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Special feature this weekend at atoday.org Watch your e-mail or the atoday.org home page for a special announcement and link to a feature-length article, "Adventist Responses to United States Supreme Court Decisions".

New Adventists and Old Creation: A newly baptized Adventist who joined the Church because of its stand against eternally burning hell, now wonders why the Church insists categorically on teaching young-earth creationism. He finds AT comments on creation refreshing, and wonders what he can do, as a new SDA, to encourage the Church to open its mind on the question, in the manner of Jack Hoehn's blogs....
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How to Check Your Church’s Blood Pressure: Does church life have a systolic-diastolic rhythm? Can you check it? Joan Chittister thinks so, in this devotional blog by Debbonnaire Kovacs....

Photographer and Dog Teach Kids Stewardship Principles: Jan Mathews says all she had “in her hand” were a camera, a furry dog, and a few rhymes. But she’s hoping God can use them to help teach children (and their parents) that He is Owner of everything, and we are the caretakers.
Prayer: Poet and connoisseur of words Andrew "Andy" Hanson distills in verse the wonder of his expanding appreciation of the marvelous complexity and improbable contradictions in his expanding appreciation for LIFE.

Victory Over the Beast, Chapter 12: Living in the Judgment Hour - II: The next chapter of Dr. Erv Thomsen’s book, "Victory Over the Beast," brings a whole new twist to the scriptural teaching that Christians are “kings and priests.” How can we help accomplish Jesus’ intercessory ministry? The answers surprise.
North American Adventist Church Growth: The Untold Story

Submitted: Jul 1, 2013

By Danny Bell

Church dignitaries anxious to capitalise on apparent gains in our worldwide movement have again given false impressions of the health of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The virus was first picked up in Australia when Church leaders there began trumpeting results from the most recent Australian Census indicating the Adventist Church in Australia was the fastest growing denomination. Like a fever, these fantastic reports have circled the globe, despite the statistical evidence from the Church archives telling an entirely different and grim picture. [1]

Despite the warnings I gave in my earlier article, the virus is still alive. At a regional meeting recently I again listened in disbelief as a church representative brought to the attention of the congregation the news that North America was doing exceptionally well and that we should be proud of our movement. This was based on an article in *USA Today,* indicating that the Adventist Church was growing at the fastest pace of any Christian denomination in the country. [2] This led me to squirm in my seat, as I was witnessing yet another message of misinformation, giving average church members a false sense of security.

First consider a few facts from the general population in the US. A recent Gallup Poll indicated that 77 percent of Americans identify with Christianity and 18 percent have no religious affiliation. [3] This survey finding is consistent with other studies near this figure and the observations of many analysts that those who no longer believe have increased substantially. [4]

There is dispute about church attendance among American Christians. Researchers challenge the polls that give a rosy picture of 40 percent when, in fact, it is closer to 20 percent. [5] There is a disconnect between Americans and the Church. They are happy to buy the product, but don’t make them go to the store to get it.

So is the Adventist Church in the United States really doing that well? One way to measure this is to look at data available from the General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics and Research. [6] The latest information is for 2011 because 2012 data is still being compiled. I have applied the same parameters to the North American Division (NAD) which I did in the Australian Union Conference study, even though the NAD is much larger in scale and geography. The results are no less disappointing.

For the Adventist Church in North America the data show that the increase in membership was 15,224 souls for 2011. This net figure is after adding all of the increases such as baptisms, profession of faith, and transfers in and then subtracting the losses from deaths, dropped, missing and transfers out. [7] However, we still need to apply a couple more parameters to get a more realistic growth picture for the NAD in 2011.

Another way of looking at these data is called kingdom growth, as I pointed out in the my article on the Australian Church. [8] The idea behind Kingdom growth is that the Church community increases by a non-believer becoming a Christian, leaving a deficit in the non-Christian community from which they came. For the purposes of illustration, if we were dealing in real growth terms it would look like this on a scoreboard:

| Christian community | +1 | Non-Christian community | -1 |

So the Church’s gain is a decrease in the number of non–Christians. Knowing this, we need to also understand that it is estimated that about half of those who join the church annually come from biological growth. [9] These increases come when we baptise our own children, those who have been brought up in the church. While it is a time for rejoicing when young people commit to Christ, it’s not true Kingdom growth. The non-Christian population has had no loss.

On way to explain this is by imagining that a church has 100 people attending regularly, 90 of whom are baptized and 10 who are youth who have not yet been baptized. If those 10 youth are then baptised, how has the church grown? The church is still 100 people and the community has not been impacted by the Gospel. Nothing has changed except inside the church.

The NAD’s net growth figure of 15,224 souls for 2011, therefore, can’t be classified as true Kingdom growth. If we concede half as being biological growth, that gives us a Kingdom growth net increase of 7,612 in 2011. To get a true picture in human terms we need to divide that figure among the 6,125 congregations of the NAD. This leaves us with an average increase of one-and-a-quarter persons per congregation. Sound cold and calculating? That’s reality, unfortunately.

If we were true to the idea of Kingdom growth, we could also say that the 5,556 souls that came in on profession of faith are not true Kingdom growth either. These members are deemed to have had a previous experience with Christ, before becoming Church members and, therefore, are not converts from the non-believing community. This adjustment tips the scales into negative territory where most Christian denominations in the U.S. clearly rate. The NAD’s ability to connect with the non-believing
public, therefore, is a losing battle, as its gains are among those who are already Christians, by an overwhelming majority.

I find most staggering the number of those who went missing during the year. The title “missing” means their local church does not know where they are. The 8,212 souls that just slipped out the back door into oblivion is a statistic that should shock us to our core. Building a more personal tracking system needs to be a major consideration.

I see retention as being part of the solution, but even with good retention rates, poor Kingdom growth is still a factor. As with Australians, most Americans identify with Christianity but are not attracted to church, as indicated by low attendance figures. They like what we are selling but our market stall is not user friendly. They like the potato salad but they didn’t trust the person who sold it to them.

The reality is that the Church in western society has become insular, self-centred, and unconcerned about a suffering, dying world. We prefer to stand at church doors and call out to the public rather than go out and get involved in the dirty business of befriending the scum of the earth. The fortress mentality is alive and well in our churches and until we realise that it’s not all about "going home to heaven" and "wishing Jesus would come," the sooner we can properly engage in the Master's business.

This is a mighty challenge for the NAD to seriously consider the current ways of doing things and ask if we are holding onto old forms of religion that are outdated and have lost currency with the masses. Are smaller, more personal efforts needed rather than large, ineffective and costly forms of evangelism? The public interest has clearly shifted away from what once attracted significant numbers.

Rather than pining for heaven and going home, we need to re-focus on what God still wants to do. Amos delivers a poignant final word and puts it better than I, for my conclusion: "What sorrow awaits you who say, 'If only the day of the Lord were here!' You have no idea what you are wishing for. That day will bring darkness, not light. In that day you will be like a man who runs from a lion—only to meet a bear. Escaping from the bear, he leans his hand against a wall in his house—and he’s bitten by a snake. Yes, the day of the Lord will be dark and hopeless, without a ray of joy or hope. I hate all your show and pretence - the hypocrisy of your religious festivals and solemn assemblies. I will not accept your burnt offerings and grain offerings. I won’t even notice all your choice peace offerings. Away with your noisy hymns of praise! I will not listen to the music of your harps. Instead, I want to see a mighty flood of justice, an endless river of righteous living." (Amos 5:18-24)

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1. Danny Bell, "What Did the Australian Census Really Tell Us About Church Growth?"  Adventist Today [www.atoday.org], May 19, 2013.
5. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Bell, Ibid.
9. There is no real way of measuring this except by anecdotal evidence. I understand that many may query this but if we look through our publications and baptisms we attend we can safely say that 50 percent is a conservative estimate. In reality it is much higher for many churches. It would be interesting for there to be some compiled data on this but I have yet to find any.

Danny Bell lives in Western Australia. He has been a pastor, chaplain, family court mediator, counsellor and editor of Trench Mail, a men's ministry publication. He is currently leading a church plant called Lion Hearts which focuses on attracting men. His passion lies in making the Church relevant to the Church’s largest unreached people group—men.

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Leading Christian Digital Publisher to Launch a Product Line for Adventists

Submitted: Jul 3, 2013

By ANN

Logos Bible Software, the leading publisher of Bible software and digital media for churches, has hired a Seventh-day Adventist pastor to develop a new line of products for the Adventist market. A story released by the Adventist News Network (ANN), the denomination's official news service, written by Mark Kellner, news editor of the Adventist Review, has announced that Pastor Martin Weber, who retired recently as communication director for the Mid-America Union Conference, has been employed by Logos as the firm's Adventist product manager.

Based in Bellingham, Washington, Logos has more than 2 million customers that use its Bible software worldwide. With users in more than 210 countries, it publishes in more than 30 languages. It is the only electronic publisher to offer The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary and the Ellen G. White writings as part of an integrated Bible software package. Logos is believed to be the first interdenominational publisher to launch an initiative specifically aimed at serving the Adventist market.

Weber, in a telephone interview, said his task will be to expand the list of Adventist-related publications—which now stands at 18, including the recent addition of the Andrews Study Bible notes—to cover a broad range of the movement’s writers and thinkers. “I’m hoping to take leading Adventist writers and speakers, contemporary and historical, and have them available in an Adventist-specific package,” he said. Logos has a proprietary database system in which thousands of documents can be searched at once for highly specific results. For example, it will be possible to type “Rev. 14:6” and see where every Adventist author in the database has ever quoted that text.

Logos can also transcribe into print format various Adventist audio and video archives and make them searchable with a keystroke by users. Potentially, a user could instantly discover every time Voice of Prophecy founder H.M.S. Richards was recorded speaking the word “Gethsemane” in his nearly five decades of radio talks or every time noted evangelist George Vandeman used the word “Armageddon” in his 35 years of television sermons. Logos hopes to package the written transcripts of their messages, and those of more than a dozen other beloved Adventist teachers past and present—with their original audio or video—thus opening up a multimedia trove of materials.

Weber is working with Logos management to provide Adventist materials in languages other than English, giving priority to Spanish, Portuguese, French and German. Ultimately, he said, thousands of articles in the archives of numerous Adventist publications can be bundled into general categories such as spirituality, outreach, Adventist history, prophecy, etc. The whole mass of documents can then be searched specifically, so that any Adventist document included in the database that used the word “Millerite” will be instantly discoverable. Participating Adventist publishers and authors would receive royalties from Logos sales of their documents. Weber said he wants to “work in collaboration with existing Adventist publishers, seeking ‘win-win’ partnerships for the sake of benefiting church members globally.”

Another advantage for Adventists, Weber said, is that evangelists and pastors can publish Ebooks through Logos, opening up distribution to the entire Christian marketplace. These materials would be available to the wider Logos user base across denominational lines.

Weber’s four decades of employment by the denomination on five continents uniquely equip him to serve the Adventist market through Logos. In addition to his role with the Mid-America Union Conference, Weber served at the Voice of Prophecy in 1983 and two years later became assistant to the director at It Is Written. He wrote 100 television scripts and answered more than 8,000 letters from viewers seeking biblical information.

During the early 1990s Weber served as associate editor for Ministry magazine and as a member of the General Conference executive committee. He also authored several books, served as an adjunct faculty member at several Adventist colleges, was a member of the International Police and Fire Chaplain’s Association, and was board chair for The Hope of Survivors, an international organization advocating on behalf of victims of clergy sexual abuse.

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Adventist Today

New York City Evangelism Campaign Culminates in Coliseum Event

Submitted: Jul 1, 2013

By AT News Team **Correction added at the end of the story on July 2**

An estimated 15,000 people crowded into the Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum in a Long Island suburb on Sabbath (June 29) to celebrate the NY13 evangelism campaign in New York City. The *Adventist Review* reported in an online bulletin Saturday night that "at least 148 were baptized" at the event and "nearly 2,000" had been baptized earlier in the year "as the New York City area hosted more than 400 evangelistic outreach events held by Adventist congregations." It is unknown how many of these baptisms were people who were already church members being rebaptized.

One of the events leading up to this occasion was the evangelism series led by Pastor Ted Wilson, president of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (GC), in the Greenwich Village neighborhood on Manhattan. When the series began on June 7, "668 guests came," according to a report in the *ASI News* published earlier last week. *ASI News* is the newsletter of Adventist-Laymen's Services and Industries, the officially-recognized association of small business people and "supporting" independent ministries associated with the denomination. The source of this figure was not identified, nor is it clear if this is the attendance on the opening night or a cumulative attendance. A different source told Adventist Today that about two thirds of those in attendance were church members.

"Nearly 160 other evangelistic meetings took place concurrently in the Greater New York area," the newsletter reported. "To date 1,100 people have been baptized in the Greater New York Conference and 52 people were baptized on Sabbath, June 8, in the North Bronx Church as a result of meetings by Breath of Life." The North Bronx Church is affiliated with the Northeastern Conference and Breath of Life is an Adventist television ministry, both with an historic focus on reaching African Americans.

The *ASI News* had predicted that "approximately 1,000 people will be baptized" at yesterday's coliseum event. It also reported that "ASI involvement began [in] January, when ASI member Denzil McNeilus presented a one-day ... training program to nearly 300" people at the Fort Washington Spanish Church. The participants were taught how to use DVDs developed by ASI. It emphasized that the campaign in New York City is "comprehensive outreach ... including prayer, community service, health education, women's and youth ministry."

At the event yesterday, the mayor of the nearby suburban town of Hempstead, Wayne J. Hall, welcomed the crowd and Una S. T. Clarke, a former member of the New York City Council and mother of U.S. Representative Yvette Clarke (D-Brooklyn) was among the VIP guests. Bill DeBlasio, the New York City public advocate, praised the contribution that Adventists make to the city.

Wilson told the *Adventist Review* that he had "an amazing experience in Greenwich Village. The audience stayed with us the whole time." He also emphasized that the day's event was not the end of Adventist outreach in the region. He said, "We came to New York to highlight 'Mission to the Cities.' This is not a culmination today in New York City: the work is continuing."

A statement from the GC Ministerial Association also underlined the wholistic and ongoing nature of the denomination's strategic focus on metropolitan areas. "Our mission to the cities is a marathon of compassion that must have an on-going and sustained presence in the cities, and must continue beyond 2013." Some 300 denominational employees from all 13 of the GC divisions have been participating in a Field School of Evangelism in New York City during June. Similar campaigns are underway in Sydney, Australia, and London, the UK.

Addendum

There are two Adventist churches in New York City named North Bronx and the one where the Breath of Life ministry conducted an evangelism campaign is affiliated with the Greater New York Conference, Pastor Lloyd Scharffenberg told Adventist Today. He also stated that the 668 attendance figure reported above "was for one night. On several nights the church was filled with additional people in the fellowship hall watching via [closed circuit television]." Adventist Today has been told by other sources that the Manhattan Church seats about 800.

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New Adventists and Old Creation

By Jack Hoehn

Since completing my series of blogs on Long Term Creationism for Adventists, I have been met by people who tell me they have enjoyed reading the blogs even though they don’t fully agree with me, and others who thank me for writing things they have thought for a long time.

I was particularly interested in an E-mail from Mr. John H. Evans, forwarded to me by Adventist Today. With John’s permission I’d like to share edited portions of our correspondence:

Dr. Hoehn,

I was delighted to receive your response to my email to the Atoday.com office. I have been an Adventist for only about 10 months, but studied Adventist Basic Beliefs thoroughly before joining the Adventist Church. I am now a member of the Mosaic Christian Fellowship in Fairview, Texas, and am very pleased with its pastor, James Weingardner, and the friendly people in the church. Previously for many years I was a member of the Southern Baptist Church, but after finally realizing that the Doctrine of Eternal Punishment which the church adheres to is not acceptable, either from a rational or scriptural basis, I joined the Adventist Mosaic Fellowship… I left the Baptist Church and joined the Adventist church to a large extent because the Adventists do not believe in eternal punishment/torment for the unsaved…

From the very beginning though, I had reservations concerning the Adventists beliefs on Creation. I am retired now, and spent much of my career as a Research Economist for Exxon Mobil in their Earth Sciences R and D subsidiary. Also, my college work included many courses in the basic sciences including geology, biology, comparative anatomy, chemistry and physics. So I was really delighted to come across your articles in the Atoday.org website on creation, including the concept of theistic evolution and an old earth chronology. I am in complete agreement with your articles on these subjects, particularly your most recent article “Jack’s Last Words on Old Earth Creationism”.

I would particularly like to know your thoughts on an important aspect of this subject. And that is, what do you feel is the possibility of ever convincing Adventists, particularly the governing conferences, of your thoughts on evolution and an old age earth? Recent trends on the acceptance of the doctrine of soul annihilation gives me hope that conservative denominations might start leaning more in the direction of… an old earth and evolution. Could the Adventists be convinced that both a literal interpretation and a more scientific, theistic evolution explanation are acceptable?

I have just finished reading the scholarly Adventist book entitled “Creation, Catastrophe and Calvary.” which strongly supports the conventional position of the Adventist Church. The main argument of this book is that evolution and an old age earth is in conflict with the Christian doctrine of atonement, including the concept that the living and dying of animals prior to Adam’s sin contradicts the doctrine of atonement. This interpretation seems very unreal, unlikely and contrived. It seems clear to me that the atonement applies only to the living and dying of humans, and not sub-humans.

At my advanced age, it might be optimistic that I could have much influence on Adventist theology, but I would be very interested in knowing your thoughts on this matter. It might not be feasible for you to put all your thoughts on this subject in writing, but anything you might have to say would be of interest to me. Would it be appropriate to include such an article on this subject on the Atoday.org website? God bless, John H. Evans

Later Mr. Evans wrote:

I have been reading some more of the Opinion section comments on the creation issue in the Adventist Today, including yours. I was amazed to find how spirited and lengthy the debate on a literal creation is in the magazine. It also is clear that you have spent a lot of time debating this issue in the magazine, and that you have a lot of opposition. I find it very interesting… Actually I don’t think the Baptist and other conservative denominations publish anything comparable. So the Adventist do encourage free discussion of these difficult debatable issues? Very encouraging.

So what would you say to our new Brother in Christ, willing to join an Adventist Church that tells the truth about hell and soul sleep?

How about having the Adventist church tell the truth about the age of the earth and the complexity of creation for the same reasons that convinced Mr. Evans to join Adventists, “on a Rational and Scriptural basis”?

I have suggested to John that he should submit a book review on Creation, Catastrophe, and Calvary.

Please welcome John Evans to our Adventist family, and suggest your answers to his questions below. He assures me he will be reading your comments.

______________________________
Join in the discussion:

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Why Doesn't Jesus Heal Anymore?

By Don Watson

Mark 3:10 tells about the huge crowd of people who came to Jesus from all over Israel—even the heathen areas of Tyre and Sidon—to be healed and have devils cast out of their loved-ones. And so I've wondered many times why God doesn't heal people today like He did back then. Don't get me wrong; I'm sure it still happens. Perhaps it even happens more often than I know, particularly in poorer countries, where affluence has not dulled people's dependence on God. But another thought has come to my mind that I want to share with you. Perhaps these thoughts will help keep your faith firm in God when you have a loved one who is sick, especially when God seems absent, not provide healing in the way you wish.

First of all, let me say that I believe God sees our healing as already accomplished rather than something that hasn't happened yet or may not happen. In other words, because the Great I AM is not a creature of time and His promises are as sure as if they had already happened, Jehovah declares it already accomplished. Isaiah says, "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed" (Is. 53:5, KJV). Peter quotes this prophetic declaration of the Healing-Messiah as well in 1 Peter 2:24. So we may not see our healing, but we are healed because God says so. Paul

Another thing: When Jesus came to this earth the teachers of Israel believed that sickness, deformities and other weaknesses or ailments, including even poverty, were the result of God's disfavor toward men who were terrible sinners. The existence of the condition, whatever it might be, confirmed the sinful state of the person. Their lack of repentance was obvious because they remained sick. If they had repented, God would have forgiven them, and they would no longer be sick or infirmed. Sick people were considered to be unrepentant, unforgiven people who remained under the condemnation of God.

This was a horrible misunderstanding of God's love and mercy. So Jesus set about to correct this evil doctrine from the beginning of His ministry. The record states that multitudes came to be healed. A simple touch of the hem of His garment could give healing. THAT is the picture Jesus wanted people to have of His Father! Every time He healed a person of some disease, or corrected some malady, such as blindness, or cast out demons, He was revealing the God who forgives first and then heals. According to the thinking of New Testament times, Jesus could not heal a person unless God had first forgiven that person. In this way Jesus brought the Gospel to life, demonstrating His love with a gift of healing for those that suffer, revealing the Good News about who God truly is. God accepts us WHILE we're sinners (Romans 5:6,8). The healing change comes afterwards, and it too is a gift of God. That's the Gospel!

Of course, nothing demonstrated God's unconditional love for every man better than the cross (Romans 5:7-8). So now in our day, we have a fuller understanding of the Gospel as revealed in the life AND death of Jesus—God loves sinners. Our sickness, defects or deformities are not God's punishment for personal sinfulness or a sign of His disfavor. Every man is loved eternally and unconditionally; they are saved and accepted exactly as they are (Romans 5:6-8). Calvary has settled the issue concerning God's love for us. Healing is not necessary to prove God's love and acceptance of us.

All that being said, Revelation 14:13 says that those who die in the Lord are blessed, because they get to "rest from their labors and their works follow them." Certainly, we miss our departed loved ones and are saddened by this loss, but we can be happy for THEM because the next thing they will see is Jesus coming to resurrect them. In fact, the next paragraph (Revelation 14:14-16) describes the coming of Jesus and the end of the world.

I lost my Dad about 25 years ago. Every now and then I think of his laugh or some funny thing he would say. For example, after eating a piece of pecan pie, he would tell the person who made it that it was "musty—musty have some more!" Or after a great meal he would declare: "My sufficiency has been suffunsified." And then when I was discouraged, he would take me into the bedroom and kneel down with me and pray until I knew everything would be all right. God heard Dad; I knew it. But Dad developed Alzheimer's, so when he died, though I missed him, I wouldn't have wished him back to life for a moment. The next thing dad will see is Jesus.

Now I know what you're thinking right now: "But Johnny was only 17 years old" or "Tiffany was still so young" or "Rebecca had four kids." And you're right, none of them wanted to die, to say nothing of those of us left behind who loved them, needed them, and miss them in a way so excruciatingly painful. But what is the next thing they will see? Jesus. And the next thing they will experience is being reunited to live FOREVER with all those people they love. Let's not forget that the best life any of us have is full of hard labor, pain and a lot of sorrow. But that will end when Jesus comes. This life is only a short breath compared to heaven's everlasting, perfect peace, joy and
endless love, leaving behind forever the suffering that now fills this world.

So why doesn't Jesus heal like He did back when He was here on earth? Does He love us less now than He did then? Was it because He had the center stage back then and had to make a really big splash while He was in the spotlight? No, a thousand times no to all of these ideas! He healed you and I today, 2000 years later, would know beyond a shadow of a doubt that regardless of our sin, sickness or weakness, we are loved without limit or condition by the God who gave His Son on Calvary so we would never forget who He is. He is Jesus, who died FOR us to rid this world forever of sin, pain and death. In the meantime, because He died, He has earned the right to live IN YOU, suffer with you, cry with you, hurt with you and be lonely with you. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me!" (Psalms 23, KJV). In this world of pain, the Jesus who endured all pain is with you!
How to Check Your Church’s Blood Pressure

Submitted: Jul 2, 2013
By Debonnaire Kovacs

In the chapter called “Responsibility,” Joan Chittister outlines the way the founder of her order, Benedict of Nursia, envisaged his ideal community. Each member was to help and support the others, so that all would have everything they needed, including the emotional support that helped each to be his or her best self.

As I read, I thought about the various church and group lives I’ve known and participated in.

I think most churches and church organizations would agree that church life, like Chittister’s Benedictine monastery, “is not built on a mentality of paid service for contracted hours.” Pastors, teachers, and other denominational workers, paid and unpaid, (or for that matter, non-denominational ones!) would heartily agree. But we might cringe a little when we read the next line:

Nor is it built by placing unending expectations on the willing.

We’re way too familiar with the 80/20 rule: 80% of the work is done by 20% of the people. Everyone benefits, but not everyone pulls a fair share. And if someone has the nerve to complain, they’re reminded that it’s not about “paid service for contracted hours. You should be grateful to pour yourself out for God’s work!

How much better and healthier it would be for everyone if, instead, we lived by the following:

Not everyone must do everything, but everyone must do something that benefits the group as a whole.

So here’s how you check the blood pressure, not just of your church or group, but of your own life, as well:

A Monastery of the Heart, then, must be a vision of life with God at the center and people in its heart. To ignore one or the other, however good each separate one might be, is to ignore the very diastolic-systolic rhythm of the life. Neither without the other is whole.

How’s your blood pressure? (Need we mention that physical, real-world blood pressure can be a good measure of these truths?)

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Photographer and Dog Teach Kids Stewardship Principles

Submitted: Jul 2, 2013
By Debonnaire Kovacs

“I use the example of Moses. God asked him what he had in his hand, and used that to save the people. Well, what I had was a black, furry dog and a camera and a couple of rhymes, so I hope God can use those to help people.”

Janice Mathews’ day job is that of nurse practitioner working with Cardiology Associates in Annapolis, MD. She is married to John Mathews, Stewardship Director for the North American Division, and mother of Angela, who is married to writer Seth Pierce and lives in Seattle. But for the purposes of this article, the important member of Jan’s family is a black Labradoodle called Jack.

Or Stewardship Jack. He even has his own website—www.stewardshipjack.com. I asked Jan how this happened.

She explained that she had always been interested in photography, but hadn’t done much with it until a few years ago. “It’s so involved! But I started making Shutterfly booklets for the kids, and Jack seemed to like to pose, so I made some with him, with funny sayings. Then, when John got this stewardship job—“

John Mathews was in the room, and interpolated, “‘Stewardship Jack’ just appeared out of nowhere!”

As the two discussed stewardship issues, Jan says she became concerned about a new generation of adults who are skeptical and feel that institutions such as churches are irrelevant to their lives. “I’d always thought I’d like to do a ministry for God, but I’m so busy with my job. But I thought, if these young adults were parents of kids and you used an innocuous little furry dog, you could teach stewardship principles in a way that would catch their attention and not cause bad feelings.”

Jan is also strongly interested in stewardship for children because she believes it will be an antidote to the consumerism and materialism that are strongly affecting kids today. She has read research which supports the hypothesis that the strong upswing in depression, anxiety disorders, and addictions among ever-younger children may be at least in part traced to advertising directed
at children, making them want (and think they need) ever more and more of “what everybody else has.” She believes children (and adults) who can learn to be grateful and generous will be happier and less likely to succumb to these problems.

So Jan created three books for 4 to 8-year-olds, with Stewardship Jack as their focus. The books, *Jack Gives Back, Jack and the Ten Rules,* and *Jack’s Hats,* present principles in kid-friendly rhymes such as these examples:

“I will not lie.  
Speak the truth; don’t lie or cheat  
Even if offered a yummy treat.”

“I will not covet.  
Be content with your bed,  
Your bone, and your buddy.  
To want someone’s things makes life very muddy.”

Jack also counts out one bone of ten to give back to God, and advises kids, “God made the world, man, money, and dogs. Let’s manage like good stewards and not be like hogs.”

Jan Mathews says there are two basic principles which can make life simpler and give peace of mind. “Number one, be converted. And number two, understand that God is the owner. We are only managers—stewards.”

Jack himself couldn’t comment for this article, but he did seem to be content and grateful.

More info:  
[www.stewardshipjack.com](http://www.stewardshipjack.com)  
[www.igivesda.org](http://www.igivesda.org)  
Stewardship Jack books are available at [www.adventistbookcenter.com](http://www.adventistbookcenter.com) and [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).
7.7.07 Prayer

By Andrew Hanson

I.
Lord,
I thought I had come to terms
With the beauty and savagery
Of the natural world
Babies
The size of the universe
And the speed of light
Not to mention
TV and cell phones
The Internet
And photographs of my house
From outer space
And particles so small
That they routinely
Pass through the earth
And touch nothing.

But that was before. . .

I discovered that
I am an ecological planet
Inhabited by trillions
Of microfauna and microflora
That, at least in most cases,
Have worked together
To make “us” into
The improbable ecological Planet “I”
That stands before you
This afternoon.

That was before. . .

I learned that
In the ocean
Two miles down
Fauna and flora
With their attending
Microfauna and microflora
Exist happily in and around
Hydrothermal vents
That spew boiling
Metal sulfide rich water
Heated by magma
Beneath the earth’s crust
Where the sea floor is spreading
Due to the movement
Of continental plates.

That was before. . .

I read that 600
Newly discovered life forms
Are flourishing four miles down
In stygian blackness
Below the ice in Antarctica.

That was when I
to put it into succinct scientific terms
FREAKED OUT

II.
Lord,
Right now I only know that
On this 7.7.07 lucky day
I am here
With the people I love
Struggling to understand
Persevering
Praying
Thanking You
For that
Improbable
Crazy
Complicated
Chaotic
Mysterious
Marvelous
Miraculous
Thing called
LIFE.

ah
7.7.07
Victory Over the Beast, Chapter 12: Living in the Judgment Hour - II

Submitted: Jul 2, 2013
By Ervin Thomsen

Living in the Judgment Hour - II
Our Identity as Kings and Priests

In the first angel’s message, God announces that the “hour of His judgment is come” (Revelation 14:6), and appeals to all of earth’s inhabitants to accept the benefits of the everlasting gospel, the everlasting covenant, which has existed before the foundation of the world. In this covenant, the Father and the Son clasped hands in a binding agreement that the Son would come here to planet earth to do whatever was necessary to restore humanity to communion with God should sin ever arise. The 2nd and 3rd angels’ messages inform us about heaven’s indictment of covenant-breakers who will reap the judgments of God. Hence this chapter is a brief summary about the specific heresies for which people will be judged in the last days prior to the 2nd coming of Jesus Christ. These are all related to human choices of rejecting the glorious provisions of the everlasting gospel by engaging in Babylon-like living and by worship of the beast and antichrist. Just as the tempter in his temptations of Jesus challenged His identity by the words “if you are the Son of God,” – so the enemy Satan also wants to erode the security of our identity in order that we may forget who we really are and to whom we belong. His ultimate motive is that feelings of fear about our legal standing will take away our joyful assurance of salvation.

The Security of our Identity

Living in the end-time of earth’s history, so often we may focus on a “to-do-list” (or “not-to-do”) list of duties and behaviors, as if our future destiny is totally determined by ourselves as we try to impress God with our conduct. We often seem to forget who we really are in Christ – our identity in Him. Because our ability to resist and overcome temptation resides to a great extent in our divinely-designated identity (our spiritual immune system), let us then embrace that identity because God has already embraced us in Christ. At His tomb on the morning of the resurrection, as Jesus conversed with Mary, He told her about her new identity – “I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God” (John 20:17).

By attacking our identity in Christ, Satan is able most effectively to take away our assurance of salvation and security in Christ. The ability to successfully overcome temptations does not rest in our trying harder to correct our wrong behaviors, or in accumulating good behaviors to outweigh our bad behaviors, but rather in taking full advantage of our identity in Jesus Christ.

Remember these key concepts about the role of our identity –

·   God’s Truth: Who you are determines what you do.
·   Satan’s Lies: What you do determines who you are.

Because of the accomplishments of Christ’s atoning work, God has declared certain things to be true about us regardless of our feelings. The gospel is the good news about our new identity
based on Christ’s accomplishments at the cross, and this means that legally…

· we are redeemed - “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Eph. 1:7).

· we are justified – “Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24).

· we have been given new life – “...even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” (Eph. 1:5, 6).

· we are reconciled to God – who “has reconciled us to Himself….God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself” (2 Corinthians 5:19, 20).

· we are deeply loved and the penalty of your sins have been paid. “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10).

· we have a new identity as His very own children and also heirs. “But you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus…and if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 4:26, 29). “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together” (Romans 8:14-17).

Living, as we are, in the time of His judgment, now is the time to take full advantage of our God-given identity. When we come to God in prayer, we do not come as beggars pleading for salvation, but as His very own children, fully entitled to receive the blessings of His everlasting covenant, His last will and testament.

Our identity as determined by the redemption history of Jesus Christ

To a great extent, our identity as Americans rests on the event of July 4, 1776 – the signing of the Declaration of Independence. This is a historically verifiable event. We were not there when it happened, but we are, nevertheless, the bona fide beneficiaries of that event. Likewise, our identity as Christians is based on certain verifiable historical events. The New Testament is utterly clear on this – that we are included and incorporated in the history of Jesus Christ as evidenced through the rite of baptism. Thus His history (His story) becomes our history. “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we should also walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection” (Romans 6:4, 5).

In other words, the good life that we should have lived, but did not live, Christ lived for us, and the righteous merits of His life are now credited to our account as though we had never sinned. The punishment that we rightfully deserved because of our sins, God laid on His Son. Thus we are considered as bona fide participants all the accomplishments of Christ in His atonement – His life, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, and His intercession, being now legally seated
with Him in heavenly places.

Our identity as kings and priests

In the prologue to Revelation, John conveys greetings from Jesus Christ to the early Christian believers, reminding them, in spite of persecutions and hardship they had endured, about their identity as kings and priests. “Grace to you, and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits which are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the Ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priest (or a kingdom of priests) to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen” (Revelation 1:5, 6). Notice in this sequence that our identity as “kings and priests” comes after the experience of being washed in the blood of Christ.

We approach our task as kings. Where Christ’s kingdom rule is not yet established, we are authorized and deputized to start “ruling” in such situations through our prayers. There are areas and circumstances where Christ is not now ruling – cities, counties, neighborhoods, churches, homes (including our own homes). God’s purpose for us is first to depend on His Son, Jesus Christ, and ask Him through us to extend His kingdom rule to such areas. Recall how in the Lord’s Prayer, based on our identity as His children, we pray, “Our Father…Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10 KJV). As a king, you may in praise and worship join with the witnesses in heaven’s courtroom in exalting the name of Jesus Christ, thus extending Christ’s kingdom authority in areas where He is not now ruling, for God inhabits the praises of His people (Psalm 22:3 KJV).

We also approach our tasks as priests. Our first work as priests is not witnessing to others, but to serve as intercessors in behalf of others that their hearts will be softened to hear and yield to the convicting power of the witness of the Holy Spirit. When you lift up others in prayer to Jesus, you thus join Him as a priest in His work as the great High Priest. One of the most poignant scenes from the heavenly sanctuary is found in Revelation 8:1-3 (KJV). “And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood at the altar, 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. And the smoke of the incense, [which came] with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast [it] into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake. And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.”

Our prayers do make a difference. Have you ever felt as if your prayers went no higher than the ceiling, and that prayer was merely a Christian duty with no measurable results? Then listen to this: “The religious services, the prayers, the praise, the penitent confession of sin ascend from true believers as incense to the heavenly sanctuary; but passing through the corrupt channels of humanity, they are so defiled that unless purified by blood, they can never be of value with God. They ascend not in spotless purity, and unless the Intercessor who is at God's right hand presents
and purifies all by His righteousness, it is not acceptable to God. All incense from earthly tabernacles must be moist with the cleansing drops of the blood of Christ. He holds before the Father the censer of His own merits, in which there is no taint of earthly corruption. He gathers into this censer the prayers, the praise, and the confessions of His people, and with these He puts His own spotless righteousness. Then, perfumed with the merits of Christ's propitiation, the incense comes up before God wholly and entirely acceptable. Then gracious answers are returned.” [1]

Because priests have special and privileged access to God, and because kings are given authority to rule, God wants us to exercise our dual privilege of “kings and priests” in worship and in prayer. As a priest, it is your privilege to participate in the proceedings of heaven’s courtroom by glorifying the Judge and His Son. Moreover, through prayer you have access to the control center of the universe, the place of highest authority in heaven and earth. As a priest your prayers ascend like incense before the throne of God as you join with Him in accomplishing His work in all the earth.

**The Authority of Our Identity**

With our new identity, Jesus Christ has deputized us with His authority to do His work on earth. In four passages in the gospels, Jesus resoundingly spoke about this authority.

In *Luke 10:1-20* Luke records how Jesus appointed 70 and sent them out two-by-two in advance of His own missionary trips. They returned with a glowing report of their success, stating that “even the demons are subject to us in Your name” (*Luke 10:17*), to which Jesus replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven” (*Luke 10:19, 20*). Note that Jesus here does not condemn the successful results of their work, but tells them that their real rejoicing should be found in the gospel—that is, that their names are written in heaven. One of the assignments of the gospel is that God has appointed believers of His church to be the “enforcement agency” on earth to extend the victory of Christ’s cross (*Revelation 12:11, 12*). Note, however, that enforcement does not mean the using of force and coercion, but it is rather that inner awareness of our authority in Christ, who said, “I am with you always.” In anticipation of this, Paul wrote that “the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly” (*Romans 16:20*).

This is not defensive, but offensive prayer, so much so that “the gates of hell” shall not prevail against it. Jesus has given every believer authority to bind and to loose, and praying in faith is the key with which we bind and loose. We bind Satan and angels, i.e. we ask that God will restrain their activities, and we loose the captives who are held in his prison that they may experience genuine freedom.

“Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you that if two of you agree concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am here in the midst of them” (*Matthew 18:19, 20*). When
we pray like this, we operate directly under the authority of Jesus in setting people free from bondages that bind them, so they will be able to hear and respond to the voice of Jesus. Unless we pray, they will generally not respond. When we pray, even when facing impossible situations, God has pledged to answer such prayers. Remember, “Why should the sons and daughters of God be reluctant to pray, when prayer is the key in the hand of faith to unlock heaven's storehouse, where are treasured the boundless resources of Omnipotence?” [2] When Peter gave his testimony about the identity of Jesus Christ, Jesus responded by investing him, and also all believers in His church, with authority, based on Christ’s name, to act in His behalf: “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven (Matthew 16:18, 19).

“All authority (power – KJV) has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...” (Matthew 28:18, 19). So often we have focused on the “finishing the work,” as if this is all that matters, but God wants us to avail ourselves of the authority, a derived authority, He has given us. Just imagine the results of our witnessing and evangelism if we would take God at His word according to these passages of Scripture. Why don’t we do it? This notion of having been given authority to act is no doubt one of the most neglected aspects of our ministry. Is it possible that we are so results-oriented in evangelism and witnessing that many of us may consider prayer and worship a waste of time when there is so much work to do? We would rather work than pray. Perhaps it is because the results of our work may generate applause and publicity, but prayer, when offered according to Christ’s guidelines, is noticed and rewarded only by our heavenly Father (Matthew 6:6).

While living in the ‘hour of His judgment” what should be our most urgent task?

Continually we hear the call to evangelize so we can “finish the work.” But could it be that our most important work is to engage in worship and prayer, because such prayer is not preparation for our work – it is the work? We have heard the slogan, “Don’t just sit there, do something!” And yet our most urgent need may be to do exactly that – to sit there and wait on the Lord, rather than letting our busyness for Him crowd out the still small voice of the Holy Spirit. Consider again the tremendous promises made by Jesus in His instructions to the disciples found in other Scripture passages.

- “And whatsoever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in my name, I will do it” (John 14:13, 14).
- “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you” (John 15:7).
- “And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive that your joy may be full.” (John 16:23, 24).

The Power of Praying in the Judgment Hour – Worship is Warfare and Prayer is our Offensive Weapon
Prayer and worship go together. When Christ, in the battle on Calvary’s cross, defeated Satan, there was worship in heaven, as a loud voice proclaimed, “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 God day and night has been cast down” (Revelation 12:10). Because Christ has defeated Satan and won the decisive victory, we too can worship His mighty name (Revelation 12:10, 11). To worship and pray is to participate as Christ’s deputies in the defeat of Satan, reclaiming territory that he has held, and setting captives free from prison. And though the Bible says, “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” (Revelation 12:11), yet Christ’s power is greater than the power of the enemy. As we go on the offensive against the enemy, the methods of our warfare are worship, praise, and prayer. God wants to enlist every Christian in such offensive warfare. Why? To give us overcoming experience in ruling, an internship for the new earth, and to learn to love as Christ loved as we participate in intercessory prayer.

**Covenant Praying**

If you have ever felt that you are unworthy to pray, then remember prayer is not answered on basis of worthiness, but on basis of Christ’s atonement. Covenant praying is prayer which makes its appeals to God on basis of His covenant faithfulness as carried out in Christ’s redeeming work. Note Christian author Paul Bilheimer’s special encouragement to help to overcome any personal reluctance to pray.

> “Prayer is not answered on the basis of worthiness. The crucial factor in getting answers to prayer is not primarily spiritual superiority but simply the boldness, courage and faith to pray regardless of our sense of unworthiness. Satan uses your sense of unworthiness to prevent your praying. When he succeeds, he has won. All the prayers that God is answering are by people who not only feel unworthy as you do, but who actually are unworthy. God does all His work through unworthy people, who, despite a conviction of unworthiness, are making prayer the main business of their lives anyway.”

> “If you are close enough to God for Him to lay a burden of prayer upon you, you are qualified to be an intercessor. You are not wasting the time you spend in prayer. All prayer that is according to God’s will originates in the heart of God. When God lays a burden of prayer upon you it means that He is already at work to accomplish it. Therefore, when you have a God-given burden for anything, you can pray in faith that God is already in action. Do not permit Satan to frighten you out of prayer because of a sense of unworthiness any longer. You have been given authority over Satan but it is totally null and void if you do not pray.” [3]

Such prayer can bring confusion and disarray to the armies of Satan who would oppose God’s work and torment us with thoughts of our own helplessness and unworthiness.

> “Satan will call to his aid legions of his angels to oppose the advance of even one soul, and, if possible, wrest it from the hand of Christ…But if the one in danger perseveres,
and in his helplessness casts himself upon the merits of the blood of Christ, our Saviour listens to the earnest prayer of faith, and sends a reinforcement of those angels that excel in strength to deliver him. Satan cannot endure to have his powerful rival appealed to, for he fears and trembles before His strength and majesty. At the sound of fervent prayer, Satan's whole host trembles.” [4]

“We are ill-taught if we look for results only in the earthlies when we pray. A praying saint performs far more havoc among the unseen forces of darkness than we have the slightest notion of.” [5]

The Power of Prayer as Intercession

As our Advocate, Jesus has been given authority to plead our cases in our behalf. But His pleading is not that of persuading the Father in order to move the Father to mercy, but to present His “pleas” (legal arguments) on behalf of our cases in a legally defensible manner before God’s throne so that the accusations of Satan cannot prevail. When Jesus prays, He knows that the Father readily welcomes any of Christ’s friends as His friends. Jesus is presenting anyone who trusts in Him as a trophy of His victory on Calvary’s cross. As He prays for us, He is intimately acquainted with every feeling in our hearts, because as our High Priest He is touched with the feelings of our infirmities (Hebrews 4:15).

One of the primary passages about intercessory prayer occurs in the context of that most favorite text of Romans 8:28: “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” The passage, which precedes Romans 8:28, is all about the power of intercessory prayer, “for the Spirit helps us in our infirmities. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express” (Romans 8:26 NIV). Here are some pointers on intercessory prayer – a most necessary work for the believer, and a work for which there is no visible credit or applause by onlookers, because it is best carried out in secret.

1. Intercessory prayer is to take up our duly authorized commission and authority to “bind and to loose”
2. The purpose of intercession is not to persuade God, because He already loves and knows what we need before we ask Him.
3. Intercession is not the sending up of compliments of praise to God to overcome His reluctance by pressuring Him to do what He would not otherwise do.
4. The intercession of the Holy Spirit is not to "translate" our prayers so that God can understand them, for He already knows everything that is in our hearts.
5. Intercession is a process of identification with the person for whom we are praying.
6. Intercession is also a process of identification with God’s heart concerning the person for whom we are praying.
7. In intercessory prayer we seek to understand the deepest needs of the person for whom we are praying as the Holy Spirit reveals these to us.
8. In intercessory prayer we enter into a unity with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit concerning the person for whom we are praying.

9. In intercessory prayer we enter into the sufferings of Christ for us and for the person for whom we are praying. “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you” (Galatians 4:19 KJV).

10. To “pray in the Spirit” is to let the Holy Spirit motivate and direct our prayers.

11. If our prayers of intercession are prompted by the Holy Spirit, does it then not also stand to reason that the same Holy Spirit is at work in accomplishing answers to such prayers?

12. A purpose of intercessory prayer is to enter into the saving work of Jesus Christ, and through the discernment given by the Holy Spirit to know something about the spirit of the person for whom we are praying.

13. In intercessory prayer, as we see others through the eyes of Jesus, we learn to love them as Jesus loved them.

14. The greatest blessing of intercession is the presence of Christ flowing through you in the form of compassion.

15. The throne of the universe is a cross, and in intercessory prayer we rule with Christ in overcoming the enemy, Satan.

Prayer has a solid foundation. When based on God’s covenant as exhibited at Calvary’s cross, when carried out by faith in His promises, its results are powerful. “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things” (Romans 8:32). Note how Ellen G. White grasped the immense possibilities of such prayer.

“Jesus is our atoning sacrifice; we can make no atonement for ourselves, but by faith we can accept the atonement that has been made. ‘For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God’ (1 Peter 3:18). ‘Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things…but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot’ (1 Peter 1:18, 19). ‘The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin’ (1 John 1:7 KJV). It is by virtue of this precious blood that the sin-stricken soul can be restored to soundness. While you are putting up your petition to God, the Holy Spirit applies the faithful promises of God to your heart. In moments of perplexity, when Satan suggests doubt and discouragement, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up as a standard against him the faithful sayings of Christ, and the bright beams of the Sun of righteousness will flash into your mind and soul. When Satan would overwhelm you with despair, the Holy Spirit will point you to the intercession made for you by a living Saviour. Christ is the fragrance, the holy incense, which makes your petitions acceptable to the Father. When the light of Christ's righteousness is fully understood and accepted, love, joy, peace, and inexpressible gratitude will pervade the soul, and the language of him who is blessed will be ‘Thy gentleness hath made me great’ (Psalm 18:35).” [6]

Some things to pray for in the judgment hour – Here are some pointers on praying and working in the judgment hour.
- Let all prayer be in accordance with the benefits of God’s covenant of the gospel. “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:31).
- Pray with the Psalmist, “Lord, how long will the wicked, how long will the wicked triumph?” (Psalm 94:3).
- Join the prayers 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” (Revelation 6:9, 10)? Take all your disappointments, unfair and unjust experiences to Jesus Christ.
- Pray like the persistent widow, “Get justice for me from my adversary” and trust the promise of the heavenly Judge: “And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily (Luke 18:3, 6, 7, 8).
- Don’t just pray for justice, but also WORK for justice: “He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8). While waiting for the 2nd coming of Jesus, don’t just sit there waiting and do nothing. Become engaged in initiatives in your world to seek to correct abuses and injustice, in whatever forms these may appear.
- Join in thanksgiving and worship with the twenty-four elders, witnesses in the heavenly courtroom, as you with gratitude anticipate God’s judgments. “We give You thanks, O Lord God, Almighty, the One who is and who was and who is to come, because You have taken Your great power and reigned. The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servant the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth” (Revelation 11:17,18).
- Pray and work for the worldwide proclamation of the everlasting gospel (Revelation 14:6)
- Pray for the Spirit-filled witness of God’s church – “And let the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 20:17). Pray and work that through the witness of the Bride, His Church, many will be contagiously attracted to and fall in love with the Bridegroom.
- Pray, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Revelation 20:20).

Read and Believe this Affirmation of Faith

God the Father, Who is for us,
sent His Son Jesus Christ to be with us,
to die for us to bring salvation to us,
that the gift of the Holy Spirit might be in us,
so the sufficiency of God’s resources
which are beyond us may flow through us
to overcome all that is against us.
Life Applications

Questions to Ponder –

Is the judgment a cause for celebration or a cause for fear and trembling in your life at this moment? Why? (Read Psalm 96 – what is the mood of this psalm?)

What are some covenant benefits of Christ’s atoning work that have personally benefited you?

Is the gospel to you a theory of doctrines that you are trying to prove to others, or is it a living experience based on your personal appreciation and application of the benefits of the everlasting gospel?

What are some specific projects in which you can engage in order to work for justice in your own neighborhood, city, and country?

Text to Remember: “My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world” (John 2:1, 2).

Truths vs. Lies:
Replace the lies of the enemy with these truths that will set you free.
“Lead me in Your truth, and teach me: for You are the God of my salvation; on You I wait all the day” (Psalm 25:5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lies or half-truths</th>
<th>Truths</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My most urgent task is to live without sin in order to impress God with my sincerity.</td>
<td>My most urgent task is to trust in the sufficiency of Christ’s atoning work for myself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important for me to tell others about the correctness of the doctrines I believe in. To finish the work I must tell others about where they are doctrinally wrong as well as about their sinfulness, and they must change their behaviors before it is too late.</td>
<td>It is important for me to turn people’s attention to the merits of Christ’s cross. To finish the work I will avail myself, and tell others, of all the covenant benefits made available to me as a result of Christ’s cross.</td>
</tr>
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Write out any other lies or half-truths that you have believed, and how you will replace these
with the truths of the Bible.

Endnotes:

[5] Oswald Chambers,