charles, International Critical Commentary, volume 1, p. 137*

*“The central item, the seven-sealed scroll, portrays a **will or testament**, for that is precisely what such a seven-sealed document was in Roman law in John’s day. We find, then, that the picture we have in the subdivision of Revelation from 4:1 to 8:1 is a **court scene** in which a will or testament is to be opened. In the context of Revelation, this **will or testament** would be a **title deed**, as it were, to man’s lost inheritance—an inheritance that has been repurchased by Christ, the Lamb. Thus, the scroll is a book of destiny. The opening of it means inheritance in God’s kingdom; its remaining closed means forfeiture. No wonder John wept when he thought no one could open the scroll.” Kenneth Strand, Interpreting the Book of Revelation, p. 55*

In two important quotations, Ellen White concurs with these scholars and adds some valuable information:

*“There in His open hand lay the book, the **roll of the history** of God’s providences, the prophetic **history** of nations and the church. Herein was contained the divine utterances, His authority, His commandments, His laws, the whole symbolic counsel of the Eternal, and the **history of all ruling powers in the nations**. In symbolic language was contained in that roll the influence of every nation, tongue, and people from the **beginning of earth’s history to its close**.” Manuscript Releases, Volume 9, p. 7*

*“Thus the Jewish leaders made their choice. Their **decision was registered** in the book which John saw in the hand of Him that sat upon the throne, the book which no man could open. In all its **vindictiveness** this decision **will appear** before them in the day when this **book is unsealed** by the Lion of the tribe of Judah.” Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 294*

Several important points emerge from this last statement. Ellen White is writing this around the year 1900. It is clear that at that point the scroll was **still sealed**. Furthermore, in order for those who cried out, “release unto us Barabbas”, to see the consequences of the decision they made in the past, they

must resurrect. This means that the scroll will remain sealed until they resurrect in the second resurrection after the millennium.

Ellen White gives this vivid description of the opening of the sealed book after the millennium:

*“Above the throne is revealed the cross; and like a **panoramic view [in high definition]** appear the scenes of Adam's temptation and fall, and the **successive steps in the great plan of redemption**. The Savior's lowly birth; His early life of simplicity and obedience; His baptism in Jordan; the fast and temptation in the wilderness; His public ministry, unfolding to men heaven's most precious blessings; the days crowded with deeds of love and mercy, the nights of prayer and watching in the solitude of the mountains; the plotting of envy, hate, and malice which repaid His benefits; the awful, mysterious agony in Gethsemane beneath the crushing weight of the sins of the whole world; His betrayal into the hands of the murderous mob; the fearful events of that night of horror--the unresisting prisoner, forsaken by His best-loved disciples, rudely hurried through the streets of Jerusalem; the Son of God exultingly displayed before **Annas**, arraigned in the high priest's palace, in the judgment hall of **Pilate**, before the cowardly and cruel **Herod**, mocked, insulted, tortured, and condemned to die--all are vividly portrayed.*

And now before the swaying multitude are revealed the final scenes--the patient Sufferer treading the path to Calvary; the Prince of heaven hanging upon the cross; the haughty priests and the jeering rabble deriding His expiring agony; the supernatural darkness; the heaving earth, the rent rocks, the open graves, marking the moment when the world's Redeemer yielded up His life.

*The awful spectacle appears just as it was. Satan, his angels, and his subjects have no power to turn from the picture of their own work. **Each actor** recalls the part that he performed. **Herod**, who slew the innocent children of Bethlehem that he might destroy the King of Israel; the base **Herodias**, upon whose guilty soul rests the blood of John the Baptist; the weak, timeserving **Pilate**; the **mocking soldiers**;*

the **priests and rulers** and the **maddened throng** who cried, "His blood be on us, and on our children!"--all behold the enormity of their guilt. They vainly seek to hide from the divine majesty of His countenance, outshining the glory of the sun, while the redeemed cast their crowns at the Savior's feet, exclaiming, "He died for me!"

Amid the ransomed throng are the apostles of Christ, the heroic Paul, the ardent Peter, the loved and loving John, and their truehearted brethren, and with them the vast host of martyrs; while outside the walls, with every vile and abominable thing, are those by whom they were persecuted, imprisoned, and slain. There is **Nero**, that monster of cruelty and vice, beholding the joy and exaltation of those whom he once tortured, and in whose extremest anguish, he found satanic delight. His mother is there to witness the result of her own work; to see how the evil stamp of character transmitted to her son, the passions encouraged and developed by her influence and example, have borne fruit in crimes that caused the world to shudder.

There are **papist priests and prelates**, who claimed to be Christ's ambassadors, yet employed the rack, the dungeon, and the stake to control the consciences of His people. There are the **proud pontiffs** who exalted themselves above God and presumed to change the law of the Most High. Those **pretended fathers** of the church have an account to render to God from which they would fain be excused. Too late, they are made to see that the Omniscient One is jealous of His law and that He will in no wise clear the guilty. They learn now that Christ identifies His interest with that of His suffering people; and they feel the force of His own words: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." Matthew 25:40.

The whole wicked world stand arraigned at the bar of God on the charge of high treason against the government of heaven. They have none to plead their cause; they are without excuse; and the sentence of eternal death is pronounced against them." *The Great Controversy*, pp. 666-669

Revelation 19 and the Seven Seals

The White Horse:

Jesus rides a white horse “conquering and to conquer” (Revelation 19:11) The Great Controversy, p. 641 tells us that Jesus rides as a mighty conqueror, a victor. He has subdued His enemies:

“Jesus rides forth as a mighty conqueror. Not now a “Man of Sorrows,” to drink the bitter cup of shame and woe, He comes, victor in heaven and earth, to judge the living and the dead. No crown of thorns now mars that sacred head; but a diadem of glory rests on His holy brow.”

The *stephanos* of Revelation 6:2 has become the *diademata* of chapter 19.

The Red Horse:

When Jesus comes on the white horse, a **sword** comes out of His mouth. The sword takes away peace from the earth and the result is war and bloodshed:

“The swords which were to slay God's people are now employed to destroy their enemies. Everywhere there is strife and bloodshed.” (GC, pp. 655; 19:11, 15, 21)

The Black Horse:

At the fifth plague, a **supernatural darkness** or blackness falls upon the earth (16:10). Ellen White described this darkness as a “*dense blackness, deeper than the darkness of the night*” (GC, p. 636).

The Yellow Horse: The Word of God now destroys the oppressors of His people (19:13-15). God’s people died for the written Word of God and now the

Word of God in person slays their oppressors. God now avenges the blood of His people on the harlot (20:4-6).

The Fifth Seal:

When Jesus comes, the number of the **martyrs is complete**. God accounted the martyrs worthy of eternal life in the investigative judgment. In the same judgment God pronounced judgment against the harlot, now the martyrs are avenged and resurrected (Revelation 19:1, 2), and they now become the judges of their oppressors (Revelation 20:4-6). The martyrs come forth from their graves. Their vindication is now complete. Until this point they were resting from their labors until the number of all the martyrs was complete (Revelation 14:13).

The Sixth Seal:

Next we have the signs in the sun, the moon and the stars (Joel 2:10; Isaiah 13:9, 10; Matthew 24:29, 30; GC 637, 641-642; EW 41). An earthquake also takes place at this time (GC 636, 637; Rev. 6:17). All these signs transpired on a limited basis during the first part of the sixth seal. During the second part of the sixth seal, God reveals the results of the judgment. He saves righteous martyrs and condemns their wicked oppressors. God has judged and avenged. Revelation 19:11 explains that Jesus comes to judge and avenge. He comes executes judgment against the wicked for what they have done to His people. The tables now turn on the wicked. God overturns the erroneous verdicts of earthly courts. The lamb now becomes a lion. When John saw Jesus in Revelation 5 He was a Lamb but when He takes over the kingdom, He is a Lion. Thus, Revelation 6 is the period between the lamb and the lion. Revelation 6:16, 17 portrays this moment when the lamb roars like a lion. Have you ever seen a roaring lamb? Jeremiah 25:30-38 presents a vivid portrayal of the moment the Lamb roars like a lion (especially verse 38 where the Lord roars).

The Seventh Seal:

Jesus then descends to the earth and the righteous ask the question, 'who shall be able to stand' followed by an awful period of silence. This is the half hour of silence of the seventh seal. The wicked then ask the same question as they hide in the caves and cry for the rocks to fall on them.

Jesus then takes His people to heaven (GC, pp. 645-657) and gives them the insignia of their royal state (the crown of glory, the victors, crown and the shining harp (GC, p. 646; Rev. 7:9; Rev. 2:10; 2 Timothy 4:7, 8; Revelation 14:2; 15:2; GC, pp. 648, 649)

In the following passage, Ellen White presents the sequence of events during the sixth and seventh seals with the respective biblical support:

"By this time the 144,000 were all sealed and perfectly united. On their foreheads was written, God, New Jerusalem, and a glorious Star containing Jesus' new name. [REV. 3:12.] At our happy, holy state the wicked were enraged, and would rush violently up to lay hands on us to thrust us in prison, when we would stretch forth the hand in the name of the Lord, and the wicked would fall helpless to the ground. Then it was that the synagogue of Satan knew that God had loved us who could wash one another's feet, and salute the holy brethren with a holy kiss, and they worshipped at our feet. [REV. 3:9.] Soon our eyes were drawn to the East, for a small black cloud had appeared about half as large as a man's hand, which we all knew was the Sign of the Son of Man. [MAT. 24:30.] We all in solemn silence gazed on the cloud as it drew nearer, lighter, and brighter, glorious, and still more glorious, till it was a great white cloud. [REV. 14:14.] The bottom appeared like fire, a rainbow was over it, around the cloud were ten thousand angels singing a most lovely song. And on it sat the Son of Man, [LUKE 21:27.] on his head were crowns, [REV. 19:12.] his hair was white and curly and lay on his shoulders. [REV. 1:14.] His feet had the appearance of fire, [REV. 1:15.] in his right hand was a sharp sickle, [REV. 14:14.] in his left a silver trumpet. [THESS. 4:16.] His eyes were as a flame of fire, [REV. 1:14.] which searched his children through and through. Then all faces gathered paleness, and those that God had rejected gathered

blackness. Then we all cried out, who shall be able to stand? Is my robe spotless? Then the angels ceased to sing, and there was some time of awful silence, [REV. 8:1.] when Jesus spoke. Those who have clean hands and a pure heart shall be able to stand, my grace is sufficient for you. At this, our faces lighted up, and joy filled every heart. And the angels struck a note higher and sung again while the cloud drew still nearer the earth. Then Jesus' silver trumpet sounded, as he descended on the cloud, wrapped in flames of fire [2 THESS. 1:7,8] He gazed on the graves of the sleeping saints, then raised his eyes and hands to heaven and cried out, [JOHN 5:25.] Awake! Awake! Awake! ye that sleep in the dust, and arise. Then there was a mighty earthquake. The graves opened, and the dead came up clothed with immortality. The 144,000 shouted, Hallelujah! as they recognized their friends who had been torn from them by death, and in the same moment we were changed and caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air. [THESS. 4:17.] We all entered the cloud together, and were seven days ascending to the sea of glass, when Jesus brought along the crowns and with his own right hand placed them on our heads. [2 ESDRAS 2:43.] He gave us harps of gold and palms of victory. [REV. 15:2. REV. 7:9.]” A Word to the Little Flock pp. 14, 15; also contained in Testimonies for the Church, volume 1, pp. 59-61

Synopsis and Overview of the Seven Seals

The seals portray sacred, not secular history. They describe a succession of historical events between the inauguration of Christ as priest/king in heaven and His final coming to take over the absolute kingship of the world. The seals have a certain “flow”. That is to say, they are not a description of individual, isolated and disconnected events of church history but rather a sequential and interconnected description of Satan’s battle strategy as he attempts to take over complete dominion of the world. On the other hand, Christ uses the true church filled with the Holy Spirit as His chosen method to gain the victory in the struggle for world dominion. Ellen White describes this battle using the imagery of the building of God’s spiritual temple in the book Acts of the Apostles, pp. 596-602.

Under the first seal, the Apostolic Church goes out ‘conquering and to conquer’. These conquests of the enemy’s territory infuriate the hosts of wickedness who bring about persecution under the Roman emperors (the red horse). Satan then changes his strategy introducing into the church doctrines of darkness under Constantine (the black horse). This horse causes famine, pestilence, sword and death during the middle Ages (the yellow horse).

The fifth seal opens to view the fact that the battle is far from over when the persecutions of the dark ages end. There will be a final struggle, no holds barred, for world dominion. An even greater number of martyrs will lose their lives in this battle for the Word of God and the Testimony that they held. Revelation 12, 13; 14:18-20; 16:4-7; 17:6; 18:20, 24; 19:2 describes this battle. The fifth seal is the hinge that describes the persecutions of the past and the greater persecutions of the future.

We must understand the two stages of martyrs of the fifth seal in the context of the two periods of Papal dominion. In between the two periods of persecution is the deadly wound (Revelation 13:3). We find this same perspective in Daniel 11 where the events of verses 30-39 will repeat in similar fashion in verses 40-45.

The fifth seal itself indicates that the historical events of the first four seals will transpire once more but on an accentuated and global scale. It is not that the first four seals will find a dual fulfillment but rather that the historical events that fulfilled them will occur once more in **similar fashion**. If the injustices of the first four seals in church history led the martyrs to cry out in the fifth seal, then we would expect the cry in the future to be the result of injustices similar to those in the first four seals. Further, as the little horn thought it could change the Sabbath during the 1260 years, so the beast will impose Sunday observance on pain of death in the future.

The future will look something like this: As at Pentecost, God’s people will receive the power of the latter rain as the disciples received the power of the

early rain. The church will go out with power to preach the light and truth of God's word—conquering and to conquer (PK, p. 725: **white horse**). This will awaken persecution (the **red horse**). The doctrines of darkness and superstition (the **black horse**) overwhelm the world (Revelation 18:2, 3) and the result will be famine, pestilence and sword. During the short time of trouble, the final group of martyrs will be complete (the **pale horse**). This is the second group of martyrs mentioned in Revelation 6:9-11. When the martyrs of the past died it looked like the enemies of Christ had triumphed (AA, p. 581) and the martyrs cried out for vindication. At the end of human history, once again the second group of martyrs will cry out (second part of the **fifth seal**) for vindication. The martyrs will cry out to God for justice from their graves (Ellen White makes this clear in her quotations about the martyrs in the fifth seal). Again it will appear that Satan's kingdom is about to take over the whole world and that the lone dissenting voices will be forever silenced. If Satan could blot the remnant from the earth, his triumph would be complete (GC 618). The battle will rage. On one side is the remnant of God and on the other the dragon, the beast and the false prophet. Finally, Jesus will take the battlefield, vindicate the martyrs and take over kingship of the world. Jesus rides forth as a mighty conqueror. Signs in the sun, the moon and the stars (**sixth seal**) announce the coming of the victorious king. He comes as King of kings and Lord of lords and as the lion of the tribe of Judah. As he descends from heaven a period of awful silence occurs (the **seventh seal**) followed by the words, 'my grace is sufficient for you.'

Thus, the final scenes of history will repeat the general principles of the seven seals. During the Loud Cry, the church will once again be pure and will go out '**conquering and to conquer**'. As a result **persecution** will come. **Darkness** will come into the church because Babylon will be full of demons and the last group of martyrs will die. The martyrs will cry out for justice and a great earthquake and signs in the sun moon and stars will announce the coming of Jesus followed by the awful silence in heaven.

Many internet sites are critical of Ellen White's description of the signs under the sixth seal. Unfortunately, they have not studied carefully what Ellen White wrote concerning this seal. They have read her comments superficially. They have not taken into account the order of the signs or the historical context in which they took place.



ANCHOR SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

“Revelation’s Seven Seals: Studies in Revelation 4-8”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #17 – WHAT IS GOD’S ESCHATOLOGICAL SEAL?

Ellen White: The Sabbath is the Seal of God

Since early in its history, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has consistently taught that the Seal of God is the Sabbath. As far as we know, the first person to discover this was Captain Joseph Bates who in 1846 published a booklet titled The Seventh-day Sabbath a Perpetual Sign.

With the passing of time, Ellen White came to agree with Joseph Bates on this point. She **unequivocally** and **repeatedly** identified the Sabbath as the Seal of God.

*“The Sabbath was placed in the Decalogue as the **seal** of the living God, pointing out the Law-giver, and making known his right to rule. It was a **sign** between God and his people, a **test** of their loyalty to him.”* Signs of the Times May 13, 1886

*“The fourth commandment is the only one of all the ten in which are found both the name and the title of the Lawgiver. It is the only one that shows by whose authority the law is given. Thus it **contains the seal of God**, affixed to His law as evidence of its authenticity and binding force.”* Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 307

*“The Sabbath of the fourth commandment **is the seal** of the living God. It points to God as the Creator, and is the **sign** of His rightful authority over the beings He has made.” Signs of the Times, November 1, 1899*

*“The **sign** or **seal** of God is the observance of the Seventh-day Sabbath, and the Lord's memorial of his work of creation.” Special Testimony to Battle Creek, 1898, p. 6*

*“The truth in regard to the Sabbath of the Lord is to be proclaimed. The Seventh-day is to be shown to be the **seal of the living God**.” Manuscript Releases, volume 4, p. 425*

The Internal Seal of the Holy Spirit

The Bible **seems** to **contradict** Ellen White's testimony. As we read Scripture, we find that the seal or sealer is the Holy Spirit yet Ellen White states that it is the Sabbath:

Ephesians 1:13-14:

*“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you **were sealed** with the **Holy Spirit** of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.”*

Ephesians 4:30:

*“And do not grieve the **Holy Spirit** of God, **by whom** you **were sealed** for the day of redemption.”*

2 Corinthians 1:21, 22:

*“Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also **has sealed us** and given us the **Spirit** in our hearts as a guarantee.”*

A Seeming Discrepancy

Is there really a contradiction between the Bible and Ellen G. White on the identity of the Seal of God?

The fact is that Ellen White and the Bible are describing **two different sides** of the same thing. The Bible is describing the **invisible, internal** work of the Holy Spirit while Ellen White is describing the **external, visible** manifestation of that very work.

The Case of Circumcision

We can better understand the relationship between the Sabbath and the internal work of the Holy Spirit, by considering the analogous case of **circumcision**.

The external act:

Leviticus 12:3: God explicitly **commanded** the **external act** of circumcision:

*“And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin **shall be** circumcised.”*

Genesis 17:14: The **external sign** was of great importance:

*“And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person **shall be cut off** from his people; he has **broken** My covenant.”*

In **Exodus 4:24-26** we even find that this rite was of such importance that God **threatened to kill Moses** for failure to circumcise his son.

The deeper meaning:

Yet circumcision had a **far deeper meaning** than the literal removal of the flesh of the foreskin. We find this deeper meaning exemplified in the experience of **Abraham**.

Genesis 15:6: When Abraham was **84 years old**, God promised him a son from his own loins. At this time, Abraham **trusted God** and it was accounted to him for righteousness:

*“And he **believed** in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness.”*

Genesis 17:24: Fifteen years after God justified Abraham by faith, he was circumcised. At the time, he was **99 years** old.

Obviously, the **external act** of circumcision did not save or justify Abraham.

In the days of Paul, the Jews made the external act of circumcision the **litmus test salvation** and **belonging to God’s people**. The apostle Paul begged to differ:

Romans 4:9, 10: According to Paul, God justified Abraham by faith long before his circumcision:

*“Does this blessedness [**of justification**] then come upon the circumcised only [**Jews**] or upon the uncircumcised [**Gentiles**] also? For we say that **faith was accounted** to Abraham for righteousness. 10 How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but **while uncircumcised**.”*

Romans 4:11-12: Circumcision was the external, visible sign of the internal justification:

“And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, ¹² and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised.”

The Old Testament already contained this deeper dimension of circumcision:

Deuteronomy 30:6: Circumcision was the external sign of an internal experience:

“And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul that you may live.”

Deuteronomy 10:16-17: Circumcision was the external sign of an internal experience:

“Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer.”

Philippians 3:3: Paul defined the true meaning of circumcision:

“For we are the circumcision who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”

Romans 2:28-29:

“For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; ²⁹ but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is

that of the heart, in the **Spirit**, not in the **letter**; whose praise is not from men but from God.”

Clarification:

- God established circumcision as a **Jewish** institution.
- God established it **after sin**.
- **Baptism replaced** circumcision.
- As of the Jerusalem Council, the observance of circumcision is **no longer required**.

Colossians 2:11, 12: The external act of baptism replaced circumcision:

*“In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made **without hands**, by putting off the body of the **sins of the flesh**, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹² **buried with Him in baptism**, in which you also were **raised with Him** through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.”*

In **contrast to circumcision**:

- God established the Sabbath **before sin**
- He established it for **all people**
- There is **no indication** that God replaced it.

The Baptismal Example

As we have seen, in the New Testament baptism **takes the place** of circumcision (Colossians 2:11-13). Is the **external act** of baptism necessary and important or is it **simply** enough for a person to receive Jesus in the heart?

The New Testament appears to make the **external rite** of baptism **a condition for salvation**. However, when we carefully read the Bible texts on baptism we see that the external ceremony, though very important, is not sufficient:

Mark 16:15-17: Belief in Jesus must precede water baptism:

*“And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. ¹⁶ He who [1] **believes** and is [2] **baptized will be saved**; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”*

1 Peter 3:21-22: Peter made water baptism a **condition for salvation**:

*“There is also an antitype which **now saves us** — baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh [**external**], but the answer of a good conscience toward God [**internal**]), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”*

Ellen White concurs with the Bible testimony. She clearly states that the external rite of baptism is indispensable but **not sufficient**:

*“Christ made **baptism the entrance** to His spiritual kingdom. He made this a **positive condition with which all must comply** who wish to be acknowledged as under the authority of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Those who **receive the ordinance of baptism** thereby make a **public declaration** that they **have renounced** the world, and **have become** members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King.” Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, volume 6, p. 1075*

Ellen White wrote about the words that the Father spoke to Jesus at His baptism:

*“Let those who received the **imprint** of God by baptism heed these words, remembering that upon them the Lord has placed **His signature**, declaring them to be His sons and daughters. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, powers*

infinite and omniscient, receive those who **truly enter** into covenant relation with God. They are present at every baptism, to receive the candidates who **have renounced** the world and **have received** Christ into the soul temple. These candidates **have entered** into the family of God, and their **names are inscribed** in the Lamb's book of life." God's Amazing Grace, p. 143

"The **new birth** is a rare experience in this age of the world. This is the reason why there are so many **perplexities** in the churches. Many, **so many**, who assume the name of Christ are **unsanctified and unholy**. They have been baptized, however they were **buried alive**. Self did not die, and therefore they **did not rise** to newness of life in Christ (MS, pp. 148, 1897)." The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, volume 6, p. 1075

"It is the **grace of Christ** that gives life to the soul. **Apart from Christ**, baptism, like any other service, is a **worthless form**." The Desire of Ages, p. 181

"Baptism **does not make** children Christians; neither does it **convert** them; it is but an **outward sign**, showing that they are sensible that they should be children of God by acknowledging that **they believe** in Jesus Christ as their Savior and will henceforth live for Christ." Child Guidance, p. 499

The Communion Example

"The gift of Christ to the marriage feast was a **symbol**. The water represented baptism into **His death**; the wine, the shedding of His blood for the sins of the world. The water to fill the jars was brought by human hands, but the word of Christ alone could impart to it life-giving virtue. So with the rites which point to the Savior's death. It is only by the power of Christ, **working through faith**, that they **have efficacy to nourish the soul**." The Desire of Ages, pp. 148, 149

The Parallel of Sabbath observance

God **commands** the external observance of the Sabbath by abstaining from our regular weekly labor. God commanded the observance of a **specific** day.

Exodus 20:8-11:

*"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the **seventh day** is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it **you shall do no work**: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. ¹¹ For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it."*

External phylacteries

Deuteronomy 6:6-8:

*"And these words which I command you today shall be in your **heart** [in the heart before they are placed on the hand, the forehead and the doorposts]. ⁷ You shall **teach them** [after they are in the heart] diligently to your children, and shall **talk of them** [after they are in the heart] when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. ⁸ You shall bind them **as a sign** [external behavior is to reveal that they are in the heart first] on your **hand** [they should guide what you do], and they shall be as **frontlets** between your eyes [they should guide what you think]. ⁹ You shall write them on the **doorposts** of your house and on your **gates**."*

*"To **make a show of their piety** was their constant aim. Nothing was held too sacred to serve this end. To Moses God had said concerning His commandments, "Thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets*

between thine eyes." Deuteronomy 6:8. These words have a **deep meaning**. As the word of God is **meditated upon and practiced**, the **whole man will be ennobled**. In righteous and merciful **dealing**, the hands will reveal, as a signet, the principles of God's law. They will be kept clean from **bribes**, and from all that is **corrupt and deceptive**. They will be **active in works of love and compassion**. The **eyes**, directed toward a noble purpose, will be clear and true. The **expressive countenance**, the speaking eye, will testify to the **blameless character** of him who loves and honors the word of God. However, by the Jews of Christ's day all this was undiscerned. The command given to Moses was construed into a direction that the precepts of Scripture should be **worn upon the person**. They were accordingly written upon **strips of parchment**, and bound in a conspicuous manner about the head and wrists. But this did not cause the law of God to take a firmer hold of the **mind and heart**. These parchments were worn merely as badges, **to attract attention**. They were thought to give the wearers an air of devotion that would command the reverence of the people. Jesus struck a blow at this vain pretense." *DA*, pp. 612, 613

Deeper Dimension of the Sabbath: External Sign of an Internal Experience

Exodus 31:12-13:

"And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ¹³ "Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: 'Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a **sign** between Me and you throughout your generations, **that you may know** that I am the Lord who **sanctifies** you.'"

Ezekiel 20:12, 20:

"Moreover I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a **sign** between them and Me, that they might know that **I am the Lord who sanctifies** them. ²⁰ hallow My Sabbaths,

and they will be a sign between Me and you, that you may know that I am the Lord your God.'

The external observance of the Sabbath did not make Israel holy but rather was an external sign that God had made them holy. That is to say, the external observance of the Sabbath was to reveal that they had an internal, holy relationship with the Lord.

The Spirit Seals the Internal Relationship

The question is who creates in us this internal relationship with the Lord? Who makes our hearts holy? Who writes the law in the heart? The answer is, the Holy Spirit. He wrote them on tables of stone and he writes them on the heart.

The finger of God wrote the Ten Commandments including the Sabbath:

- **Matthew 12:28**: Jesus cast out demons by the Spirit of God
- **Luke 11:20**: Jesus cast out demons by the Finger of God and the Ten Commandments were written by the finger of God

2 Thessalonians 2:13: The Holy Spirit sanctifies us or makes us holy:

"But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth."

The Holy Spirit's sword is the Word of God. The Holy Spirit transforms the life and then we keep the Sabbath as the sign.

John 17:17: The truth sanctifies us:

"Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth."

John 16:13: The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth that sanctifies us:

*“However, when He, the **Spirit of truth**, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.”*

Ezekiel 36:26, 27: When the Holy Spirit is in the heart the result is obedience to God’s statutes:

*“I will give you a **new heart** and put a **new spirit** within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I will put **My Spirit within you** and cause you to **walk in My statutes**, and you will **keep My judgments** and do them.”*

Although the wind is **invisible** to human eyes we can see its visible **effects**. In like manner, the work of the Holy Spirit on the human heart is **unseen** but we can see the **effects** by the observance of the holy Sabbath.

Ellen White explained that the Holy Spirit is the sealing agent:

*“Would you impress **the seal** to obtain a **clear impression** upon the wax, you do not dash it on by a violent action, but you place the seal carefully and firmly and press it down until the wax receives the mold. **Just so**, the Lord is dealing with our souls. . . . Not now and then, but constantly the **new life is implanted** by the **Holy Spirit** after Christ’s likeness.” *In Heavenly Places*, p. 66*

*“As **wax** takes the **impression** of the **seal**, so the soul is to take the **impression** of the **Spirit of God** and retain the image of Christ.” *1SM*, p. 336*

Ellen White on the Internal and External Meaning of the Sabbath

Contrary to what many detractors believe, Ellen White did not teach that Sabbath observance is an end in itself. Ellen White never wrote that the observance does confers holiness nor did she state that it earn us salvation.

In several statements, she explained that the Sabbath is an outward sign of an inward experience produced by the Holy Spirit:

“Pointing to God as the Maker of the heavens and the earth, it [the Sabbath] distinguishes the true God from all false gods. All who keep the seventh day signify by this act that they are worshipers of Jehovah. Thus the Sabbath is the [visible] sign of man's allegiance to God as long as there are any upon the earth to serve Him.” Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 307

Regarding the Sabbath test in the end time, she wrote:

“The Sabbath will be the great test of loyalty, for it is the point of truth especially controverted. When the final test shall be brought to bear upon men, then the line of distinction will be drawn between those who serve God and those who serve Him not. While the observance of the false sabbath in compliance with the law of the state, contrary to the fourth commandment, will be an avowal of allegiance [just like your vow of allegiance to the United States is exhibited by your pledge of allegiance to the flag] to a power that is in opposition to God, the keeping of the true Sabbath, in obedience to God's law, is an evidence of loyalty to the Creator. While one class, by accepting the sign of submission to earthly powers, receive the mark of the beast, the other choosing the token of allegiance to divine authority, receive the seal of God.” The Great Controversy, p. 605

The analogy of patriotism will help us understand the inward and outward dimensions of the Sabbath. Patriotism is an abstract concept; it is something a

person feels deep in his heart. Pledging allegiance to the **flag** to the sound of the Star Spangled Banner allows a person to **externalize** in visible form his patriotism. Pledging allegiance to the flag is the **externalization** or the **visible sign** of patriotism. Would it be proper to pledge allegiance to the United States while using a Russian flag? Does it really make any difference? What would you think of someone who says: "I am a red blooded American, I love this country" and then pledges allegiance to the Russian flag? Does the flag that we pledge allegiance to make a difference?

*"Those who would have the seal of God in their foreheads **must keep the Sabbath** of the fourth commandment. This is what **distinguishes them** from the disloyal, who have accepted a manmade institution in the place of the true Sabbath. The observance of God's rest day is the **mark of distinction** between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not."* Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, volume 7, p. 970

*"The keeping of the Sabbath is a **sign** of loyalty to the true God."* The Great Controversy, p. 438

*"The Sabbath is a pledge given by God to man--a **sign** of the relation existing between the Creator and His created beings. By observing the memorial of the creation of the world in six days and the rest of the Creator on the seventh day, by keeping the Sabbath holy, according to His directions, the Israelites were to **declare to the world [particularly important in a polytheistic world] their loyalty** to the only true and living God, the Sovereign of the universe."* Selected Messages, volume 3, p. 256

*"Let us reverence God's institution, the Sabbath day; for it is the **sign** of our relationship to God, the **sign** by which we are **demonstrated** as His people."* Manuscript Releases, volume 5, p. 86

*"To the **obedient**, it is a **sign** of their loyalty to God."* Manuscript Releases, volume 11, p. 18

*“**True** observance of the Sabbath is the **sign** of loyalty to God.” Manuscript Releases, volume 15, p. 32*

*“Nothing so distinguished the Jews from surrounding nations, and designated them as true worshipers of the Creator, as the institution of the Sabbath. Its observance was a continual **visible token** of their **connection with God**, and separation from other people.” 2SP, p. 193*

The Sabbath as a deeper Spiritual Experience

*“The quiet, consistent, godly life is a living epistle, known and read of all men. **Holiness is not shaped from without or put on; it radiates from within.** If goodness, purity, meekness, lowliness, and integrity **dwelt in the heart**, they will **shine forth in the character**; and such a character is **full of power**. Not the instrument, but the great Worker in whose hand the instrument is used, **receives the glory**. The heart filled with the Savior's love, daily **receives grace to impart**. The **life reveals** the redeeming power of the truth.” In Heavenly Places, p. 237*

*“Just as soon as the people of God are sealed in their foreheads--it is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a **settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually**, so they cannot be moved--just as soon as **God's people are sealed** and prepared for the shaking, it will come.” Manuscript 173, 1902, pp. 1-6. (“Medical Missionary Work in Southern California,” Interview held in Los Angeles, California, September 15, 1902 found in Manuscript Releases, volume 10, p. 252*

*“The Sabbath is a **test** to this generation. In obeying the fourth commandment in **spirit and truth**, men will obey all the precepts of the Decalogue. To fulfill this commandment one must **love God supremely**, and exercise **love toward all the creatures** that he has made.” Signs of the Times, February 13, 1896*

*“The **seal of the living God** will be placed upon those only who bear a **likeness to Christ in character**.” Review and Herald, May 21, 1895*

The two ideas together

"The sign, or seal, of God is revealed in the observance of the Seventh-day Sabbath, the Lord's memorial of creation." Testimonies for the Church, volume 8, p. 117

Back to the Times of Jesus

The best way to understand the relationship between the internal work of the Holy Spirit and the external observance of the Sabbath is by comparing how Jesus and the Pharisees kept the Sabbath.

The problem of the Pharisees was that they had the outward behavior without the internal work of the Holy Spirit on the heart. This type of legalism is what the religious leaders manifested in Christ's day.

Matthew 23:25-28:

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. ²⁶ Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. ²⁷ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. ²⁸ Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."

All of the healings that Jesus performed on the Sabbath were **chronic ailments**. Jesus could have waited until sundown to heal these individuals but He wanted to make a point. He wanted to show that love is at the heart of the Sabbath. This is why He stated that He desired mercy, not sacrifice. The healings of Jesus on the Sabbath revealed that He had the Spirit of God in His heart. Here is an

example of the callousness of the Jewish leaders in Christ's day in contrast to Christ's tenderheartedness.

Mark 3:1-7:

*"And He entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a withered hand. ² So they **watched Him closely**, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might **accuse Him** [not a problem to accuse on the Sabbath!]. ³ And He said to the man who had the withered hand, "**Step forward** [He is going to make a point]." ⁴ Then He said to them, "Is it **lawful** on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to **save life** or to **kill** [they were actually plotting to kill Jesus on Sabbath]?" But they kept silent. ⁵ And when He had looked around at them with **anger** [the only time in the Gospels that anger—righteous indignation—is attributed to Jesus], being grieved by the **hardness of their hearts** [they had an internal heart problem], He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other. ⁶ Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might **destroy Him**."*

Ellen White described their hypocritical Sabbath observance:

*"Its [observance of the Sabbath] mere **outward observance** was a mockery." The Desire of Ages, p. 286*

The Pharisees meticulously kept the **Sabbath externally** but did not have the work of the **Holy Spirit upon the heart**. Their observance of the Sabbath was loveless! The person who has the Holy Spirit in the heart will **truly keep the Sabbath** as Jesus did. Jesus had the seal of the Holy Spirit and His Sabbath observance revealed it.

Ellen White further describes the legalistic observance of the Sabbath in Christ's day:

*“As the Jews departed from God, and failed to make the **righteousness of Christ their own by faith [the internal work of the Holy Spirit]**, the Sabbath **lost its significance [meaning]** to them. Satan was seeking to exalt himself and to draw men away from Christ, and he worked to **pervert the Sabbath**, because it is the **sign** of the power of Christ. The Jewish leaders accomplished the will of Satan by surrounding God's rest day with **burdensome requirements**. In the days of Christ, the Sabbath had become so **perverted** that its observance reflected the character of selfish and arbitrary men rather than the character of the loving heavenly Father. The rabbis virtually represented God as giving laws that it was impossible for men to obey. They led the people to look upon God as a tyrant, and to think that the observance of the Sabbath, as He required it, made men **hard-hearted and cruel**. It was the work of Christ to clear away these misconceptions. Although the rabbis followed Him with merciless hostility, He did not even appear to conform to their requirements, but went straight forward, **keeping the Sabbath according to the law of God.**” The Desire of Ages, pp. 283, 284)*

*“No other institution which was committed to the Jews tended so fully to **distinguish them** from surrounding nations as did the Sabbath. God designed that its observance should **designate them** as His worshipers. It was to be a **token** of their separation from idolatry, and their connection with the true God. However, in order to keep the Sabbath holy, **men must themselves be holy [experience the internal work of the Holy Spirit first]**. Through faith, they must become partakers of the **righteousness of Christ. [the internal work of the Spirit]** When the command was given to Israel, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy,” the Lord said also to them, “Ye shall be holy men unto Me.” Ex. 20:8; 22:31. **Only thus** could the Sabbath distinguish Israel as the worshipers of God.” The Desire of Ages, p. 284*

From a sign of **Christ's righteousness** in the life to **glorify Him**, the Sabbath became a sign of their **own righteousness** and **glory for them**. It made them **intolerant, mean spirited, judgmental** and **arrogant**. The Sabbath makes **no one holy**; it is the sign of holiness or **sanctification worked out by the Holy Spirit** upon the heart.

Some enemies of the Sabbath such as Dale Ratzlaff teach that Jesus is our spiritual Sabbath rest and therefore God does not require us to keep the day. After all, didn't Jesus say that He will give His rest to 'all who labor and are heaven laden'? (Matthew 11:28)

However, does resting in Jesus exonerate us from the need to observe the Sabbath as an external expression of an internal experience of rest with Jesus?

Would these same enemies of the Sabbath affirm that the rite of baptism in water is not necessary because it is sufficient to accept Jesus as our Savior in our hearts? Would they say that it is not necessary to partake of literal bread and wine in the Lord's Supper because we already believe internally what these symbols represent? Would anyone contend that it is unnecessary to get married in an official legal ceremony simply because love is already in the heart? Bottom line: Works are the outward manifestation of faith and faith is the inward motivation for works.

External Sabbath Keepers

Ellen White always kept the proper balance in her view of the Sabbath. She taught that an internal relationship with Jesus, would lead to an external observance of the Sabbath. She also taught that an external observance of the Sabbath without the internal work of the Holy Spirit in the heart is of no value before God:

"I was shown that merely observing the Sabbath and praying morning and evening are not positive evidences that we are Christians. These outward forms [external] may all be strictly observed, and yet true godliness [internal] be lacking." Spiritual Gifts, volume 4, p. 95

*“An **outward observance** of the Sabbath will not save the soul. The principles interwoven with every one of the Ten Commandments are to be honored and obeyed in the individual, **practical life**. The law, God requires, shall be written on the **tablets of every soul**.” 6MR, pp. 396, 397*

*“All who keep the Sabbath **in truth** bear the mark of loyalty to God. They are representatives of His kingdom. Their light is to **shine forth** to others in **good works**. We are not merely to observe the Sabbath as a **legal matter**; we are to be intelligent in regard to **its spiritual bearing** upon all the transactions of life. God says, “Verily, my Sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you.” Ex. 31:13. **This is sanctification through the truth**.” Manuscript Releases, volume 3, p. 424*

Some “Sabbath keepers” will be lost

Ellen White went so far as to write that some ‘Sabbath keepers’ would be lost:

*“Not all who **profess** to keep the Sabbath **will be sealed**. There are many even among those who **teach the truth to others** who will not receive the seal of God in their foreheads. They had the light of truth, they knew their Master's will, they understood every point of our faith, but they had not **corresponding works**. These who were so familiar with prophecy and the treasures of divine wisdom, should have acted their faith. They should have commanded their households after them, that by a well-ordered family they might present to the world the influence of the truth upon the human heart.” Christian Experience and Teaching, p. 189*

*“The law of God, which is perfect holiness, is the only true standard of character. Love is expressed in obedience, and perfect love casteth out all fear. Those who **love God, have the seal of God in their foreheads**, and work the works of God. Would that all who **profess** Christianity knew what it means to love God*

practically. . . They would have some realization of the infinite holiness of God, knowing that He is high and lifted up, and the train of His glory fills the temple. They would have a powerful influence upon the life and character of those around them, which would work as leaven amid the mass of humanity, transforming others through the power of Jesus Christ. Connected with the Source of power, they would never lose their vital influence, but would ever increase in efficiency.” Sons and Daughters of God, p. 51

“The quiet, consistent, godly life is a living epistle, known and read of all men. **Holiness** is not shaped from **without or put on**; it **radiates from within**. If goodness, purity, meekness, lowliness, and integrity dwell in the heart, they will **shine forth in the character**; and such a character is full of power. Not the instrument, but the great Worker in whose hand the instrument is used, receives the glory. The heart filled with the Savior's love, daily receives **grace to impart**. The life reveals the redeeming power of the truth.” In Heavenly Places, p. 237

Is it just possible that we have focused so much on what we should **not do** on the Sabbath that we have forgotten what **we should be doing**. If we love Jesus, we will do what Jesus did on the Sabbath. What did Jesus do on the Sabbath? **Isaiah 58** explains that it a day to shed for the love of Jesus in acts of kindness.

The Issue: The Seal of God and the Mark of the Beast

Am I suggesting that we should be **lax** in our Sabbath observance? Of course not! What I am saying is that our **strict observance** of the Sabbath should flow from the **right motivation**.

At the end, two conflicting days will be **external, visible signs of allegiance**. One is the Seal of God (the observance of the Sabbath) and the other the mark of the beast (the observance of Sunday).

I am not willing to **die for the Sabbath** but I am willing to die for the **Lord of the Sabbath**. There is no better sign of obedience in the end time than this. The two days will be the **token, the visible sign, the avowal or allegiance** to one power of the other. However, we will only be willing to die because we have the **inward relationship** with Jesus. The Sabbath will be the outward sign of inward experience.

*“The image of the beast will be formed before probation closes; for it is to be the great test for the people of God, by which their eternal destiny will be decided. . . This is the test that the people of God must have **before** they are sealed [**contrary to what some in our midst are teaching**]. All who **prove** their loyalty to God by observing His law, and refusing to accept a spurious sabbath, will rank under the banner of the Lord God Jehovah, and **will receive** the seal of the living God. Those who yield the truth of heavenly origin, and accept the Sunday sabbath, will receive the mark of the beast.”* Maranatha, p. 164

*“The time of trouble was upon us. I saw our people in great distress, weeping and praying, pleading the sure promises of God, while the wicked were all around us, mocking us and threatening to destroy us. They **ridiculed** our feebleness, they **mocked** at the smallness of our numbers, and **taunted** us with words calculated to cut deep. They charged us with taking an **independent position** from all the rest of the world. They had cut off our resources so that we could not buy or sell, and they referred to our abject poverty and stricken condition. **They could not see how we could live without the world**. We were dependent on the world and we must concede to the customs, practices, and laws of the world, or **go out of it**. If we were the only people in the world whom the Lord favored, **the appearances** were awfully against us.*

*They declared that they had the truth; that **miracles** were among them; that **angels** from heaven talked with them and walked with them, that great **power and signs and wonders** were performed among them, and that this was the **temporal millennium** they had been expecting so long. The **whole world** was converted and in harmony with the Sunday law, and this **little feeble people***

stood out in defiance of the laws of the land and the law of God, and claimed to be the only ones right on the earth. 2MR, pp. 207, 208

Additional quotations on the deeper meaning of the Sabbath:

"The Israelites placed over their doors a signature of blood, to show that they were God's property. Therefore, the children of God in this age will bear the signature God has appointed. They will place themselves in harmony with God's holy law. A mark is placed upon every one of God's people just as verily as a mark was placed over the doors of the Hebrew dwellings, to preserve the people from the general ruin. God declares, "I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them." Ezekiel 20:12." FLB, p. 287

*"Just as soon as the people of God are sealed in their foreheads,--it is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they **cannot be moved**--just as soon as God's people are sealed and prepared for the shaking, it will come. Indeed, it has begun already; the judgments of God are now upon the land, to give us warning, that we may know what is coming." Manuscript 173, 1902 ("Medical Missionary Work in Southern California," November 20, 1911) (Manuscript Releases, volume 1, pp. 249, 250)*



ANCHOR SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

“Revelation’s Seven Seals: Studies in Revelation 4-8”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #18 - THE PAPACY, THE JESUITS AND THE SABBATH

Revelation 14:6, 7: The final message to the world commands people from all nations to worship the Creator:

*“Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth — to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people ⁷ saying with a loud voice: “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and **worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.**”*

Literal Creation Days

For several reasons, there is no doubt that the days of creation were literal 24-hour days just as we know them today:

- ✓ The **Hebrew lexicons** all understand the days of Genesis 1 as being literal 24-hour days.
- ✓ The **250 times** that the word ‘day’ appears in the Old Testament with a numeral qualifier, in every single instance it refers to a 24-hour day.

- ✓ Each day had an **evening and morning**, a meaningless expression if the days of creation were vast periods of millions of years.
- ✓ **Psalm 33:9** uses the language of **immediacy**: God ‘spoke and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.’
- ✓ The expression ‘**and it was so**’ in the creation story (**verses 7, 11, 15, 24**) does not suggest vast periods.
- ✓ The language of the **fourth commandment** would be absurd if the days were long periods. How could God command man to work six days and rest the seventh as He did at creation, if the days were not literal?
- ✓ The **New Testament writers** understood the story of creation to be literal. So at issue is the integrity and **credibility** of Jesus and the New Testament writers (Matthew 19:4-6; 1 Corinthians 15:45).
- ✓ **Ellen White** was explicit about the literal days of creation week:

*“I was then **carried back** to the creation, and **was shown** that the first week, in which God performed the work of creation in six days and rested on the seventh day, was **just like every other week**. The great God, in his days of creation and day of rest, measured off the first cycle **as a sample** for successive weeks till the close of time.” Spirit of Prophecy, volume 1, p. 85*

*“When the Lord declares that He made the world in six days and rested on the seventh day, He means the day of **twenty-four hours**, which He has marked off by the **rising and setting of the sun**.” Testimonies to Ministers, p. 135*

- ✓ Testimony of creationist scientist **Henry Morris**:

*“The Lord himself had worked six days, then rested on the seventh, setting thereby a **permanent pattern** for the benefit of mankind.” Henry Morris, Biblical Creationism, p. 62*

Ellen White warned about the attempt by theologians to accommodate the biblical evidence to the discoveries of ‘science, so called’:

*“Inferences erroneously drawn from facts observed in nature have, however, led to **supposed conflict** between science and revelation; and in the effort to **restore harmony**, interpretations of Scripture have been adopted that **undermine and destroy the force of the word of God**. Geology has been thought to contradict the literal interpretation of the Mosaic record of the creation. Millions of years, it is claimed, were required for the evolution of the earth from chaos; and in order to **accommodate** the Bible to this supposed revelation of science, the days of creation are **assumed to have been vast, indefinite periods, covering thousands or even millions of years**. Such a conclusion is wholly **uncalled for**. The Bible record is in harmony with itself and with the teaching of nature.” Education, pp. 128, 129*

John Paul II, Francis I

Let us dwell for a few minutes on the **papacy’s concept of creation**. It is a fact that **neither** John Paul II nor Francis I believe that the creation story of Genesis literally occurred **as it is written**. Both of them have gone on the record saying that the creation story **is symbolic**, that the universe came into existence by a **Big Bang** and that this **world has evolved** over the course of **billions of years** through the process of **macroevolution** albeit with the intervention of God at certain critical points in the process.

John Paul in a speech to the **Papal Academy of the Sciences**, referred to evolution as ‘more than a hypothesis’ and argued that the various branches of science have presented ‘a significant argument in favor of the theory’.

*“Today, almost half a century after the publication of the encyclical [Pope Pius XII, Humane Generis, 1950 was very cautious about embracing the theory of evolution], **new knowledge** has led to the recognition of the theory of evolution as **more than a hypothesis**. It is indeed remarkable that this theory has been progressively accepted by researchers, following a series of discoveries in various fields of knowledge. The convergence, neither sought nor fabricated, of the results of work that was conducted independently is in itself **a significant argument in favor of the theory**.”*

Stephen Swanson, staff writer for the *Chicago Tribune* was brutally honest when he wrote that Darwin’s evolution and the biblical record cannot be reconciled:

*“In a major statement of the Roman Catholic Church’s position on the theory of evolution, Pope John Paul II has proclaimed that the theory is ‘**more than just a hypothesis**’ and that **evolution is compatible with Christian faith**. In a written message to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, the pope said the **theory of evolution has been buttressed** by **scientific studies and discoveries** since Charles Darwin. . . **If taken literally**, the Biblical view of the beginning of life and Darwin’s scientific view would seem **irreconcilable**. In Genesis, the creation of the world, and Adam, the first human, took **six days**. Evolution’s process of genetic mutation and natural selection—the survival and proliferation of the fittest new species—has taken **billions of years**, according to scientists. . .”* *Chicago Tribune*, 10/25/96 “Pope Bolsters Church Support for Evolution.” By Stephen Swanson, *Tribune* staff writer.

Pope Francis, who along with John Paul II wants to please the **world of academia**, affirmed that the papacy **endorses the Big Bang** as the origin of the world:

*“The **Big Bang**, which today **we hold** to be the origin of the world, **does not contradict** the intervention of the divine creator but, rather, **requires it** . . . Evolution in nature is **not inconsistent** with the notion of creation, because **evolution requires the creation** of beings that **evolve**. When we read about Creation in Genesis, we run the risk of imagining **God was a magician**, with a magic wand able to do everything **but that is not so** . . . He created human beings and **let them develop** according to the **internal laws** that he gave to each one so they would **reach their fulfillment** . . .”*

According to the Big Bang theory, the evolutionary process of the universe began some **13.8 billion years ago** when a single speck in the universe exploded and the universe began to expand.

The Devastating Implications

These statements by the popes are **troubling** for the following reasons:

- ✓ The foundation of **heterosexual** marriage between a man and a woman is based on a literal reading of the creation story. *“Therefore a **man** shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his **wife**.”*
- ✓ The foundation of **gender identity** as male and female has as its basis the literal reading of the creation story. *“**Male** and **female** He created them.”*
- ✓ The **Sabbath** as a memorial of creation has as its foundation on a **literal reading** of the Genesis account. *“The **seventh day** is the Sabbath of the Lord your God.”*
- ✓ The creation story defines the **distinctive functions** of men and women.
- ✓ Francis I has constantly admonished the **strong to help the weak** and the **rich to help the poor**. However, his counsel does not fit with the **mechanism of**

evolution because evolution functions based on the survival of the fittest or natural selection where the strong prevail and the weak disappear. If this is true, why should the strong help the weak and the rich help the poor?

- ✓ Even more seriously, the papal view of origins destroys the expectation of a soon coming of Jesus. How many more millions of years must we wait for evolution to work out its wrinkles and flaws to reach its Omega Point?

The Character of God

The evolutionary theory mars the beautiful character of God:

- ✓ It is an attack on the omnipotence of God (does not God have the almighty power to create things instantaneously by speaking them into existence?).
- ✓ It is an attack against the omniscience and wisdom of God (Is not God wise enough to create everything perfect from the start without having to use a method of trial and error where there is much suffering and death?).
- ✓ It is the method of the survival of the fittest. The strong prevail and the weak succumb. It is contrary to the biblical principle that the rich should help the poor and the strong the weak. It is a method of trial and error where the process of evolution irons out the glitches. Does this reflect the biblical picture of God? Could not God get it right from the start?

“Evolution presents a bloody, ruthless struggle for existence from the very beginning, where there is much waste of living substance and many false starts and blind alleys.” Here I Stand, p. 277.

Does this sound like the Creator who fed 5,000 and 4,000 with five loaves of bread and two fishes and commanded that nothing be wasted?

- ✓ It is an attack on the **love and mercy** of God (how can a God of love use a method where there is much suffering, cruelty, pain and death? Does this sound like a God who cares for the sparrows and the lilies of the field?). Would a God whose **eye is on the sparrow** use such a **cruel** method to create? (Luke 12:6)
- ✓ It is an attack against the need for a **savior** (if the Genesis account is symbolic then the story of the fall is also symbolic and salvation simply means perfecting through the process of evolution).

The Bible presents an **unbroken chain of events**:

- God created Adam and Eve **perfect** with no inclination to sin.
- Adam and Eve ate from the **literal tree** of knowledge of good and evil and **literally fell into sin**.
- The **infection** of passed from Adam and Eve to all their descendants.
- Death came in and passed to all human beings because of sin.
- Therefore, all humanity needs a **Redeemer** from sin and death.
- If there was death before sin then the **link** between **creation and redemption** is broken.

Roman Catholic theologian **Karl Schmits-Moorman** quoted in **Creation, Catastrophe and Redemption**, p. 112.

*“The notion of the traditional view of redemption as reconciliation and ransom from the consequences of Adam’s fall **is nonsense** for anyone who knows about the evolutionary background to human existence in the modern world. Further, salvation **cannot mean returning to an original** state, but must be conceived as perfecting through the **process of Evolution**.”*

Seventh-day Adventist creationist scientist **Frank L. Marsh** wrote about the devastating implications of an evolutionary beginning:

*"If death and the law of tooth and claw existed long before man, and if man evolved through these 'natural' processes, then there could not have been a **perfect Garden** of Eden nor a **perfect Adam and Eve**. Nor could there have been a **real fall**, in which man became subject to sin. If that is so, what is the theological meaning of Jesus' **incarnation and atonement**? Paul connects the two: 'For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous' (Romans 5:19)*

"If there was no Garden of Eden with its tree of life, what is the future that Revelation 22 depicts for the redeemed?" Frank L. Marsh, quoted in, Here I Stand, pp. 278, 279

The evolutionary theory destroys the biblical hope of a soon second coming of Jesus to restore the earth to its original perfection. If perfecting is through the process of evolution, **how much longer** must we wait until the **process** reaches its climax? **Millions** of years? Billions? How many more million years must we wait for **lamb and wild beasts** living together in harmony? (Isaiah 11:6; 65:25)

If we eliminate a literal beginning, a literal fall, a literal atonement and a literal second coming, what is left? We might as well pack up our Seventh-day Adventist bags and join the ecumenical movement!

Holy Week and the Old Covenant

In spite of the fact that the Bible, without exception, refers to the seventh day Sabbath as God's day of rest, **Popes John Paul II** (in the Apostolic Letter *Dies Domini*) and **Francis I** (in the encyclical *Laudato Si*) have declared that the seventh day Sabbath is **Jewish** and that **Sunday is the Christian Sabbath**. Yet, as

we have seen, the Bible **never refers** to the Sabbath as Jewish. In every single instance, the **Sabbath is God's holy rest day** because he made it holy by his rest.

The papacy claims that the Sabbath is a **relic of the Jewish Old Covenant** and yet it continues a plethora of **Old Covenant** practices such as **sacrifices** on altars, the use of holy **vestments**, the sprinkling holy **water**, the burning **incense**, the lighting **candles**, and the building of **shrines** to the saints. By doing this, the papacy **strains the gnat** and swallows the camel. The papacy enjoins all of these practices that God does not command and yet discards God's explicit command to rest on the Sabbath!

The simple fact is that Sunday cannot be holy because **God did not rest on it!** Jesus rested from creation, redemption and will rest from the new creation on Sabbath! Even more seriously, if Pope Francis does not believe in the literal story of creation (and he does not), then the Sabbath has no foundation.

The Jesuit Strategy

Now we must discuss briefly the Jesuit agenda concerning the Sabbath and we begin with a theory by the philosopher **Hegel**. Hegel theorized that history develops in three stages: Thesis, antithesis and synthesis. The theory as it applies to the papacy works out in the following way:

- **Thesis**: The papacy during the 1260 years.
- **Antithesis**: In the French Revolution, Communism or Secularism arose against the papacy.
- **Synthesis**: Catholicism and Communism join forces.

Conservative Popes

John Paul II and Benedict XVI were popes of a dying breed. They were staunch defenders of papal authority and of the dogmas of the Church. During the conservative pontificates of John Paul II (Benedict was the head of the Office of the Inquisition) and Benedict XVI, the papal talking points focused primarily on marriage between a man and a woman, euthanasia, abortion, LGBT, and doctrinal orthodoxy.

Of course, the political leaders of the world and the secular media including the United Nations frowned upon these causes so the papacy needed to implement a more liberal agenda (see below).

As is well known, John Paul was a deadly enemy of Communism and theologically conservative. John Paul fought tooth and nail against Communism in the Soviet Block and Ronald Reagan did the same in Latin America. This 'holy alliance' would ultimately defeat Communism.

The Papal Shift

At the same time, Post-modernism was eroding the idea that there is such a thing as doctrinal truth. It also denied that truth can be found anywhere outside the subjective experience of each human being. Thus, subjective truth and autonomous authority took the place of objective truth and absolute authority outside of man.

Until recent times, the Roman Catholic Church has taught that its dogmas are absolute truth and the pope is its absolute arbiter. However, at Vatican Council II (1962-1965) things began to change.

The catchword for the Council was *Aggiornamento* that in Latin means 'renewal.' According to conservative Vatican insiders, the Council was a

watershed event that diluted the authority of the pope and the doctrinal orthodoxy of the church. The confirmation of the truthfulness of the insiders' assessment would not take long!

In the 1970's Communism began causing problems in Central America. The Jesuit bishops were not merely Roman Catholics but also Communists. In the **1980'S** the problems intensified as catholic priests embraced **Liberation Theology** and began treating the Pope with **disdain and disrespect**.

The book by the late **Malachi Martin**, *The Jesuits*, published in **1987**, two years before the fall of the **Berlin Wall**, is a real revelation. Martin was a staunchly conservative Jesuit and close friend of Pope John Paul II. He was **aghast** of what the liberal Jesuits were doing to change the power structure of the papacy and **church doctrine**. In his book, he documents in minute detail how **John Paul II** was treated with disdain and disrespect by the **Sandinistas** when he visited **Nicaragua in March of 1983**. He also documents how, beginning with Vatican II, the Jesuit Order has watered down church doctrine and the authority of the pope in order to make it easier to unite with Protestants, world political leaders and scientists.

It is a documented fact that since **the sixties**, the Jesuits have been chipping away at the idea that **church dogma** is set in stone. They also question the idea that the pope is the absolute arbiter of truth. They realize that in order for the papacy to gain the **trust** of the political leaders of the world, it must embrace the **causes that they stand for**.

This is the real reason why Pope Benedict was strong-armed to 'retire' from the papal throne. The papacy **needed a liberal pope** who would not focus on the **orthodoxy of church dogma** or on the authority of the pope but rather on the causes that **pleased the politicians** of the world. Ellen White hit the nail on the head when she compared the papacy to a chameleon:

"It is a part of her policy to assume the character which will best accomplish her purpose; but beneath the variable appearance of the chameleon she conceals the invariable venom of the serpent." (The Great Controversy, p. 571)

Benedict resigned or retired but not on his own free will. The conversation topics needed to change so that the papacy would be more in harmony with the agenda of the United Nations and the world governments because prophecy predicts that the papacy will be able to use the civil powers of the world to accomplish her agenda.

First Jesuit Pope

Francis I is the first Jesuit pope in the history of the Roman Catholic Church. His focus is not on church doctrine or on the authority of the papal chair. He is a Catholic Communist in the style of the Sandinistas of Central America in the 1980's. He has synthesized Catholicism with Socialism. He is a theological liberal and does not care much about Orthodox Church doctrine.

The key item on the papal to do list is to win the trust and confidence of the civil powers of the world (especially the United States) and then advise them to implement its agenda. In order to accomplish this, the papacy has recognized that it must change its traditional talking points.

During the pontificate of Francis I, the first Jesuit pope in history, the traditional social talking points have all but faded from view. The pope rarely mentions church doctrine or the authority of his papal chair. When approached on his view of gay marriage he said, 'who am I to judge?'

His topics of conversation are socialist including climate change, poverty, spreading the wealth of rich nations to poor ones for the common good, and open and free immigration. Political leaders and the United Nations can identify with these causes. The politicians of the world revealed their

enthusiastic approval of the pope's new talking points when the **193 nations** represented gave the pope a **thunderous standing ovation** when he finished his inaugural speech at the seventieth anniversary of the General Assembly of the United Nations in **September of 2015**. Ellen White wrote about the papal strategy of changing its appearance while retaining its basic principles:

"The Roman Church now presents a fair front to the world, covering with apologies her record of horrible cruelties. She has clothed herself in Christ like garments; but she is unchanged. Every principle of the papacy that existed in past ages exists today." GC, p. 571

Arturo Sosa Abascal

The most powerful man in the Vatican is not the pope but rather the Black Pope, the Father Superior of the Jesuit Order. We can see the **shift away** from church dogma (and the Bible) in order to please the contemporary liberal, post-modern mind in an interview of Giuseppe Rusconi with **Father Arturo Sosa Abascal**, the recently elected Superior of the Jesuit Order, the **Black Pope**. Here is a portion of the interview:

Question Rusconi:

Cardinal Gerhard L. Müller the prefect of the congregation for the doctrine of the faith has said with regard to marriage that the words of Jesus are very clear and 'no power in heaven and on earth, neither an angel nor the pope, neither a council nor a law of the bishops has the faculty to modify them.'"

Answer Abascal:

*"So then, there would have to be a lot of reflection on what **Jesus really said**. At that time, no one had **a recorder** to take down his words. What is known is that the words of Jesus must be **contextualized**, they are expressed in a language, in a*

specific setting, they are addressed to someone in particular [they apply only to that time if Jesus even said them].”

Question Rusconi:

“But if all the words of Jesus must be examined and brought back to their historical context, they do not have an absolute value.”

Answer Abascal:

“Over the last century in the Church there has been a great blossoming of studies that seek to understand exactly what Jesus meant to say... That is not relativism, but attests that the word is relative, the Gospel is written by human beings, it is accepted by the Church which is made up of human persons... So it is true that no one can change the word of Jesus, but one must know what it [His word] was!”

About church doctrine, Abascal stated:

*“The Church has developed over the centuries, it is not a piece of reinforced concrete. It was born, it has learned, **it has changed**. This is why the **ecumenical councils** are held, to try to bring developments of doctrine into focus. Doctrine is a word that **I don't like very much**, it brings with it the image of the **hardness of stone**. Instead the human reality is much more **nuanced**, it is never black or white, it is in **continual development**.”*

Abascal is from **Venezuela** and Pope Francis handpicked him. Why did the pope pick someone from an **avowed communist** country where **poverty, disease, hunger, crime, civil unrest** are the rule of the day? Why has not the pope **condemned the abuses** of the communist government in Venezuela? Why has Abascal **remained silent** simply saying that both sides should resolve their problems by dialogue? Simply because the pope and Abascal are both catholic-communists!

Three Talking Points

The pope has three main talking points and all have to do with the observance of Sunday as the day of rest:

- The need to resolve the grave problem of **climate change** by giving the planet a day of rest—Sunday.
- The need for **capitalist overlords** to give their poor workers a day to rest from work—Sunday.
- The need for the **family** to have a day when they can connect with one another and rest from the endless cycle of work—Sunday.

He expressed it this way:

*“On Sunday, our participation in the Eucharist has special importance. **Sunday**, like the **Jewish Sabbath**, is meant to be a day which heals our relationships with **God**, with **ourselves**, with **others** and with the **world**.”*

These causes are certainly praiseworthy. The problem is that he has the wrong day! The Bible tells us that the Sabbath is the day to let the environment rest, the family rest and workers rest! The pope attributes to Sunday all the virtues that the Bible attributes to the Sabbath.

The Final Test

The great final test that will divide the world is **not merely a matter of days** but rather of **authority**. The observance of the Sabbath is a **sign of loyalty and obedience** to the Creator. The observance of Sunday is the sign of **loyalty and obedience to the beast**. Thus, the matter of days will test which authority you will obey. The first angel's message commands us to worship the Creator and the third warns us not to worship

the beast/little horn who attempted to change God's law. Are we **so loyal** to God that we will even be **willing to die** to be faithful to Him?

*"It was the **Catholic Church** which, by the authority of Jesus Christ, has **transferred** this rest to the Sunday in remembrance of the resurrection of our Lord. Thus the observance of Sunday by Protestants is an **homage** they pay, in spite of themselves, to the **authority of the Church**." Monsignor Segur, Plain Talk about the Protestantism of Today (Boston: Thomas B. Noonan & Co., 1868), p. 213.*

*"A word about Sunday. God said: 'Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day!' The Sabbath was Saturday, not Sunday; why, then, do we keep Sunday holy instead of Saturday? The **Church altered** the observance of the Sabbath to the observance of Sunday. . . Protestants who say that they go by the Bible and the Bible only, and that they do not believe anything that is not in the Bible, must be rather puzzled by the keeping of Sunday when God distinctly said, 'Keep holy the Sabbath day.' The word Sunday does not come anywhere in the Bible so, without knowing it, they are **obeying the authority of the Catholic Church**." H. Canon Cafferata, The Catechism Simply Explained (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd., 1938), p. 89*

*"But since Saturday, not Sunday, is specified in the Bible, isn't it curious that non-Catholics who profess to take their religion directly from the Bible and not from the Church, observe Sunday instead of Saturday? Yes, of course, it is inconsistent; but this **change** was made about fifteen centuries before Protestantism was born, and by that time the custom was universally observed. They have continued the custom, even though it rests upon the **authority of the Catholic Church** and not upon an explicit text in the Bible. That observance remains as a reminder of the **Mother Church** from which the non-Catholic sects broke away—like a boy running away from home but still carrying in his pocket a picture of his mother or a lock of her hair." John O'Brien, The Faith of Millions (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1974) pp. 400, 401.*

*"It was the **Holy Catholic Church** that **changed** the day of rest from Saturday to Sunday, the first day of the week. And it not only compelled all to keep Sunday, but urged all persons to labor on the seventh day under pain of anathema. Protestants. . . profess great reverence for the Bible, and yet by their solemn act of keeping Sunday, they **acknowledge the power of the Catholic Church**. The Bible says, 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.' But the **Catholic Church says**, 'NO: Keep the first day of the week' and lo, the entire civilized world **bows down in reverent obedience** to the command of the holy Catholic church." Words of Father Enright, longtime President of Redemptorist College in America, quoted in, Joe Crews, *The Beast, the Dragon and the Woman* (Frederick, Maryland: Amazing Facts, Inc., thirteenth edition, June 1991), p. 33.*



ANCHOR SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

“Revelation’s Seven Seals: Studies in Revelation 4-8”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #19 – LESSONS FROM A FORBIDDEN TREE

Introduction

In this study, we will look at the subject of the Seal of God and the mark of the beast but from a different perspective. As we examine the creation story, we notice that Adam and Eve did not see Jesus create anything. Therefore, they had no **absolute** rational, empirical, scientific or historical **proof** that God was telling them the truth when He told them that He was their creator. Belief in Jesus as the creator was a matter of faith in His word. However, God does not expect us to have blind faith. In matters of belief, there is no such thing as blind faith because faith is sustained by visible evidence.

No Absolute Proof or Demonstration:

- Eve did not have **absolute proof** that God was the Creator.
- She **did not see** God create anything.
- There was no **demonstration** that Jesus was the Creator.

Adam and Eve had Evidence

- Yet Eve had **evidence** that God was her Creator.
- She existed in a **beautiful world**.
- She had a wonderful **husband**.
- Jesus talked with them **face to face**.
- They had fullness of **happiness and joy**.
- She had **plenty of evidence** upon which to base her faith in Jesus as her Creator.

Ellen White has correctly stated:

*“God never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith. His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His word, are all established by testimony that appeals **to our reason**; and this **testimony is abundant**. Yet God has never removed the **possibility of doubt**. Our faith must rest upon **evidence**, not **demonstration**. Those who wish to doubt will have opportunity; while those who really desire to know the truth will find plenty of evidence on which to rest their faith.” Steps to Christ, p. 105*

*“If you refuse to believe until **every shadow of uncertainty** and **every possibility** of doubt is removed you will **never believe**. The doubt that demands **perfect knowledge** will never yield to faith. Faith rests upon **evidence**, not **demonstration** [because if I have demonstration I do not need faith, see Romans 8:24].” Testimonies for the Church, volume 5, p. 69*

Identifying the Creator

According to the Bible, who was the active agent in the creation of the world?

John 1:1-3:

*"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ **All things were made through Him**, and without Him nothing was made that was made."*

Note: If Jesus created all things then He also created the Sabbath. This is why He later explained that 'the Son of Man is the Lord of the Sabbath' (Mark 2:27, 28).

Positive and Negative Command

What **positive command** did Jesus give Adam when he created him?

Genesis 2:15, 16:

*"Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to tend and keep it. ¹⁶ And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of **every tree** of the garden you may freely eat. . ."*

Note: God gave Adam and Eve a **positive command** first. He instructed them that they could partake of all of the trees of the Garden for their **personal** enjoyment.

What **negative command** did God give Adam and Eve concerning one particular tree?

Genesis 2:17:

*"... but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you **shall not eat**, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."*

Location and Choice of the Tree

In what location was the tree that tested the faith and loyalty of Adam and Eve?

Genesis 3:2, 3, NIV:

"The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

Note: The tree that tested the loyalty of Adam and Eve was located in the very middle of the Garden of Eden. The tree was an external test of an internal commitment of Adam and Eve to Jesus.

Who chose the tree from which Adam and Eve were not to eat?

Genesis 2:17:

"... but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

Note: God did not give Adam and Eve the option of choosing the tree from which they could not eat. God chose the specific tree, pointed it out and expected Adam and Eve to abstain from eating its fruit.

The Appearance of the Tree

Read Genesis 2:15-17. Is there any evidence in the text that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was any different than the other trees of the Garden? _____.

Note: There is no evidence that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was any different from the other trees of the Garden. It was not **taller** or **brighter**. Neither did it have a different **type of fruit** than the other trees. What made it different was not its external appearance but the fact that God had set it apart. God identified the tree by **location**, not by appearance.

*“Adam and Eve were permitted to partake of every tree in the garden save one. There was a single prohibition. The forbidden tree was **as attractive and lovely as any of the trees in the garden**. It was called the tree of knowledge because in partaking of that tree of which God had said, “Thou shalt not eat of it,” they would have a knowledge of sin, an experience in disobedience.” Confrontation, p. 12*

The Owner of the Tree

To whom did all the trees of the Garden belong?

Psalm 24:1, 2:

*“The earth is **the Lord's**, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein. ² For He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the waters”*

Note: All the trees of the Garden were God’s property because He created them. However, the tree of knowledge was in a **special category**—it belonged to God **exclusively** in a **special sense**. Even though the other trees of the Garden also belonged to God, He permitted man to use them for his own personal pleasure. However, this particular tree was not for man’s use. It was off limits.

How much of the tree belonged to God? Could man eat just a little piece of the fruit?

Rejecting God as Creator

What did Satan tell Eve that she and her husband would become if they ate from the tree?

Genesis 3:4, 5:

"Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Satan's Alternative Explanation

- Eve strayed from her husband's side.
- Eve asked herself why God forbade eating from this one tree.
- Perhaps she asked herself whether Jesus really created them.
- After all, did they actually see Him create anything?
- She asked herself if there might be an alternative explanation of their existence.

Satan's Logic

- Satan used four methods to deceive Eve: a counterfeit miracle, a distortion of the Word, an appellation to Eve's senses, and by far the most specious was His attempt to get Eve to put her unaided reason in place of the Word of God.
- Genesis 3:1-4 explains that Satan offered an alternative explanation of God's prohibition that superficially made rational sense.

Eve's only safety was to have a **settled faith** and trust in the Word of God, period. "God said it, and I believe it, and that settles it for me."

Note: The purpose of the tree was to test Adam and Eve's faith in the LORD, to see if they were willing to recognize Him as their Creator and the only true God. In his temptation, Satan was not telling Eve that she and Adam would be **little** gods if they ate from the tree. He was actually insinuating that at some time in the past God had eaten from the tree and had become God and he assured Eve that if she ate she would be God as well. The Hebrew word for "gods" in Genesis 3:5 is *Elohim*. This is the identical word which is translated "God" in Genesis 1:1. Satan unabashedly attacked God as the Creator. He was not telling Eve that she would be a little God but rather that she would be on a level of equality with God. Satan knew that the only way he could get Adam and Eve to dishonor their Creator was by getting them to partake of the one tree that God had reserved for Himself.

Satan Deceived Eve

What **excuse** did Eve give to God for eating from the tree of knowledge?

Genesis 3:13:

"And the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Note: The word "beguile" is an old English word that means to "deceive". We must say three things about the genuine and the counterfeit:

1. In order to be deceptive, the counterfeit must appear as close as possible to the genuine.
2. The counterfeit comes after the genuine in time.
3. The only way to detect the counterfeit is to compare it to the genuine.

Penalty for Transgression

What was the penalty for eating from the tree of knowledge?

Genesis 2:17:

"... but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

The Test for Today

Do we have any absolute empirical **proof** today that God created the world?

Hebrews 11:3:

*"**By faith** we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible."*

Note: Today we do not have any greater empirical, rational, historical or scientific **proof** that God was the Creator than did Adam and Eve. After all, there are many other plausible explanations for the origin of the world—the big bang, spontaneous generation, intelligent design, progressive creation, punctuated equilibrium, etc. The fact is that we can only be certain that God was the Creator because the Word of God says so. We must accept this fact by faith although there is abundant evidence to bolster our faith.

Positive and Negative Command

What positive command did God give in the fourth commandment?

Exodus 20:8-9:

*“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. **Six days** you shall labor and do all your work...”*

Note: God specified that all the trees of the Garden were for man’s personal use. Similarly, He has specified that the **first six days** of the week are for our own personal use as well.

What negative command did God give in the Fourth Commandment?

Exodus 20:10:

*“... but the seventh day is the **Sabbath of the Lord** your God. In it you shall do no work: You, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates.”*

Note: As God reserved one tree **exclusively** for Himself, the fourth commandment underlines the fact that He has reserved **the seventh day** of the week for Himself. The Bible tells us that the Sabbath was **God’s rest day** before it became the rest day for man. This is why God calls it ‘My holy day’ (Isaiah 58:13). That is to say, the Sabbath belongs to God; it is His property.

The Test in the Middle

Where do you think the fourth commandment is located in the Law of God?

Note: The tree of knowledge that tested the faith of Adam and Eve was located in **the middle** of the Garden. Likewise, the Sabbath commandment is in the very center of God's law. **Archeological discoveries** at Ugarit unmistakably reveal that ancient law codes had the seal in the middle of the tablet. The seal always contained **three elements**:

- The **name** of the lawgiver.
- The official function or office of the lawgiver.
- The **jurisdictional territory** over which the official governs.

Of all the Ten Commandments, only the fourth contains these three elements.

- His name is 'the LORD your God'.
- His title or office is Creator.
- His jurisdictional territory is heaven, earth, the seas and the fountains of waters.

According to God Himself, what is His covenant?

Deuteronomy 4:13:

"So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone."

On how many sides of the tablets did God write the Ten Commandments?

Exodus 32:15, 16:

"And Moses turned and went down from the mountain, and the two tablets of the Testimony were in his hand. The tablets were written on both sides; on the one

side and on the other they were written. ¹⁶ Now the tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God engraved on the tablets.”

Note: Clay tablets have been unearthed in the city of Ugarit in Canaan (see the copies at the end of this lesson). These tablets contain covenants between greater and lesser kings. The tablets contains writing on both sides and in the middle of one side is the authentic seal of the lawgiver. The seal of authenticity in the middle of the tablet contains the name, the title and jurisdictional territory of the law-giving king. One is reminded that the Ten Commandments are the covenant between God and His people (Deuteronomy 4:13) and the tables were written on both sides (Exodus 32:15, 16). One would therefore expect God’s seal to be in the very center of the Ten Commandments and it is. The fourth commandment is the only one that identifies the name of the lawgiver, his function or office and his jurisdictional territory.

God’s Choice

Who chose the seventh day Sabbath as the specific day of rest?

Exodus 16:29:

*“See! For the **Lord has given you the Sabbath**; therefore He gives you on the sixth day bread for two days. Let every man remain in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.”*

Note: God chose the tree from which Adam and Eve were not to eat. In like manner, God established the seventh day at creation as His day of rest. God has not given man the option of choosing on which day he will abstain from work. The fourth commandment does not say, “Remember to keep one day in seven” or “remember to keep every seventh day” or “remember to rest” or ‘take time to rest’. God chose a specific day: “The **seventh day** is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God.”

All the days belong to God but the Sabbath day belongs to God in a special way. It is God's **exclusive property**, it is holy and we are not to use it for ourselves. The same principle applies to the Sabbath as applies to the tithe. Some people affirm: "I believe that all the days are God's days" and they are right but this does not mean that all days are holy. All our money also belongs to God because God says 'mine is the silver and mine is the gold' (Haggai 2:8). However, this does not mean that all our money is holy. God did not say that all days are holy. There is only one day that God identified as holy, the Sabbath! The stories of **Nadab and Abihu** and **Belshazzar** teach us that it is dangerous indeed to treat the holy as common and the common as holy. Ellen White is right on target when she wrote:

*"When God says, keep the seventh day, he does not mean the sixth, nor the first, but the **very day** he has specified. If men substitute a **common day for the sacred**, and say that will do just as well, they **insult** the Maker of the heavens and of the earth, who made the Sabbath to commemorate His resting upon the seventh day, after creating the world in six days. It is **dangerous business** in the service of God to deviate from His institutions. Those who have to do with God, who is infinite, who explicitly directs in regard to His own worship, should follow the **exact course** He has prescribed, and not feel at liberty to deviate in the **smallest respect**, because they think it will answer **just as well**. God will teach all His creatures that He **means just what He says**." *Spiritual Gifts*, volume 4A, pp. 14-15*

The Sabbath and Astronomy

Thought Question: Is there any astronomical reason for a seven-day week? _____.

Note: There is an astronomical explanation for **the year** (it takes our planet 365 days to make one complete turn around the sun). There is an astronomical explanation for **the month** (it is the interval between one new moon and

another). There is an astronomical explanation for **the day** (it is the amount of time it takes our planet to make one complete revolution on its axis). However, there is no astronomical explanation for a **seven-day week**. The only reason we have a seven-day week is that God made it so at creation.

*“The first week, in which God performed the work of creation in six days and rested on the seventh day, was **just like every other week**. The great God, in his days of creation and day of rest, **measured off** the first cycle as a sample for **successive weeks till the close of time** . . . The weekly cycle of seven literal days, six for labor and the seventh for rest, which has been **preserved** and brought down through Bible history, originated in the great facts of the first seven days.”*
ST, March 20, 1879

Thought Question: Is the Sabbath in its external appearance any different from any other day?

Note: The tree of knowledge looked just like any other tree in its external appearance. On the surface, the Sabbath looks just like any other day. It has **24 hours**, the **sun rises and sets** on it just like any other day of the week and it is a **single digit** on the calendar. We get up and go to bed on the Sabbath the same as on any other day. What sets the Sabbath apart is not its **external appearance** but the fact that God has reserved it for himself.

A Sign of Loyalty

What great fact does the Sabbath memorialize?

Exodus 20:11:

“For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and sanctified it.”

Note: The Sabbath is a memorial of the Creator and by observing it, we are recognizing the fact that He alone is God and we are his creatures. If we remember, the tree of knowledge in the Garden also tested man's willingness to accept God's sovereignty as the only true Creator God.

When we keep the Sabbath, whom are we recognizing as the only true God?

Ezekiel 20:20:

'... hallow My Sabbaths, and they will be a sign between Me and you, that you may know that I am the Lord your God.'

Note: As abstaining from the tree of knowledge was an **external sign of loyalty**, so abstaining from our own secular affairs on the Sabbath is an external sign of our **loyalty to the true God**.

The Entire Day

How many hours of the Sabbath belong to God?

Leviticus 23:32:

*"It shall be to you a Sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict your souls; on the ninth day of the month at evening, **from evening to evening**, you shall celebrate your Sabbath."*

Mark 1:32:

*"At **evening**, when the **sun had set**, they brought to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed."*

Note: We must keep the Sabbath from evening to evening, that is, from sundown to sundown. The evening and morning marked each day of creation. The entire 24-hour period belongs to God. Not one little itsy bitsy second can be used for our own secular affairs (Isaiah 58:12, 13). The Commandment forbids going out to eat in a restaurant, playing ball, sleeping all afternoon, watching television, shopping in the mall, etc. If we love Jesus, it will be our great pleasure leave aside all our common endeavors to concentrate only on Him on the Sabbath. It will be a delight and we will not desire to do anything else other than enhance our relationship with Him. We will not do as Israel was doing in the days of Hosea when they were longing for the Sabbath to be over so that they could carry on their own secular business (see Amos 8:5). Ellen White well remarks:

*“A **partial observance** of the Sabbath is not accepted by the Lord and has a worse effect upon the minds of sinners than if you made no profession of being a Sabbath keeper. They perceive that your life contradicts your belief, and lose faith in Christianity. The Lord means what He says.” 4T, p. 248*

*“It is as ruthless a violation of the law to **occasionally** use the Sabbath for secular business as to entirely reject it; for it is making the Lord’s commandment a matter of **convenience**.” 4T, p. 249*

*“Many excuse themselves for violating the Sabbath by referring to your example. They argue that if so good a man, who believes the seventh day is the Sabbath, can engage in worldly employments on that day when **circumstances seem to require it**, surely they can do the same without condemnation. Many souls will face you in the judgment, making your influence an excuse for their disobedience of God’s law. Although this will be no apology for their sin, yet it will tell fearfully against you.” 4T, p. 250*

*“We should jealously **guard the edges** of the Sabbath. Remember that **every moment** is consecrated, holy time. Whenever it is possible, employers should give their workers the hours from Friday noon until the beginning of the Sabbath. Give*

them time for preparation that they may welcome the Lord's Day with quietness of mind. By such a course you will suffer no loss even in temporal things." 6T, p. 356

Satan's Hatred of the Sabbath

What great aspirations did Lucifer have in heaven that led to his downfall?

Isaiah 14:14:

"I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High."

Note: There can be no doubt that Satan hates the Sabbath because it reveals the absolute distinction between the Creator and the creature. At the beginning, Lucifer (later called Satan) wanted to be God (Isaiah 14:12-14) which is a preposterous idea for a mere creature. Satan's hatred for the Sabbath stems from the fact that it identifies the true Creator whose position he wanted to usurp. We can discern Satan's hatred for the Sabbath by the way he led Israel to persistently violate it in the Old Testament, by the way in which the religious leaders of Christ's day distorted its meaning and by the way Christians disdain and attack it today.

Genuine and Counterfeit

Which genuine day of worship did God create at the beginning?

Genesis 2:3:

"Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made."

Note: Satan has a counterfeit for each one of God's truths. It is important to remember that the counterfeit in most cases comes after the genuine in time and the counterfeit deceives because it is so similar to the genuine. God's genuine day of worship at the very beginning was the seventh day Sabbath. Would we then expect a counterfeit day of worship later on in history? Would it be a day that purportedly honors God? Yes to both questions! However, in order to be deceptive, it would have to be a day that supposedly honors God. Which day of worship has the Christian world embraced that seemingly honors God? The answer is unmistakable: Sunday.

Thought Question: Is the Sabbath really better than any other day? What is the true issue involved in keeping the exact day that God has specified?

Note: The Sabbath is not better than any other day, per se. The central issue in the Sabbath/Sunday controversy is not whether one day is better than the other. The central issue is whose authority do we obey? By keeping the Sabbath, we are recognizing the authority of the One who established it. On the other hand, by keeping Sunday we are recognizing (perhaps inadvertently) the authority of the power that made it a day of worship—the Roman Catholic Papacy.

The Penalty

What was the penalty for violating the Sabbath?

Exodus 31:15:

“Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death.”

Note: At the beginning, Satan seemed to say to Eve, “Do you really think that would pronounce the death penalty just for eating a piece of fruit? Common’ be real!” If God threatened to kill Moses for not circumcising his son, how serious would he consider breaking the Sabbath? Would God be any less particular if people considered the observance of the Sabbath optional?

Some people argue that because we do not execute those who break the Sabbath today the Sabbath is no longer binding upon Christians. However, this logic ignores the fact that adulterers in the Old Testament suffered execution. Is adultery all right today because we do not execute people for it? The fact is that knowingly trampling upon the Sabbath does not presently lead to death today, but willfully trampling upon it will eventually lead to second death at the end of time.

Notice the following remarkable statement from the devotional book, Our High Calling:

*“As the **tree of knowledge** was placed in the midst of the Garden of Eden, **so the Sabbath command** is placed in **the midst** of the Decalogue. In regard to the **fruit of the tree** of knowledge, the restriction was made, “Ye shall not eat of it . . . lest ye die.” Gen. 3:3. **Of the Sabbath** God said: Ye shall not defile it, but keep it holy. “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.” Ex. 20:8. As the tree of knowledge was the **test of Adam's obedience**, so the **fourth command is the test** that God has given to prove the loyalty of all His people.” Our High Calling, p. 343.*

The Sabbath for Spiritual Jews

According to the apostle Paul, who is the seed of Abraham today?

Galatians 3:29:

“And if you are _____, then are you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.”

The Final Test

Thought Questions: What were the two issues in the story of Daniel 3? (Hint: Notice the number of times the word “worship” appears in the chapter). Is God’s law also involved in this story? Which of the two tables of the law was especially at stake?

What will be the great issue in the final conflict on earth?

Revelation 13:15:

*“He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not **worship** the image of the beast to be killed.”*

Revelation 14:9-11 brings to view those who will receive the mark of the beast. What characterizes the followers of God in the next verse?

Revelation 14:12:

*“Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that **keep the commandments** of God, and the faith of Jesus.”*

Why will Satan hate the final remnant of Jesus?

Revelation 12:17:

*“And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who **keep the commandments** of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”*

On the Right Hand or in the Forehead

In what two places will the unsaved receive the mark of the beast?

Revelation 13:16:

"He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads. . ."

What was placed upon the foreheads and the hands of Israel in the Old Testament?

Deuteronomy 6:6-8:

*"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. ⁸ You shall bind them as a **sign on your hand**, and they shall be as **frontlets between your eyes**. ⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."*

Where did God promise to write His holy law?

Hebrews 8:10:

*"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws **in their mind** and write them **on their hearts**; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."*

What will God's people receive in contrast to the mark of the beast?

Revelation 7:1, 2:

*"After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. ² Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having **the seal of the living God**. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, ³ saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads."*

To which commandment does the first angel's message draw our attention (Hint: Read Exodus 20:8-11)?

Revelation 14:6, 7:

"Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth — to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people — ⁷ saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water."

Does the Sabbath commandment have anything to do with worship?

Isaiah 66:22, 23:

*"For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and **from one Sabbath to another**, shall all flesh **come to worship** before me, saith the LORD."*

The Importance of the Sabbath

*“Instead of the people of God becoming less and less definitely distinguished from those who do not keep the Seventh day Sabbath, they are to make the observance of the Sabbath **so prominent** that the world cannot fail to recognize them as Seventh-day Adventists.” Evangelism, p. 233*

*“There is to be **no compromise** with those who are worshiping an **idol sabbath**. We are not to spend our time in controversy with those who **know the truth**, and upon whom the light of truth has been shining, when they **turn away their ear** from the truth to turn to fables. I was told that men will employ every policy to make **less prominent** the difference between the faith of Seventh-day Adventists and those who observe the first day of the week. The **whole world** will be involved in this controversy, and the time is short. This is no time to haul down our colors.” 2SM, p. 385*

*“A company was presented before me **under the name of Seventh-day Adventists**, who were advising that the banner or sign which makes us a **distinctive people** should not be held out so strikingly; for they claimed it was not the best policy in securing success to our institutions. This **distinctive banner** is to be borne through the world to the close of probation. In describing the remnant people of God, John says, “Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12). This is the law and the gospel. The world and the churches are uniting in harmony in transgressing the law of God, in tearing away God's memorial, and in exalting a sabbath that bears the signature of the man of sin. However, the Sabbath of the Lord thy God is to be a sign **to show the difference** between the obedient and the disobedient. I saw some reaching out their hands to remove the banner and to obscure its significance. . . .” 2SM, p. 385*

*“Our people have been regarded as **too insignificant** to be worthy of notice, but **a change will come**; the movements are now being made. The Christian world is now making movements that will necessarily bring the commandment-keeping*

people **to notice**. There is a daily suppression of God's truth for the theories and false doctrines of human origin. There are plans and movements being set on foot to **enslave the consciences** of those who would be loyal to God. **The law-making powers** will be against God's people. Every soul will be tested. O that we would as a people be wise for ourselves and by precept and example impart that wisdom to our children! Every position of our faith will be searched into, and if we are not **thorough Bible students**, established, strengthened, settled, the **wisdom of the world's great men** will be too much for us." 2SM, p. 386



ANCHOR SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

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by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #20 – THE IDOL SABBATH

‘Abomination’ in the Bible refers to idolatry

Read Deuteronomy 7:25-26; 27:15; I Kings 11:5-7; Ezekiel 8:14-16, Ezekiel 9:1-6, and Jeremiah 17:24-17.

Quotations from the writings of Ellen G. White:

“The Sabbath question is one that will demand great care and wisdom in its presentation. Much of the grace and power of God will be needed to cast down the idol that has been erected in the shape of a false sabbath.” 9T, p. 211

“Satan has taken the world captive. He has introduced an idol sabbath, apparently giving to it great importance. He has stolen the homage of the Christian world away from the Sabbath of the Lord for this idol sabbath. The world bows to a tradition, a man-made commandment. As Nebuchadnezzar set up his golden image on the plain of Dura, and so exalted himself, so Satan exalts himself in this false sabbath, for which he has stolen the livery of heaven.” RH, March 8, 1898

*"Like Cain, men are today violating a plain "Thus saith the Lord." God has sanctified and blessed the seventh day, requiring all men to keep it sacred as His memorial of creation. But, inspired by the arch-deceiver, man has set up a rival rest day, which God regards as He did the offering of Cain. Like Cain, those **who worship this idol** are offended because God's chosen people will not reject the day specified in His law as holy, to keep a rest day of man's creation. **They try to force their fellow-men to worship this idol**. Thus did Nebuchadnezzar, when he set up a golden image in the plains of Dura, and in his pride and self-exaltation sought to **compel all to bow down to it**. As Cain set aside God's holy command, and offered a sacrifice of his own choice, so men have set aside God's holy Sabbath, and have exalted one of their **own creation**. And as Cain was filled with bitterness against Abel, so they are filled with bitterness against those who by keeping God's Sabbath cast reflections upon the worship of a day which bears no divine sanction or appointment.*

"Thus it has been, and thus it will be till the end of time. Sin is Satan's attribute, and it is always leagued against good. The spirit of Cain is manifest in all false religions. Satan's work is to condemn and destroy, to take away man's liberty and destroy his life. Transgression always leads men to act as Satan's agents, to carry out his purposes against God and righteousness." ST, March 21, 1900

*"But this day so universally exalted is a spurious sabbath, a **common working-day**. It is accepted in the place of the day that the Lord has blessed and sanctified; but the sure result of this course may be seen in the punishment which fell upon **Nadab and Abihu**, the sons of Aaron." RH, December 20, 1898.*

*"The Protestant world have set up an **idol sabbath** in the place where God's Sabbath should be, and they are treading in the footsteps of the Papacy." Letter 90, 1897*

*"Sunday keeping is not yet the mark of the beast, and will not be until the decree goes forth causing men to worship this **idol sabbath**." FLB, p. 286*

*"Those who live during the last days of this earth's history will know what it means to be persecuted for the truth's sake. In the courts injustice will prevail. The judges will refuse to listen to the reasons of those who are loyal to the commandments of God because they know the arguments in favor of the fourth commandment are unanswerable. They will say, "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die." God's law is nothing to them. "Our law" with them is supreme. Those who respect this human law will be favored, but those who will not bow to the **idol sabbath** have no favors shown them." ST, May 26, 1898*

*"Not a move has been made in exalting the **idol sabbath**, in bringing around Sunday observance through legislation, but Satan has been behind it, and has been the chief worker; but the conscience should not be compelled even for the observance of the genuine Sabbath, for God will accept only willing service." RH, April 15, 1890*

*"Among professed Christians there are **idolaters**, men and women who are not sealed by God. Many have subverted the Christian faith into **idolatry**, giving to a manmade institution the glory and honor that God requires for His Sabbath day, and compelling others to **worship this idol**. Such ones will surely be visited with God's retributive judgments, which are to be poured out without mixture of mercy upon the unrepentant despisers of God's law." 19MR, p. 244*

*"In preaching the truth, it is not always best to present those strong points of truth that will arouse prejudice, especially where such strong feelings exist as are felt in the Southern States. The Sabbath must be taught in a decided manner, but be cautious how you deal with **the idol, Sunday**. 'A word to the wise is sufficient.'" Spaulding Magan Collection, p. 22.*

Someone might object: It is not the same thing to worship the sun, as it is to worship on Sunday. However, a closer look reveals that in principle they are the same. When someone presents this objection, I ask three questions:

- Who created the sun? The answer will be: "God"

- Did he create it for worship? The answer will be: “No”
- If we make the sun an **object** of worship, what do we call that? The answer will be “Idolatry” because anything that we make for worship that God has not created for worship is idolatry.

Then ask three follow-up questions:

- Who created Sunday, the first day of the week? The answer will be “God”
- Did he create the sun for worship? The answer will be “No”
- If we make Sunday a day of worship, what do we call that? The answer will not come out as quickly!

It does not really matter whether we worship God through a manmade idolatrous object or we worship God on a manmade idolatrous day. Man created both for worship.



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LESSON #21 – THE SEAL OF THE LIVING GOD

Seventh-day Adventists are not the only ones who keep the seventh day Sabbath. There are Seventh-day Baptists, Orthodox Jews, and Messianic Jews who keep the Sabbath. Various offshoots from the Worldwide Church of God and several Pentecostal churches keep the Sabbath as well.

However, the Seventh-day Adventist theology of the Sabbath is **unique**. Ellen White once wrote about an Adventist evangelist in Wisconsin who was teaching the Sabbath without its distinctive character:

*“As far as the Sabbath is concerned, he occupies the same position as the **Seventh Day Baptists** [they use the same arguments as SDA’S do]. Separate the Sabbath from **the messages**, and it loses its power; but when connected with the **message of the third angel**, a power attends it which convicts unbelievers and infidels, and **brings them out** with strength to stand, to live, grow, and flourish in the Lord.”*
Testimonies for the Church, volume 1, p. 337

Ellen White wrote that the observance of the Sabbath will be the separating wall between the faithful and the unfaithful in the final conflict and that in the end time God’s people will proclaim it more fully:

*"I saw that the holy Sabbath is, and will be, the **separating wall** between the **true Israel of God** and unbelievers; and that the Sabbath is the **great question** to unite the hearts of God's dear, waiting saints.*

*"I saw that God had children who do not see and keep the Sabbath. They have not rejected the light upon it. And at the commencement of the time of trouble, we were filled with the Holy Ghost as we went forth and **proclaimed the Sabbath more fully**. This **enraged the churches and nominal Adventists**, as they could not refute the Sabbath truth. And at this time God's chosen all saw clearly that we had the truth, and **they came out** and endured the persecution with us. I saw the sword, famine, pestilence, and great confusion in the land. The wicked thought that we had brought the judgments upon them, and they rose up and took counsel **to rid the earth of us**, thinking that then the evil would be stayed." *EW*, pp. 33, 34*

Why our View is Distinctive and Unique

- The Sabbath is not **simply** one of the Ten Commandments. It is the seal of God and will be the **final test** that will divide the world into **two groups**.
- Seventh-day Adventist believe that the Sabbath is not merely a day to go to church but rather a day to suspend all our secular activities from sundown Friday to Sundown Saturday.
- Jesus entered the Most Holy Place in 1844, and all who enter by faith with Him will keep the Sabbath because the Sabbath is in the Law and the Law is in the Most Holy Place.
- The presence of the Manna inside the Ark of the Covenant highlights its importance (see Exodus 16; Hebrews 9:1-3).

Three concentric circles

- The final conflict will be regarding the **Ten Commandments**.
- The final conflict will relate to the **first four** commandments.
- The final conflict will be over the observance of **the Sabbath**.

The Final Conflict will be over the Ten Commandments

Revelation 12:17: Satan **hates** the **commandments** of God

*“And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who **keep the commandments of God** and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”*

Revelation 14:1: At the very end of time, God’s people will have a seal of God **on their foreheads**:

*“Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father’s name written **on their foreheads**.”*

Jeremiah 31:33; **Hebrews 8:7-13**: God writes His Law in the minds and hearts of Christians under the **New Covenant**:

*“But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their **minds**, and write it on their **hearts**; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”*

Isaiah 8:16: God **seals His law** among His disciples:

“Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.”

2 Timothy 2:19: Those who have God's seal depart from iniquity or lawlessness. The Law distinguishes between what is good and what is evil (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

*"Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having **this seal**: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ **depart from iniquity**."*

Note: The New Testament uses words *adikía* and *anomías* interchangeably. 1 John 3:4 translates the word *anomías* as 'transgression of the law.' Therefore, those who have the seal of God depart from the transgression of God's Law.

Matthew 7:23:

"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness [anomías]!'"

Luke 13:27:

"But He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity [adikía].'"

Matthew 24:12:

*"And because **lawlessness** will abound, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³ But he who endures to the end shall be saved."*

Revelation 14:9-11 Revelation 14:12 **contrasts** those who worship the beast and receive the mark with those who keep the commandments of God:

*"Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and **receives his mark on his forehead** or on his hand,*

*10 he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. 11 And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives **the mark of his name.**"*

*"Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who **keep the commandments** of God and the faith of Jesus."*

The Final Conflict will Center on the First Table of the Law

Deuteronomy 6:4: The **central focus** of this verse is on the first four commandments. Then, in verses 5-9 God commands Israel to write them on the **forehead** and the **hand**:

*"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! 5 You shall **love the Lord your God** with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. 6 "And these words which I command you today shall be **in your heart**. 7 You shall **teach** them diligently to your children, and shall **talk** of them when you **sit** in your house, when you **walk** by the way, when you **lie down**, and when you **rise up**. 8 You shall bind them as a **sign on your hand**, and they shall be as **frontlets between your eyes**. 9 You shall write them on the **doorposts** of your house and on your **gates**."*

The issue in the end time centers on **worship** (Daniel 3 [11 times]; Revelation 13:8, 12, 15; 14:11; 14:7) and the core of the **first four** commandments is worship. The **last six** commandments do not define worship but rather deal with **horizontal** relationships between fellow human beings.

Revelation 13 describes false worship to the beast and his image. In contrast, **Revelation 14:6, 7** calls upon the world to **worship God, the Creator**.

- The world will worship the beast **as if he were God** [first commandment] (Revelation 13:4).
- The entire world will worship the **image** of the beast [second commandment] (Revelation 13:14).
- The beast will blaspheme **God's name** [third commandment] (Revelation 13:6).
- The beast will attack **the Creator** [fourth commandment] (Revelation 14:7 with 14:9).

The Final Conflict will Center on the Fourth Commandment

Testimony of Scripture:

Point #1: We worship God because **He is our Creator**:

Psalm 95:1-6:

*"Oh come, let us sing to the Lord! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation.
² Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms. ³ For the Lord is the great God, and the great King above all gods. ⁴ In His hand are the deep places of the earth; the heights of the hills are His also. ⁵ The sea is His, for He made it; and His hands formed the dry land. ⁶ Oh come, let us **worship** and **bow down**; let us **kneel** before the Lord our Maker."*

Nehemiah 9:6:

*"You alone are the Lord; You have **made** heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and everything on it, the seas and all that is in them, and You **preserve** them all. The host of heaven **worships** You."*

Revelation 14:6, 7: The first angel commands us to worship the Creator and strongly alludes to the **Sabbath commandment** in Exodus 20:8-11.

"Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—⁷ saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water."

Isaiah 66:22, 23: When God creates a new heaven and a new earth all flesh will come to worship Him on the Sabbath:

*"For as the **new heavens** and the **new earth** which I **will make** shall remain before Me," says the Lord, "So shall your descendants and your name remain. ²³ And it shall come to pass that from one **New Moon** to another [see Revelation 22:3], and from one **Sabbath to another**, **all flesh** shall come to **worship** before Me," says the Lord.*

Point #2: We worship God because He is the **Creator** and the **sign** of the Creator is the Sabbath.

As we read the conclusion of the creation story, we find something very unusual—God finished His work **twice**. Notice Genesis 1:31-2:3:

Genesis 1:31-2:2-3

*"Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good, so the evening and the morning were the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were **finished [kalah]**. ² And on the seventh day, God **ended [kalah]** His work that He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work that He had done. ³ Then God blessed the seventh day and **sanctified it, because** in it He **rested** from all His work which God had created and made."*

You might ask how someone can finish something twice. Perhaps an illustration will help us understand.

Let us imagine an artist painting a beautiful nature scene. The first day the artist prepares the frame, staples the canvass to the frame and adds some background colors. At the end of the first day, the artist steps back, looks at his work and says to himself, 'it is good'. The second day the artist paints a blue sky with some fluffy clouds and at the end of the second day, he looks at his work and says 'it is good'. The third day the artist paints some beautiful green grass, trees and flowers; at the end of the day, the artist steps back and says 'it is good'. The fourth day the artist paints a radiant sun and an opaque moon in the sky and at the end of the day steps back and says to himself 'it is good'. On the fifth day of work the artist paints some birds sailing through the air and some fish leaping out of a beautiful lake and at the end of the day steps back and says, 'it is good'. On the sixth day, the artist paints all kinds of land animals and a man and a woman standing in the midst of the glorious nature scene. The artist then puts the **finishing touches** on the canvass, steps back and says 'it is very good'.

Has the artist finished his work? Yes and no! The work of art is finished but there is one thing lacking—the signature of the person who painted it. Without the signature, anyone can claim the masterpiece. Likewise, God finished His work of art on the sixth day and on the seventh, he put His signature on His work. It would be forgery for someone to replace the name of God with his own!

Exodus 31:16, 17 (notice who is Israel today in Galatians 3:29)

*"Therefore the **children of Israel** [notice that the 144,000 are children of Israel, Revelation 7:4] shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a **perpetual covenant**.¹⁷ It is a **sign** between Me and the **children of Israel forever**; for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day **He rested** and was refreshed."*

Ezekiel 20:12, 20:

*"Moreover I also gave them **My** Sabbaths, to be a **sign** between **them and Me**, that they might know that I am the Lord who **sanctifies them**. . . hallow My Sabbaths, and they will be a **sign** between **Me and you**, that you may know that **I am the Lord your God**."*

Romans 4:11 - NIV: The words 'sign' and 'seal' are used interchangeably:

*"And he received the **[visible] sign** of circumcision, a **[visible] seal** of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them."*

A Contrary Sign

Ezekiel 8:16-18: The greatest of all abominations **in Jerusalem** was **sun worship**:

*"So He brought me into the inner court of the Lord's house; and there, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about **twenty-five men** with their **backs toward the temple** of the Lord **[thus they turned their backs on the Lord]** and their **faces toward the east**, and they were **worshiping the sun toward the east**.¹⁷ And He said to me, "Have you seen this, O son of man? Is it a trivial thing to the house of Judah to commit the **abominations** which they commit here? For they have filled the land with violence; then they have returned to provoke Me to anger. Indeed they put the branch to their nose.¹⁸ Therefore I also will **act in fury**. My eye will not spare nor will I have pity; and though they cry in My ears with a loud voice, **I will not hear them**."*

Ezekiel 9:1-6: God placed a **protective seal** on the **foreheads** of those who **sighed and cried** because of the abominations of Jerusalem:

*"Then He called out in my hearing with a loud voice, saying, "Let those who have charge over the city draw near, each with a **deadly weapon** in his hand." ² And suddenly six men came from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north, each with his battle-ax in his hand. One man among them was clothed with linen and had a **writer's inkhorn** at his side. They went in and stood beside the bronze altar. ³ Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub, where it had been, to the threshold of the temple. And He called to the **man clothed with linen**, who had the writer's inkhorn at his side; ⁴ and the Lord said to him, "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and **put a mark on the foreheads** of the men who **sigh and cry** over all the abominations that are done within it." ⁵ To the others He said in my hearing, "Go **after him** through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare, **nor have any pity**. ⁶ Utterly slay old and young men, maidens and little children and women; but **do not come near anyone on whom is the mark**; and begin **at My sanctuary**." So they began **with the elders** who were before the temple."*

Jeremiah 17:24, 25, 27: God destroyed Jerusalem because the **Sabbath was desecrated**:

*"And it shall be, if you heed Me carefully," says the Lord, "to bring no burden through the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, but **hallow the Sabbath day**, to do no work in it, ²⁵ then shall enter the gates of this city kings and princes sitting on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their princes, accompanied by the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and **this city shall remain forever**. ²⁷ "But if you will **not heed Me to hallow the Sabbath day**, such as not carrying a burden when entering the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it **shall devour the palaces** of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.""*

The book of Revelation universalizes the message of Ezekiel 8 and 9. God will seal His faithful followers before releasing the winds of strife (Revelation 7:1-3):

Revelation 14:1:

*“Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written **on their foreheads**.”*

In contrast, those who are not faithful will receive the mark of the beast on their foreheads:

Revelation 13:16, 17:

*“He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or **on their foreheads**,¹⁷ and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.”*

The Testimony of Analogy

Seals, such as the presidential seal of the United States, must bear **three items** of information in order to be authentic.

- **The name of the authority of the lawgiver**
- **The office or position of the lawgiver**
- **The jurisdictional territory of the lawgiver**

Only the Fourth Commandment contains these three elements:

*“The seal of God's law is found in the fourth commandment. This only, of all the ten, brings to view both the **name** and the **title** of the Lawgiver. It declares Him to be the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and thus shows His **claim to reverence and worship** above all others. Aside from this precept, there is nothing*

in the Decalogue to show by whose authority the law is given. When the Sabbath was changed by the papal power, the seal was taken from the law. The disciples of Jesus are called upon to restore it by exalting the Sabbath of the fourth commandment to its rightful position as the Creator's memorial and the sign of His authority." GC, p. 452

The Testimony of Archeology

The dynastic seals in the city of Ugarit were very similar to the Ten Commandments. They wrote covenants on both sides of tablets of clay and in the middle of the tablet placed the dynastic seal of the great king. The seal had three elements: The name of the lawgiver, his title and his jurisdictional territory. The Ten Commandments are very similar:

- The city was in the general geographical area of Israel (the region of Syria).
- The Ten Commandments are God's Covenant (Deuteronomy 4:13).
- God wrote the Ten Commandments on tables (Deuteronomy 4:13).
- The tables were written on both sides (Exodus 32:15, 16).
- In the middle of the tablets was the Sabbath commandment.
- The Fourth Commandment contains the name, the office, and the title of the lawgiver.

"The fourth commandment is the only one of all the ten in which are found both the name and the title of the Lawgiver. It is the only one that shows by whose authority the law is given. Thus it contains the seal of God, affixed to His law as evidence of its authenticity and binding force." PP, p. 307

The Testimony of Prophecy

Daniel 7:25: The little horn (the papacy) thought it could change God's Law:

“He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to **change times and law**. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time.”

Revelation 12:14-17:

*“Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. ¹⁴ But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a **time and times and half a time**, from the presence of the serpent. ¹⁵ So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. ¹⁶ But **the earth helped the woman**, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. ¹⁷ And **the dragon was enraged** with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who **keep the commandments of God** and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”*

Here is the sequence of events:

- The dragon **persecutes** the faithful church for time, times and the dividing of time.
- The **earth helps** (the United States) by swallowing up the waters of persecution.
- The dragon hates remnant and will **once again persecute** it.
- The observance of the **Commandments** is what infuriates the dragon.
- The remnant **counteracts the change** in the Law (see Mark 7:9, 10; Matthew 19:17; Romans 13:8, 10 where the words ‘law’ and ‘commandments’ are used interchangeably).

- **Revelation 13:11** (notice the connection with Revelation 12:16, 17) refers to a beast that rises from the earth and speaks like a dragon. It will enforce by law the change of the Sabbath (the mark of the beast).

The Testimony of History

Roman **Catholics confirm that their** sign of authority is the change in the Law:

*"For ages all Christian nations looked to the Catholic Church, and, as we have seen, the various states enforced by law her ordinances as to worship and cessation of labor on Sunday. Protestantism, in discarding the authority of the Church, has no good reason for its Sunday theory, and ought logically, to keep Saturday as the Sabbath. The State in passing laws for the due Sanctification of Sunday, is unwittingly acknowledging **the authority of the Catholic Church**, and carrying out more or less faithfully its prescription. The Sunday as a day of the week set apart for the obligatory public worship of Almighty God is **purely a creation of the Catholic Church**." John Gilmary Shea, in The American Catholic Quarterly Review, January 1883, p. 139 [Shea (1824-1892) was an important Catholic historian, of his time].*

*"Protestants . . . accept Sunday rather than Saturday as the day for public worship after the Catholic Church made the change . . . But the Protestant mind does not seem to realize that in accepting the Bible, in observing the Sunday, they are **accepting the authority of the spokesman for the church, the Pope**." Our Sunday Visitor, Feb. 5, 1950 [One of the largest U.S. Roman Catholic magazines]*

*"Question: What Bible authority is there for changing the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week? Who gave the Pope the authority to change a command of God?" Answer: It was the Catholic Church that, by the authority of Jesus Christ, has transferred this rest [from the Bible Sabbath] to the Sunday. Thus the observance of Sunday by the Protestants is an **homage they pay**, in spite of themselves, to the **authority of the [Catholic] Church**." Monsignor Louis Segur,*

Plain Talk About the Protestantism of Today, 1868, p. 213 [L.G. Segur (1820-1881) was a French Catholic prelate and apologist, and later a diplomatic and judicial official at Rome.]

“Question: What is the Third Commandment? [The fourth in Protestant Bibles, because the Catholic Church removes the Second Commandment—Exodus 20:4-6] “Answer: The Third Commandment is: Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day.” Question: Which is the Sabbath day?” Answer: Saturday is the Sabbath day.” Question: Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?” Answer: The Catholic Church, after changing the day of rest from Saturday, the seventh day of the week, to Sunday, the first day, made the third commandment refer to Sunday as the day to be kept as the Lord's Day.” The Catholic Encyclopedia, vol. 4, p. 153.

*“Prove to me from the Bible alone that I am bound to keep Sunday holy. There is no such law in the Bible. **It is a law of the holy Catholic Church alone.** The Bible says 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.' The Catholic Church says, 'No. **By my divine power** I abolish the Sabbath day and command you to keep holy the first day of the week.' And lo, the entire civilized world **bows down in reverent obedience** to the command of the Holy Catholic Church.”--Priest Thomas Enright, CSSR, President of Redemptorist College, Kansas City, Mo., in a lecture at Hartford, Kansas, February 18, 1884, and printed in the Hartford Kansas Weekly Call, February 22, 1884, and the American Sentinel, a New York Roman Catholic journal in June 1893, page 173.*

*“Of course the Catholic Church claims that the change was her act . . . AND **THE ACT IS A MARK** of her ecclesiastical power.” From the office of Cardinal Gibbons, through Chancellor H.F. Thomas, November 11, 1895.*

*“A word about Sunday. God said: ‘Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day!’ The Sabbath was Saturday, not Sunday; why, then, do we keep Sunday holy instead of Saturday? The **Church altered** the observance of the Sabbath to the observance of Sunday. . . Protestants who say that they go by the Bible and the*

*Bible only, and that they do not believe anything that is not in the Bible, must be rather puzzled by the keeping of Sunday when God distinctly said, 'Keep holy the Sabbath day.' The word Sunday does not come anywhere in the Bible so, without knowing it, they are **obeying the authority of the Catholic Church**."* Henry T. Cafferata, *The Catechism Simply Explained* (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd., 1938), p. 89.

Protestants will end up returning to Mother because they were never able to completely sever their doctrinal ties to the Roman Catholic Church:

*"However, since Saturday, not Sunday, is specified in the Bible, isn't it curious that non-Catholics who profess to take their religion directly from the Bible and not from the Church, observe Sunday instead of Saturday? Yes, of course, it is inconsistent; but this **change** was made about fifteen centuries before Protestantism was born, and by that time the custom was universally observed. They have continued the custom, even though it rests upon the **authority of the Catholic Church** and not upon an explicit text in the Bible. That observance remains as a reminder of the **Mother Church** from which the non-Catholic sects broke away—like a boy running away from home but still carrying in his pocket a picture of his mother or a lock of her hair."* John O'Brien, *The Faith of Millions* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1974), p. 400, 401.

Ellen White explained the process whereby the Christian Church went astray from the Sabbath:

*"The arch-deceiver had not completed his work. He was resolved to gather the **Christian world** under his banner and to exercise his power through his vice-regent, the proud pontiff who claimed to be the representative of Christ. Through half-converted pagans, ambitious prelates, and world-loving churchmen he accomplished his purpose. Vast councils were held from time to time, in which the dignitaries of the church were convened from all the world. **In nearly every Council, the Sabbath which God instituted was pressed down a little lower, while the Sunday was correspondingly exalted.** Thus the **pagan festival** came*

finally to be honored as a divine institution, while the Bible Sabbath was pronounced a relic of Judaism, and its observers were declared to be accursed.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 53.

“The Lord commands by the same prophet: “Bind up the testimony, seal the law among My disciples.” Isaiah 8:16. The seal of God's law is found in the fourth commandment. This only, of all the ten, brings to view both the name and the title of the Lawgiver. It declares Him to be the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and thus shows His claim to reverence and worship above all others. Aside from this precept, there is nothing in the Decalogue to show by whose authority the law is given. When the Sabbath was changed by the papal power, the seal was taken from the law. The disciples of Jesus are called upon to restore it by exalting the Sabbath of the fourth commandment to its rightful position as the Creator's memorial and the sign of His authority.” GC, p. 452

Two Signs: Saved or Lost

The book of Revelation describes two groups, each with its own mark (Revelation 13:16, 17; 14:1).

In the beginning, God used a tree to test Adam and Eve's obedience and loyalty. The question was to whom they would pledge allegiance. If they disrespected God's tree they would show themselves loyal to Satan. If they respected God's tree they would show themselves loyal to God. The issue was loyalty and the tree was the means to test their loyalty. At the end, God will use a day to test the obedience and loyalty of each person in the world. The issue is not primarily a day but rather loyalty!

“The Sabbath will be the great test of loyalty, for it is the point of truth especially controverted. When the final test shall be brought to bear upon men, then the line of distinction will be drawn between those who serve God and those who serve Him not. While the observance of the false Sabbath in compliance with the law of

*the state, contrary to the fourth commandment, will be an **avowal of allegiance** to a power that is in opposition to God, the keeping of the true Sabbath, in obedience to God's law, is an **evidence of loyalty** to the Creator. While one class, by accepting the sign of **submission** to earthly powers, receive the mark of the beast, the other choosing the token of **allegiance to divine authority**, receive the seal of God.” GC, p. 605*

If we are **lax** in our Sabbath observance now, what will happen when we are forbidden to **buy and sell** and are in danger of **imprisonment, confiscation of goods** or **death**?

*“**Not all who profess to keep the Sabbath will be sealed.** There are many even among those who teach the truth to others who will **not receive the seal of God in their foreheads.** They had the light of truth, they knew their Master's will, they understood every point of our faith, but they had not corresponding works. These who were so familiar with prophecy and the treasures of divine wisdom, should have acted their faith. They should have commanded their households after them, that by a well-ordered family they might present to the world the influence of the truth upon the human heart.” CET, p. 189*

The seminal backdrop to the mark of the beast is in the story of Cain and Abel. Abel obeyed God and worshiped as God commanded. Cain, on the other hand, disobeyed God and worshiped Him as he pleased. When Cain killed his brother, he received a mark to protect his life. In the final test, those who have the mark of the beast will receive the protection of the beast and God will protect those who have His seal. Who would you rather be protected by?

Revelation indicates that there will be two possible ways of serving the beast but only one way of serving God. The beast is willing to have service on the forehead **or** in the hand (Revelation 13:16). God accepts the service only of the forehead **and** the hand.

Discuss the difference between the sin of **Eve** and the sin of **Adam**.



ANCHOR SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

“Revelation’s Seven Seals: Studies in Revelation 4-8”

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

LESSON #22 – REFLECTIONS ON A SABBATH DEBATE

Introduction

I recently watched with great interest a debate between a Seventh-day Adventist evangelist and an Evangelical radio host. The subject was whether the observance of the Sabbath is part of the Old Covenant and binding only on the Jews, or whether God expects New Covenant Christians to keep the Sabbath as well.

The debate format forced the presenters to be very brief and many viewers came away frustrated because some questions did not receive adequate answers. In this document, I will attempt to respond to some of the seemingly persuasive and yet misleading arguments that the Evangelical radio host used. At the end of this study, I will also make a few remarks about the papal perspective of creation and the Sabbath. Let us begin with a point on which both debaters agreed. The days of creation week were literal days.

Were the days of creation literal 24-hour days?

- ✓ In the Old Testament, the word day with a **numeral qualifier** always means a 24-hour day.
- ✓ Each day had an **evening and morning**, a meaningless expression if the days of creation were vast periods of millions of years.
- ✓ Psalm 33:9 uses the language of **immediacy**: God ‘spoke and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.’”
- ✓ The expression ‘**and it was so**’ in the creation story (verses 7, 11, 15, 24) does not suggest vast periods of time.
- ✓ The language of the **fourth commandment** would be absurd if the days were long periods. How could God command man to work six days and rest the seventh as He did at creation if the days were not literal?
- ✓ The **New Testament writers** understood the story of creation to be literal. So at issue is the integrity and **credibility** of Jesus and the New Testament writers (Matthew 19:4-6; 1 Corinthians 15:45).

The Evangelical's Premises

The Evangelical radio host based his arguments against the Sabbath as a Christian institution on **three propositions** and a **conclusion**:

- **Proposition #1:** Genesis tells us that it was **God who rested** on the seventh day.
- **Proposition #2:** The word ‘rested’ in Genesis 2:2, 3 is **Shabbat** that means ‘**to cease**’. The word does not describe the quality of God’s rest but rather that He ceased from working.

- **Proposition #3:** The creation story contains **no command for man** to *Shabbat* or '**cease**'.
- **Conclusion:** Because the creation story affirms that God ceased and there is no command for man to cease, the Sabbath is **not a creation institution** but rather a part of the **Old Covenant** that applies **only to the Jews**.

I can **fully agree** with the radio host's **three propositions** but **not with his conclusion**:

- **Proposition #1:** True, the Genesis record states explicitly that it was '**God who ceased**'.
- **Proposition #2:** True, the Hebrew word **Shabbat** does mean '**to cease**' as we can see in the following examples:
 - ✓ Genesis 8:22: The seasons and the cycle of day and night will not cease after the flood.
 - ✓ Joshua 5:12: The Manna ceased the day after Israel entered the land of Canaan.
 - ✓ Nehemiah 6:3: Nehemiah told his enemies that he could not cease building the wall of Jerusalem.
 - ✓ Psalm 46:8, 9: Describes the time when all wars will cease.
- **Proposition #3:** True, Genesis 2:2, 3 does not contain an explicit command for Adam and Eve to cease on seventh day.

However, the radio host's conclusion is wrong. He assumes that the absence of a divine command for Adam and Eve to cease on Sabbath indicates that the Sabbath is not a creation institution.

Therefore, the million-dollar question is why God did not give Adam and Eve an explicit command to cease on that first Sabbath. The reason is as simple to understand as two plus two equals four. Granted that the word *shabbat* means 'to cease', Adam and Eve could not cease from work on the seventh day because they had not worked the first six. Only God could cease because only God had worked!

Four Important Points

I believe the Bible gives us clear theological reasons why God did not command Adam and Eve to *shabbat* on the seventh day of creation week. We will turn to those reasons in brief, but before we do, we must consider four important points.

First, we must remember that when God ceased, there was no sin and there were no Jews. This being the case, if we can prove that God gave the Sabbath to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden before the inception of sin and before there were any Jews, then all the Old Covenant arguments that the radio host used are superfluous.

Second, the first six days and the seventh day of creation week are all about what God did. The word 'God' appears 31 times in chapter one and Genesis 2:2, 3 underlines ten times that it was God who worked six days and ceased on the seventh:

"And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. ³ Then God blessed the

*seventh day and sanctified it, because in it **He** rested from all **His** work which **God** had created and made.”*

Third, after God **finished** all His work on the sixth day, He **rested** on the seventh and **after** He rested, He **set it apart** from the other six days as holy:

- ✓ **Genesis 2:3**: God rested and **then** sanctified the Sabbath:

*“Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, **because** in it He **rested** from all His work which God had created and made.” [See the causal use of the word “because” in Genesis 2:23]*

- ✓ **Exodus 20:11**: God rested and **then** sanctified the Sabbath:

*“For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and **rested** the seventh day. **Therefore the** LORD **blessed** the Sabbath day and **hallowed** it.” [See the causal use of the word “therefore” in Genesis 2:24]*

Fourth, after creating it, God **gave the week** to Adam and Eve. Here is the sequence of events:

- ✓ God worked **six days**.
- ✓ God **ceased** the seventh day.
- ✓ When the seventh day ended, God **blessed and sanctified** it.
- ✓ After God had worked six and ceased on the seventh, the week was **complete**.
- ✓ God then **gave the week** to Adam and Eve and their descendants.
- ✓ Creation week is what I call **God’s week** because He—**not man**—worked six and ceased on the seventh.

In perfect harmony with Scripture, Ellen White wrote:

*"Like the Sabbath, **the week** originated at creation, and it has been preserved and brought down to us through Bible history. God Himself **measured off** the **first week** as a **sample** for successive weeks to the close of time. Like every other, it consisted of **seven literal days**. Six days were employed in the work of creation; upon the seventh, **God rested**, and He **then** blessed this day and set it apart as a day of rest **for man**." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 111*

Why no Command?

Now we are ready to answer fully the question of **why** God did not command Adam and Eve to cease on the seventh day of creation week:

First, as previously indicated, Adam and Eve could not cease from work on the seventh day because they had not worked the first six. How could they cease from work if **they had not worked**?

Second, God **had to make the Sabbath** before He could give it to man (Mark 2:27). John 1:3, 10 tells us explicitly that Jesus was the Creator. These verses tell us **four times** that Jesus **made** all things and the word 'made' is identical to the one in Mark 2:27. Jesus is **Lord** of the day because He **made it** and for that reason, He has a **perfect right** to define **what is proper** and what is not proper on the day.

Third, Jesus could not have told Adam and Eve to keep the Sabbath of creation week holy because He did not **make it holy** until He had finished resting the entire seventh day.

Fourth, it is absurd to believe that Jesus would **bless** the Sabbath and set it apart as **holy for Himself**. In the Bible when God blesses and sanctifies something, He

always does it with reference to His creatures and never simply for Himself. Mark 2:27 tells us explicitly that the Sabbath was **made for man**.

Fifth, Adam and Eve could not follow God's **example** of Sabbath observance until He had **first** given the example. In other words, Jesus did **not merely tell Adam and Eve** to keep it holy but rather **showed them** how to keep it!

*"God made man in His own image and then **gave him an example** of observing the seventh day, which He sanctified and made holy." Lift Him Up, p. 38*

Sixth, the **fourth commandment** applies to Adam and Eve beginning with the **second Sabbath** of human history. Notice the following sequence of events:

- ✓ Jesus worked six days and ceased on the seventh thus creating the week.
- ✓ After resting on the Sabbath Jesus blessed it and made it holy.
- ✓ Jesus then gave the week to Adam and Eve.
- ✓ They would now work six and cease the seventh as God had.
- ✓ The Fourth Commandment applies to Adam and Eve after they worked six:

Exodus 20:8-11:

*"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the **seventh day** is the Sabbath of the **Lord your God**. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. ¹¹ For in six days the **Lord made** the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested **the seventh day**. Therefore the Lord **blessed** the Sabbath day and **hallowed** it."*

Seventh, Ellen White was a firm believer in the creation origin of the Sabbath but she **never made the mistake** of writing that God commanded Adam and Eve to keep that first Sabbath:

*“**After** resting upon the seventh day, God sanctified it, or **set it apart**, as a day of rest for man. **Following the example** of the Creator, **man was to rest** upon this sacred day, that as he should look upon the heavens and the earth, he might reflect upon God's great work of creation; and that as he should behold the evidences of God's wisdom and goodness, his heart might be filled with love and reverence for his Maker.” Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 47*

*“The first six days of each week are given to man for labor, because God employed the same period of the first week in the work of creation. On the seventh day man is to refrain from labor, in **commemoration of the Creator's rest**.” Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 111*

*“Instead of keeping God's own rest-day, which he sanctified **after** he had rested upon it, and **set it apart for man** to observe and reverence, they honor a Papal institution.” Review and Herald, September 16, 1862*

Why no Evening and Morning?

There is another matter related to what we have covered in the previous section. The creation story tells us that each of the days of creation had an evening and a morning except the seventh. The question is why. Did Moses forget to include the formula ‘it was the evening and morning of the seventh day,’ or is there a deeper reason for its absence from the text?

In order to answer this question we must remember that the word *shabbat*, by the testimony of the Evangelical radio host, means ‘to cease.’ The question is, what did God cease from? The answer is that He ceased on the seventh day from the work he had done on the first six.

As I have indicated previously in this article, the first week of history is all about God—it is God’s week. God was the one who worked six and ceased on the seventh. Moreover, after ceasing on the seventh day God did not begin a new six day cycle

of work because his work was finished. To this day, God has not begun a new cycle of six days, thus God is **still ceasing** from His works of creation.

Does this mean that the seventh day never ended and we are still living in the seventh day because it had no evening and morning? The answer is an emphatic 'no'. How do we know?

The Fourth Commandment tells us that God worked six days and ceased on the seventh. The same commandment indicates that Adam and Eve worked the first six days of the second week and ceased on the seventh. Moreover, God commanded humankind to follow this cyclical pattern as long as time should last.

Where do we find this concept in the Bible? Let us go to Genesis 1:31-2:2 for the answer:

Genesis 1:31-2:2:

*"Then God saw everything that **He had made**, and indeed it was very good and so it was the evening and the morning of the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were **finished**. And on the seventh day God **ended His work** which **He had done**, and He **rested** [ceased] on the seventh day from all **His work** which **He had done**."*

Thus, the first week is **God's week**. **He worked** six and **He ceased** on the seventh. The seventh day had no evening or morning for God because **He did not begin a new cycle** of work on the next day. That is, God is **still ceasing** from his creative works.

Put another way, when God ceased on the seventh day, he has **continued ceasing** ever since because He has not begun a new cycle of work. On the other hand, the **day after the first Sabbath** was a **day of work** for man so the seventh day did have an **evening and a morning for man**. Where do we find this concept in the Bible?

Hebrews 4:3 - NIV, last part:

*"And yet **his work** has been **finished since the creation** of the world."*

This text tells us that concerning this world, God has been ceasing from creative works since creation week. The seventh day never ended **for God** because He has continued ceasing. Someone might object: But did not Jesus say that He and the Father were still working during the incarnation? Yes, He did and here is the text:

John 5:17-18:

*"But Jesus answered them, "My Father has been **working** until now, and I have been **working**."*

However, the works that Jesus mentioned here were not works that began a new cycle of creation but rather a work of redemption or restoration. Jesus did not create anything new when he healed the paralytic but rather **restored** his legs, as they should have worked since the beginning. Jesus did something similar when He opened the eyes of a man born blind. He **restored** his eyes to what they should have been at the beginning. Hebrews 1:3 and Colossians 1:17 describe this work of upholding all created things.

Ellen G. White on God's Cessation

Ellen White's explanation of John 5:17, 18 is enlightening:

*"As regards **this world**, God's work of creation is **completed**. For 'the works were **finished** from the foundation of the world' (Hebrews 4:3) But His energy is still exerted in **upholding** the objects of His creation." Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 115*

*"Although the Lord has **ceased** His work in **creating**, He is constantly employed in **upholding** and using as His servants the things which He **has made** Said Christ, "My Father **worketh** hitherto, and I **work**" (MS 4, 1882). 6BC, p. 1062*

"As regards this earth, Scripture declares the work of creation to have been completed. "The works were finished from the foundation of the world." Hebrews 4:3. But the power of God is still exercised in upholding the objects of His creation." Education pp. 130, 131

No evening and morning for us?

The fact that the God has been ceasing from his work of creation since the first seventh day does not mean that we have been ceasing with Him since then. The fourth commandment clearly commands humankind to work six and cease on the seventh in a continual cycle in commemoration of the Creator's rest. Just because God ceased on the seventh day does not mean that human beings are still living in the seventh day.

- The seventh day did have a beginning and an end because God set the day apart from the other days when it ended. How could God set the Sabbath apart from the other days if the Sabbath never ended?
- A numeral adjective is used of the seventh day just like the first six days
- The sun rises and sets on the seventh day just like every other day. The day does have an evening and morning which is determined by the rising and setting of the sun:

"When the Lord declares that He made the world in six days and rested on the seventh day, He means the day of twenty-four hours, which He has marked off by the rising and setting of the sun." Testimonies to Ministers, p. 135

- Leviticus 23:32 explicitly commanded Israel to celebrate the Day of Atonement Sabbath from evening to evening (see also Mark 1:32). This

means that the Sabbath did have an evening and a morning (see also Mark 1:32).

- How could Israel keep God's command to observe the Sabbath in a continual weekly cycle of seven days if the seventh day never ended?

The Bible is clear that when the seventh day ended, God **worked no more** but the very next day **man began the cycle of work**. This shows that the seventh day had no evening and morning for God but it **did have for man**.

Commonalities

Some have argued that the Sabbath in Genesis is different from the Sabbath that God gave to Israel. However, this is not tenable because there are several commonalities between the Genesis and Exodus accounts. In both:

- ✓ The Sabbath is a **memorial** of **creation**.
- ✓ The Sabbath comes **after six days** of labor.
- ✓ The Sabbath is the **seventh day** of the week.
- ✓ In both accounts God **rested** and then **blessed** and **sanctified** the seventh day.

God's Example of Rest

It is true that Genesis 2:2, 3 and Exodus 20:11 use a different word for 'rest'. While Genesis 2:2, 3 describes God's rest with the word *shabbat* ('ceased'), Exodus 20:11 uses the word *nuach* ('rested'). If Moses wrote both Genesis and Exodus, why did he use a different word in Exodus for 'rest' than he did in Genesis? There must be a reason for the difference.

As we have already noted, the emphasis of the word *shabbat* in Genesis falls upon the fact that on the seventh day God **created no more**. On the first six days, He worked and on the seventh, He did not. We use the word ‘rest’ in a similar way today when the district attorney has finished presenting his case to the jury. He tells the judge: ‘**The prosecution rests.**’ This does not describe the quality of rest that the district attorney enjoys when he has finished presenting his case but rather that he has no more evidence or arguments to present in the trial—his work is finished.

Genesis 2:2, 3 tells us what God did **not do** on the seventh day—he created no more. However, the question that stares us in the face is this: What did God **do** on the seventh day while He ceased? The answer to this question comes from several sources.

First, the Genesis record explicitly tells us that at the end of the sixth day "God **saw** everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good." Clearly, God **beheld** the fruit of His creative work with satisfaction so the Sabbath was a day for God to relish His magnificent creation.

Second, the use of the word *nuach* in the Fourth Commandment is significant. In distinction to the word *shabbat* in Genesis 2, the emphasis in the Fourth Commandment falls upon **how** God rested on the seventh day while He ceased because He was giving an **example** to humanity on how to rest on it.

The Old Testament links the word *nuach* with the idea of **joy, gladness, and feasting**. This word not only describes a rest of **passive repose** but an **active rest** of celebration. Proverbs 29:17 couples *nuach* with the concept of delight:

*“Correct your son and he will give you **rest** [nuach]; yes, he will give **delight** to your soul.”*

In this synthetic parallelism, Solomon describes rest not a passive repose but rather as a delightful rest! In this context, we can hardly miss the fact that the gospel prophet Isaiah twice refers to the Sabbath as a delight:

*“If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a **delight**, the holy day of the Lord honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, or speaking your own words, then you shall **delight** yourself in the Lord.”*

After God delivered Israel from their enemies in the days of Esther, they established a commemorative feast called **Purim**. Although Purim was a day of rest, it was not a day of **passive repose**. It was a rest of feasting, gladness and joy:

Esther 8:20-22:

*“And Mordecai wrote these things and sent letters to all the Jews, near and far, who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, ²¹ to establish among them that they should celebrate yearly the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar, ²² as the days on which the Jews had **rest** [nuach] from their enemies, as the month which was turned from sorrow to **joy** for them, and from mourning to a **holiday**; that they should make them days of **feasting** and **joy**, of sending presents to one another and gifts to the poor.”*

Third, Scripture informs us that God did not delight on the seventh day alone. The entire heavenly universe sang and shouted for joy when they beheld the marvelous works of God at creation:

Job 38:7:

“Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. ⁵ Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? ⁶ To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its

cornerstone, ⁷ when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"

Ellen White captured the profound sense of God's rest with all heaven at creation:

*"The Sabbath was hallowed at the creation. As ordained for man, it had its origin when 'the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.' Job 38:7. **Peace** brooded over the world for earth was in **harmony** with heaven. 'God **saw** everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good' and **He rested** in **the joy** of His **completed work**. Genesis 1:31." *The Desire of Ages*, p. 281*

Fourth, Exodus 31:17 gives us an additional glimpse into the quality of God's rest on the seventh day of creation week. In speaking to Israel, God said concerning the Sabbath:

*"It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He **rested** and was **refreshed**."*

This verse tells us two facts about God's experience on the seventh day. First, He ceased (*shabbat*) from His work of creating. That is, on the seventh day He created no more. The second fact is that on the seventh day He **was refreshed**.

What does the word 'refreshed' (*naphash*) imply? The word is not a common one in the Old Testament appearing only four times. It means 'to take a breath' or to 'refresh oneself' after much hard labor. Exodus 23:12 is of particular importance because it uses three words for rest, *shabbat*, *nuach* and *naphash*:

*"Six days you shall do your work, and on the seventh day you shall **rest** [shabbat], that your ox and your donkey may **rest** [nuach], and the son of your female servant and the stranger may be **refreshed** [naphash]."*

Of course, the inevitable question is this: in what sense was God refreshed on the seventh day? It certainly cannot mean that God was famished at the end of six days of hard labor and needed a ‘breather’, because the prophet Isaiah tells us that the Creator God does not get weary or tired (Isaiah 40:28). The only conclusion we can reach is that God reflected upon His creative work and took a deep breath of satisfaction. Ellen White was right on target when she described how God viewed His creative masterpiece:

*“God looked with **satisfaction** upon the work of His hands. All was perfect, worthy of its divine Author, and He rested, **not as one weary**, but as **well pleased** with the fruits of His wisdom and goodness and the manifestations of His glory.” PP, p. 47*

We must remember that God created Adam and Eve on the sixth day so they must have been eyewitnesses of God’s manner of resting on the seventh day. What did Adam and Eve do on the seventh day, the first full day of their existence? They certainly **did not work** on the seventh day while God was resting! According to the fourth commandment, the day after the Sabbath was their first day of work so they must not have worked on the seventh. No doubt, God gave them the **scenic tour** on the seventh day, showed them **how to keep** the Sabbath and then told them to do as He had done—work the next six days and rest the seventh.

God’s Signature on Creation

As we read the conclusion of the creation story, we find something very unusual—God finished His work **twice**. Notice Genesis 1:31-2:3:

Genesis 1:31-2:2-3

*“Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good, so the evening and the morning were the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were **finished** [kalah]. ² And on the seventh day, God **ended** [kalah] His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all*

*His work that He had done.³ Then God blessed the seventh day and **sanctified it** **because** in it He **rested** from all His work which God had created and made.”*

You might ask how someone can finish something twice. Perhaps an illustration will help us understand.

Let us imagine an artist painting a beautiful nature scene. The first day the artist prepares the frame, staples the canvass to the frame and adds some background colors. At the end of the first day, the artist steps back, looks at his work and says to himself, ‘it is good’. The second day the artist paints a blue sky with some fluffy clouds and at the end of the second day, he looks at his work and says ‘it is good’. The third day the artist paints some beautiful green grass, trees and flowers; at the end of the day, the artist steps back and says ‘it is good’. The fourth day the artist paints a radiant sun and an opaque moon in the sky and at the end of the day steps back and says to himself ‘it is good’. On the fifth day of work the artist paints some birds sailing through the air and some fish leaping out of a beautiful lake and at the end of the day steps back and says, ‘it is good’. On the sixth day, the artist paints all kinds of land animals and a man and a woman standing in the midst of the glorious nature scene. The artist then puts the finishing touches on the canvass, steps back and says ‘it is very good’.

Has the artist finished his work? Yes and no! The work of art is finished but there is one thing lacking—the signature of the person who painted it. Without the signature, anyone can claim the masterpiece. Likewise, God finished His work of art on the sixth day and on the seventh, he put His signature on His work. It would be forgery for someone to replace the name of God with his own!

Is it not true that all days belong to God?

The radio host argued, as many Christians do today, that all days belong to God and therefore we should worship Him every day.”

No one would argue against the idea that all days belong to God and that we should worship Him every day. However, the Bible simply does not teach that all days are **holy**. The Fourth Commandment leaves no doubt that six days are for our secular labor and work but the seventh day Sabbath is holy because God set it apart from the rest.

By way of analogy, the Bible tells us that **all** the money that we manage belongs to God (Haggai 2:8). Does this mean that all the money we have is holy and we must return 100% of our money to God? Of course not! Although all the money that we have belongs to God, only 10% is holy—the tithe. Likewise, all days belong to God but only the seventh is holy.

Did Jesus break the Sabbath that He created?

In the debate between the Adventist evangelist and the Evangelical radio host, the Evangelical claimed that because Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath, He had the right to break it and He did. Does this argument stand up to scrutiny?

The text that the Evangelical radio host used was John 5:18. A careless reading of the text without its context would seem to indicate that Jesus broke the Sabbath. However, the context of this verse and other texts in the gospels clearly indicate that Jesus did not break the Sabbath that He Himself created. Let us take a closer look at John 5:18.

John 5:18:

*“Therefore **the Jews** sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only **broke the Sabbath**, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.”*

This text clearly indicates that **the Jews** were accusing Jesus of breaking the Sabbath. Jesus had just healed a paralytic on the Sabbath and the Jews accused

Him of breaking the Sabbath. It bears noting that there is no Old Testament law against **healing** on the Sabbath or telling a man to **pick up his bed** and walk home. These were rabbinical rules added by the scholars, not found in Scripture and handed down by tradition.

Luke 13:14 tells us that Jesus healed a woman who had been unable to stand straight for **18 years**. The **ruler of the synagogue** accused Jesus of breaking the law because He healed the woman on the Sabbath. The ruler announced to the crowd that six days were for work and on those days, they could come for healing but **not on the Sabbath**. It bears repeating that there is **no law** in the Old Testament that forbids healing on the Sabbath. The law against healing was a **rabbinical rule** based on human tradition.

Luke 13:14:

"The Lord then answered him and said, "Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? ¹⁶ So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound — think of it — for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?"

Jesus pointed to the absurdity of **their law** by telling them in effect:

"Your traditions allow you to care for the needs of beasts on the Sabbath but not of a human being."

Matthew 12:10, 12 tells us explicitly that Jesus did not break the Sabbath law by healing on the day. His work of healing on the Sabbath was **lawful**:

*"And behold, there was a man who had a **withered hand** and they asked Him, saying, "**Is it lawful** to heal on the Sabbath **[not according to them!]**?"—that they might **accuse Him**. ¹¹ Then He said to them, "What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it*

*and lift it out? ¹² Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore **it is lawful** to do good on the Sabbath."*

The Evangelical radio host used the example of a police officer who is above the law because he can violate the speed limit. However, Jesus did not come as a police officer to be above the law. According to the apostle Paul, Jesus was **born under the law** (Galatians 4:4, 5). He needed to obey all the law because He was taking our place. If Jesus had broken the law, He would be a sinner and would have needed a Redeemer.

Does the Sabbath belong only to the Old Covenant?

The Evangelical radio host repeatedly underlined that the Ten Commandments are a part of the Old Jewish Covenant and therefore they do not apply to Christians. He is correct on two counts. First, Deuteronomy 4:12, 13 does tell us that the Ten Commandments are the Covenant and second, God did give the Ten Commandments initially to Israel. Here is the evidence:

Deuteronomy 4:13-14:

*"So He declared to **you** **His covenant** which He commanded **you** to perform, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone."*

Exodus 20:1, 2:

*"And God spoke all these words [to Israel], saying: ² "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the **land of Egypt**, out of the house of bondage."*

Whereas the Evangelical radio host is correct on these two counts, he is incorrect in the conclusion he draws from them.

Exodus 20:1, 2 tells us that God gave **all** the Ten Commandments (not only the Sabbath) to Israel so the question is, are all the Ten Commandments **only** for Israel? Is it proper for Christians to have other gods, worship idols, take God's name in vain, dishonor their parents, kill, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness and covet? To answer this question with a 'yes' is absurd!

God gave the Ten Commandments to Israel because they were His people at the time when He gave them, but nowhere does the Bible tell us that God gave them **exclusively** to and for Israel! By way of analogy, Jesus promised His twelve disciples that He was going to heaven to prepare a place for **them** (John 14:1-3). He said: "I go to prepare a place for **you** and if I go and prepare a place for **you**, I will come again and receive **you** unto Myself that where I am there **you** may be also." Does this mean that only the disciples can claim the promise of the second coming of Christ? Of course not! God gave the promise initially to the disciples but it is a promise for everyone!

Scholars have written numerous volumes on the concept of Covenant in Scripture. The topic appears to be complex; but it is not as complicated as it may appear! Let us briefly examine the biblical concept of Covenant.

There is only **one** Everlasting Covenant that was devised in the ages of eternity past (Zechariah 6:12, 13). In this Covenant, the Father and the Son agreed that should man break God's eternal Moral Law, the Son would come to earth to take the place of sinners. He would live the perfect life that the Law requires of humanity, bear their sins, and suffer their penalty of death.

Clearly, this Covenant has two components and both of them are eternal. I call these two components, 'Covenant Law' and 'Covenant Sacrifice'. Although the two components are distinct, they are intimately related. The transgression of the one (the eternal Moral Law) makes the implementation of the other necessary (the Covenant Sacrifice).

Regarding Covenant Law, there can be no doubt that the foundational principles of the Ten Commandments are eternal because they describe perfect relationships of man with God and man with man in a sinless society. Just imagine what the world would be like if everyone kept the Ten Commandments!

God commanded Adam and Eve to keep the eternal Covenant Law that they might live. However, when they disobeyed the eternal Moral Law, God pronounced the sentence of death and announced the implementation of the 'Covenant Sacrifice' that had been hidden in the mind of God for eternal ages.

The concept of Covenant Sacrifice is just as eternal as Covenant Law because Peter wrote that the plan of salvation 'was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times' (1 Peter 1:20) and John wrote that Jesus is the Lamb 'slain from the foundation of the world' (Revelation 13:8). Paul refers to this Covenant as the 'mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints' (Colossians 1:26). Referring to this Covenant Ellen White perceptively wrote:

*"Christ was not alone in making His great sacrifice. It was the fulfillment of the **covenant** made between Him and His Father **before the foundation of the world was laid**. With clasped hands they had entered into the solemn pledge that Christ would become the surety for the human race if they were overcome by Satan's sophistry." The Faith I Live By, p. 76*

*"The covenant of grace is not a new truth, for it existed **in the mind of God from all eternity**. This is why it is called the **everlasting covenant**." The Faith I Live By, p. 77*

*"The covenant of mercy was made before the foundation of the world. It has existed **from all eternity**, and is called the everlasting covenant. Just as surely as there never was a time when God was not, so surely there **never was a moment***

when it was not the delight of the eternal mind to manifest **His grace** to humanity.” Signs of the Times June 12, 1901

Yet Covenant Sacrifice has two stages, one old and one new, one temporary and one eternal. In the Old Testament God gave Israel a ceremonial system of rites, ceremonies and sacrifices that pointed forward to the one and only Covenant Sacrifice of Christ. This system of ceremonies had no power in itself to save the sinner but rather pointed to the Savior who was to come. Although this Ceremonial Law was temporary until Christ came, it was actually a revelation in types and shadows, of the Everlasting Covenant Sacrifice that had been in the mind of God long before the inception of sin.

The enemies of Sabbath observance have done their utmost to eliminate the distinction between the Ten Commandments and the Ceremonial Law. They have gone to great lengths to blend the two into one, referring to both as the Old Covenant and affirming that both were Jewish and therefore abolished when Christ died on the cross. However, the distinction between the two is broad and clear. Ellen White perceptively wrote:

*“There are many who **try to blend** these two systems, using the texts that speak of the ceremonial law to prove that the moral law has been abolished; but this is a perversion of the Scriptures. The distinction between the two systems is **broad and clear**. The ceremonial system was made up of symbols pointing to Christ, to His sacrifice and His priesthood. This ritual law, with its sacrifices and ordinances, was to be performed by the Hebrews **until type met antitype** in the death of Christ, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Then all the sacrificial offerings were to cease.” Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 365*

When Adam and Eve transgressed God’s eternal Moral Law, He immediately put the eternal Covenant Sacrifice into effect. Sacrificial animals were slain, God made garments of skins and covered the shame of Adam and Eve’s nakedness (Genesis 3:21). The transgression of the Moral Law made the **implementation**

of the Covenant of Sacrifice necessary. Thus, both Covenant Law and Covenant Sacrifice existed long before the events at Mt. Sinai.

God revealed this Covenant of grace repeatedly in Old Testament times in various stages. He revealed it to Adam (Genesis 3:15), to Noah (Genesis 9:9-16), to Abraham (Genesis 17:13), to Isaac (Genesis 17:21), to Jacob (Leviticus 26:42), to Israel at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19:5) and to David (Acts 2:29, 30). These were several manifestations of the one and only covenant.

Let us turn for a few moments to the idea of Covenant in the book of Hebrews. The central theme of Hebrews is not the contrast between 'good' and 'bad' but rather 'good' and 'better'. The Old Covenant Sacrificial system of types and shadows was good in that it pointed forward to Christ. However, the New Covenant system is better because Jesus fulfilled what the Old Covenant Sacrificial system foreshadowed. Jesus offers a better hope, He is the mediator of a better covenant based upon better promises, and He offered a better sacrifice with better blood. The blood of bulls and goats was good in the sense that it foreshadowed the blood of Christ but it could not legally take away sin (Hebrews 10:4). Jesus referred to the blood of His sacrifice as 'the blood of the New Covenant' and Hebrews refers to 'the blood of the everlasting covenant' that brought Jesus back from the dead (Matthew 26:28; Hebrews 13:20).

However, the book of Hebrews not only addresses the Covenant Sacrifice, eternal in the mind of God, announced in the sacrificial system, fulfilled in fact when Jesus lived and died and forever to be remembered by the universe after the final eradication of sin. The book of Hebrews also addresses the issue of the everlasting Moral Law.

Exodus 19 describes the arrival of Israel at Mt. Sinai. Moses went to the top of the Mount and God gave him a message to share with 'the house of Jacob' and the 'people of Israel'. God first told Moses about His goodness, 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself' (verse 4).

Next, God announced that He wanted to make a covenant with ‘the house of Jacob’ and ‘the people of Israel’: ‘Now therefore, if you will indeed **obey** My voice and **keep My covenant**, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine” (verse 5). Moses then relayed the message to ‘the house of Jacob’ and ‘the people of Israel’ to which they replied, ‘all that the Lord has spoken we will do’ (verse 8). Finally, in chapter 20, God revealed to ‘the house of Jacob’ and ‘the people of Israel’ the Covenant, the Ten Commandments.

Israel’s vow of obedience to their marriage covenant with the LORD was short lived. In Exodus 32, we find them repudiating their ‘I do’ wedding vows with their ‘husband’ and playing the harlot with the Egyptian gods. What went wrong so quickly? The prophet Jeremiah some 800 years later explained:

Jeremiah 31:31, 32

*"Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a **new covenant** with the **house of Israel** and with the **house of Judah**—³² not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant **which they broke**, though I was **a husband** to them, says the Lord."*

There was nothing wrong with the marriage Covenant at Sinai. The problem was with the people not with the Covenant. The writer of the book of Hebrews, reminiscing about the Sinai event stated that God found fault with the people, not the Covenant (Hebrews 8:8). The problem was that the people looked at the Law as an external code written on tables of stone to obey but without a heart relationship with their husband. So what was the solution to the problem? Did God decide to abolish the Covenant Law that He wrote on tables of stone? Jeremiah provided the answer:

Jeremiah 31:33:

*“But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put **My law** in their **minds**, and write it on their **hearts**; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”*

Both the Old and New Covenants have the **same Law**, the Ten Commandments. However, the place where God writes that Law changes. When the Law is written merely on tables of stone outside man, obedience becomes external, forced, dry and legalistic. However, when God writes the Law upon the human heart, obedience becomes loving and spontaneous. Israel sought to render God a loveless obedience to the Law as a bare code written on tables of stone.

Someone might object, Jeremiah was talking about ‘the house of Israel’ and the ‘house of Judah’ and therefore what he says applies only to the Jews. The problem with this argument is that the book of Hebrews applies these verses from Jeremiah to Christians! Thus, the expressions ‘house of Israel’ and ‘house of Judah’ today refer to Christians! (Hebrews 8:7-12)

Let us now apply this to the Sabbath in the time of Christ. The **Pharisees** of Christ’s day were a perfect example of the Law written **only** on tables of stone. Like Israel at Mt. Sinai (where the people promised: “all that the Lord has commanded **we will do**”) they rendered the law written **on stone** an **external, legal** obedience that did not come **from the heart**. Their observance of the Sabbath was loveless, harsh and merciless. They saw the Sabbath as a means to earn salvation, and it was a burden because it was devoid of love. When Jesus healed on the Sabbath, the religious leaders focused on the external code instead of focusing on those who were suffering and in need of healing. Jesus did not break or abolish the Sabbath but rather restored it to its original intent and meaning. A Christian who truly loves Jesus will find it a delight to suspend their own activities for twenty-four hours to focus only on their relationship with Jesus and the needs of others. The foundation of lasting and deep

relationships is spending time with the one we love and God has given us an entire day a week to spend with Him!

A few years ago, Roy Moore, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Alabama placed a 5,300-pound monument of the Ten Commandments in State Building of Alabama. Does placing the Ten Commandments on a monument of stone really transform society? Actually, it does little good to have the Ten Commandments merely on a monument of stone. In order for the Commandments to be effective, God must write them on the tables of the human heart because true morality works from the inside out.

In 2 Corinthians 3 the apostle Paul seconded Jeremiah's perspective of this matter when he wrote that the Ten Commandments should be written, 'not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.' (2 Corinthians 3:3).

Is the Sabbath Jewish?

Frequently I ask Christian friends of other denominations to whom the light, the firmament, the vegetation, the heavenly bodies, the fish, the birds, the land animals and human beings belong. Their immediate answer is that it all belongs to God. Then I ask them, why these things belong to God and the answer is immediate: "Because God created them." They are of course correct:

Psalm 24:1-2:

*"The earth is **the Lord's**, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein. ² **For** He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the waters."*

However, these same Christian friends fail to take their statement to its logical conclusion. If everything that God made during creation week is His, because he made it then the Sabbath must be His as well because He made it for man at the conclusion of creation week (Mark 2:27). To say that all that God made the

first six days is His but the Sabbath is of the Jews is absurd. This is why the Bible refers to the Sabbath with expressions such as:

- ‘the Sabbath **of the Lord** your God’ (Exodus 20:11)
- ‘you shall keep **my** Sabbaths’ (Ezekiel 20:12, 20),
- God refers to it as ‘**my** holy day’ (Isaiah 58:13, 14)
- The Son of man is **Lord of the Sabbath** (Mark 2:27)

Never once in the Old or New Testament, not even once, do the writers refer to the Sabbath as the **Jewish Sabbath** or the Sabbath of the Jews. However, John refers to the feasts that passed away when Jesus died as ‘feasts of the Jews’.

- Jesus is the king of the Jews (Matthew 2:2; 27:11). Is He not the king of everyone?
- John 2:13: The Passover is called the ‘Passover of the Jews’
- John 5:1: ‘a feast of the Jews’
- John 6:4: ‘the Passover, a feast of the Jews’
- John 7:2: ‘the Jews’ Feast of Tabernacles’
- John 11:55 ‘the Jews Passover was nigh at hand’

Was the Sabbath only a sign for Israel?

Frequently anti-Sabbatarian Christians affirm that the Sabbath was a sign **only** between God and literal Israel. The passage that they usually refer to as proof is Exodus 31:13, 16-17.

Exodus 31:13, 16, 17:

*"Speak also to the **children of Israel**, saying: 'Surely **My** Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is **a sign** between **Me and you** throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you. ¹⁶ Therefore the **children of Israel** shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a **perpetual covenant**. ¹⁷ It is **a sign** between Me and the children of Israel forever; **for** in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.'"*

These verses clearly tell us that the Sabbath was a sign between God and Israel. However, the text does not say that it was **exclusively** a sign between God and Israel. Let us notice several indicators that the Sabbath was for all human beings.

First, God gave **all** Ten Commandments **to Israel** at Mt. Sinai. Does this mean that the Ten Commandments were binding **only** upon Israel because God revealed them to them? To answer **yes would be absurd!** It defies logic to say that nine of the Ten Commandments apply to everyone but **only one** applies exclusively to the Jews. God gave the Ten Commandments to Israel because they were **His people at that time**. However, that does not mean that they were binding **only** upon **literal** Israel. The text does not say that the Sabbath was a sign **exclusively** between God and literal Israel.

Second, the motivation for the observance of the Sabbath **transcends** literal Israel because **creation** is the reason why the Sabbath is a sign between God and His people. That is to say, Israel must keep the Sabbath because God established it as a **sign of creation**. Would it make any sense to think that **Israel alone** was required to keep the Sabbath in **commemoration of creation**? Do not all human beings need to remember that God created the heavens, the earth and everything in them?

Third, **Galatians 3:28, 29** states that those who are '**in Christ**' are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. If Christians are Abraham's seed, then they are members of Israel and as such should keep the Sabbath.

Finally, **Isaiah 56:4-7** clearly states that the Sabbath was intended for **Gentiles** as well as Jews and Jesus explicitly affirmed that the Sabbath **was made for man** (**Mark 2:27**). Thus, our Lord taught that the Sabbath was a creation institution that He made it for the benefit of man. The use of the word **anthropos** by Jesus in Mark 2:27 is significant. He did not say He made the Sabbath for Israel but rather for '**humankind**' (NRSV).

A Sign of Redemption from Bondage

Let us now consider another argument that the Evangelical radio host used to discard the need for Christians to keep the Sabbath.

Deuteronomy 5:12-15:

*"Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. ¹³ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁴ but the **seventh day** is the **Sabbath** of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. ¹⁵ And remember that **you were a slave** in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; **therefore** the Lord your God commanded you to **keep the Sabbath day.**"*

The Evangelical radio host said that this passage proves that the Sabbath was **only** for the Jews because it was a sign of their deliverance from Egypt. This is not true! The passage simply proves that the Sabbath took on an **added significance** for Israel. The original creation function remained because

Exodus 31:17 tells us that Israel was to keep the Sabbath as a commemoration of **creation**. At the Exodus, the Sabbath simply took on an added function to remind Israel that God had redeemed them from bitter servile slave labor. This added dimension of the Sabbath does not abolish its original creation function!

As we have previously seen, Jesus was the Creator of Genesis 1 (see John 1:1-3) so it was Jesus who created the Sabbath! Notably, the very same Jesus delivered Israel from Egypt and gave them the Sabbath as the sign of their redemption. This same Jesus also wrote the law with His own finger at Mt. Sinai. You might be wondering how we know this.

When Moses drew near the burning bush that was not consumed, the LORD called to him from the midst of the bush and told Moses that He had descended to deliver Israel from bondage (Exodus 3:6-9). When Moses asked the LORD in whose name he was to speak to the people, God replied that he should tell them that 'I AM that I AM' (Exodus 3:14) had sent him. The same I AM spoke and wrote the Ten Commandments and gave them to Israel on Mt. Sinai. We know this because the giver of the Law spoke to Israel saying: "**I am** the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" and as we have seen, the Sabbath became a sign of their deliverance from bondage in Egypt.

There is a definite link between the deliverance of Israel from bondage in Egypt and deliverance from bondage to sin. In John 8 we find Jesus conversing and with the Jews and the conversation revolved around deliverance from bondage. The conversation began with Jesus telling the Jews 'you will know the truth and the truth will set you free' (John 8:31) to which the Jews quickly responded that they were free and had never been in bondage to anyone. Jesus then told them that whoever sins is a slave to sin and told them that if they accepted Him they would be free indeed (John 8:32-36). The conversation concluded when Jesus said, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.' John 8:58

The point is that the same person who delivered Israel from literal bondage in Egypt would deliver those who accepted Him from spiritual bondage to sin. As the blood of the Passover lamb in Egypt marked Israel's deliverance from physical bondage, so Jesus, the true Passover Lamb shed His blood to deliver His people from bondage to sin. Moreover, after Jesus finished His work of redemption, He rested in the tomb on the Sabbath day and as Christ commanded Israel to rest on the Sabbath in commemoration of their deliverance from bondage, so the followers of Jesus rested in commemoration of their release from spiritual bondage to sin.

Luke 23:54-56:

*"That day was the **Preparation**, and the **Sabbath** drew near. ⁵⁵ And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid. ⁵⁶ Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils and **they rested** on the Sabbath according to **the commandment**."*

True, the followers of Jesus did not yet understand the profound redemptive significance of the Sabbath but in time, they would. Ellen White was right on target when she described the relationship between creation, redemption and the Sabbath:

*"The **Father and the Son rested** after **Their work** of Creation. 'Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day, God ended His work which He had made. . . . And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested' Genesis 2:1-3. The death of Christ was designed to be at the very time in which it took place. It was in God's plan that the work which Christ had engaged to do should be **completed on a Friday**, and that on the Sabbath He should rest in the tomb, even as **the Father and Son had rested after completing Their creative work**. The hour of Christ's apparent defeat was the hour of His victory. The great plan, devised before the foundations of the earth were laid, was successfully carried out." Manuscript 25, 1898, pp. 3, 4 ("The Man of Sorrows," typed, February 24, 1898)*

The Manna episode in Exodus 16 bears a close relationship with the redemptive significance of the Sabbath. The story tells us that Manna fell on the first six days of the week but not on the seventh day Sabbath. When the people picked up a double portion of Manna on Friday, it was as fresh on Sabbath as it had been on Friday. However, if they picked up a double portion any other day, it bred worms and stank. What is the Christ centered meaning of this and how does it relate to the Sabbath? We must go to the New Testament to find out.

The gospel of John tells us explicitly that the Manna represented the flesh of Jesus that He would give for the life of the world (John 6:51). What would have happened to an ordinary body that died on Friday? The answer is that shortly after death the body would begin the process of decomposition that would lead it to breed worms and stink. However, the body of Jesus was different. While His flesh rested in the tomb on Sabbath, it did not see corruption because He was what the Manna represented (see Acts 2:25-27). Thus, the Sabbath is a reminder of the rest of Jesus from His redemptive works where His flesh saw no corruption.

However, the Sabbath has yet a third dimension. The book of Revelation describes seven devastating plagues that will afflict creation just before the second coming. God gave the prophet Jeremiah a glimpse of what the earth will be like because of the plagues:

Jeremiah 4:23:

*"I beheld the earth, and indeed it was **without form**, and **void**; and the heavens, they had **no light**."*

The scenario that Jeremiah described is that of the earth before creation week:

✓ **No light** in the heavens.

- ✓ The **atmosphere** defiled by putrefaction.
- ✓ All the **vegetation** dried up and died.
- ✓ The **sun, moon and stars** were moved out of their places.
- ✓ All the **fish** in the sea died.
- ✓ All the **birds** of the air were gone.
- ✓ All the **land animals** died.
- ✓ No **human beings** on earth.

However, the book of Revelation tells us that God will create a new heavens and a new earth (Revelation 21:1) and the gospel prophet Isaiah explains that **all flesh** (not only the Jews) will come to worship God in commemoration of the new creation.

Isaiah 66:22-23:

*"For as the **new heavens** and the **new earth** which I will make shall remain before Me," says the Lord, "So shall your descendants and your name remain. ²³ And it shall come to pass that from one New Moon to another, and from one **Sabbath** to another, **all flesh** shall come to **worship before Me**," says the Lord."*

- ✓ No doubt, God will recreate the world in six days and cease on the seventh. God's people could not go to worship before the Lord on the seventh day Sabbath unless there were six days before the seventh.
- ✓ In contrast to the beginning when Adam and Eve did not see God create anything, God's people will be alive and **eyewitnesses** of the new creation.
- ✓ Someone might ask, how then do we explain **Revelation 21:23** where John tells us that the New Jerusalem will not need the sun or moon? If there is no sun or moon how can there be days and weeks? No problem. The text does

not say that there will be no sun or moon but rather **in the city** there will be **no need** of sun or moon (see Isaiah 24:23).

Argument from Silence

The radio host claimed that because there is no mention of Sabbath observance in the Biblical record between Geneses 2:2, 3 and **Exodus 16**, the Sabbath was not a creation institution. I have never liked arguments from silence because they prove little. The fact that there is no mention of Sabbath observance between creation and the Manna episode does not mean that no one kept it! True, there is no direct mention of Sabbath observance between Genesis 2 and Exodus 16, however, in Exodus 16 there are strong hints that the Sabbath existed during this period. In Exodus 16:4, the LORD spoke to Moses in the following words:

Exodus 16:4:

*"I will rain bread from heaven for you and the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in **My law** or not . . .*

When Israel disobeyed the LORD and went out to pick up Manna on the Sabbath and found none, the LORD told them through Moses:

Exodus 16:28:

*"How long do you refuse to keep My **commandments** and My **laws**?"*

At this point God had not yet given Israel the Ten Commandments and yet God complained that Israel was violating the Sabbath because they did not keep His commandments and laws. Obviously, the Sabbath law existed before the Manna episode.

Notably, God told Isaac long before the exodus that in Abraham's seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed because "Abraham obeyed My voice and **kept** My charge, My **commandments**, My statutes, and My **laws**." The words 'commandments' and 'laws' are the same that appear in Exodus 16:28!



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