Our Firm Foundation

The 7th-Day Sabbath  Immutable Law of God  Non-Immortality of the Soul
Christ Our Righteousness  Three Angels’ Messages  The Sanctuary

Vol. 11, No. 5  May 1996

The Strait Gate That Leadeth Unto Life

See page 4
The only test God gave to the original pair of human beings, when He created this world, was obedience. Tragically, Adam and Eve miserably failed that test, and because of their failure they passed on to their children the inclination to sin. Their children were not born sinners, but they had lost the original trust in God—the faith of Jesus—with which Adam and Eve were created.

Disobedience to the law of God, His Word, brought the death penalty to the whole human family. The only way God could rescue them from that penalty was through the Creator, Jesus Himself, to accept their just penalty. See Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:16. “And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.” Hebrews 5:9.

“Christ came to the world to counteract Satan’s falsehood that God had made a law which men could not keep. Taking humanity upon Himself, He came to this earth, and by a life of obedience showed that God has not made a law that man cannot keep. He showed that it is possible for man perfectly to obey the law. Those who accept Christ as their Saviour, becoming partakers of His divine nature, are enabled to follow His example, living in obedience to every precept of the law. Through the merits of Christ, man is to show by his obedience that he could be trusted in heaven, that he would not rebel.” The Faith I Live By, 114.

The sin problem in this world created the greatest crisis that God had ever faced in His universe. The whole universe was in jeopardy. Millions of created beings in myriads of perfect worlds were now exposed to Lucifer’s accusations against God and His immutable law. Lucifer demanded freedom from God’s law for himself, his angels and all created beings. He demanded to be equal with Christ, and to have part in the creation of this world. See The Story of Redemption, 13-19. As a result of Lucifer’s demands “there was war in heaven.” See Revelation 12:7-9.

The great deceiver, Lucifer, became Satan and was cast out of heaven with those angels he had deceived. Tragically, he carried the war to this newly created world, and, at the fall of Adam and Eve, became the prince of this world. Adam became the father of the fallen race. The disobedience of Adam and Eve could only be cured now by the Creator’s willingness to accept their just punishment—death, eternal death. See The Desire of Ages, 25.

Praise God, Jesus was willing to step into the breach caused by their disobedience of His perfect law! Christ would come into the world, and, through the working of the laws of heredity, accept their fallen nature. See Romans 1:3, 8:3; Philippians 2:5-7. He would show what a human being could become by being a partaker of the divine nature through the Holy Spirit’s power. He would show the universe of perfect beings that there was no excuse for Adam and Eve’s disobedience and that any man, woman, or child, by surrendering his or her will to the Creator, could resist all temptation and live a perfect life by the power of the Holy Spirit. See Colossians 3:12. Listen as God speaks to us on this important subject:

“Christ’s overcoming and obedience is that of a true human being. In our conclusions, we make many mistakes because of our erroneous views of the human nature of our Lord. When we give to His human nature a power that it is not possible for man to have in his conflicts with Satan, we destroy the completeness of His humanity. His imputed grace and power He gives to all who receive Him by faith.

“The obedience of Christ to His Father was the same obedience that is required of man. Man cannot overcome Satan’s temptations without divine power to combine with his instrumentality. So with Jesus Christ; He could lay hold of divine power. He came not to our world to give the obedience of a lesser God to a greater, but as a man to obey God’s Holy Law, and in this way He is our example. The Lord Jesus came to our world, not to reveal what a God could do, but what a man could do, through faith in God’s power to help in every emergency. Man is, through faith, to be a partaker in the divine nature, and to overcome every temptation wherewith he is beset. . . .

“The humanity of the Son of God is everything to us. It is the golden chain that binds our souls to Christ, and through Christ to God.” Our High Calling, 48.

Let us remember that Christ gave us a perfect example of obedience to the perfect law of God—in our fallen nature, without sinning. Again, we must turn to Inspiration:

“I present before you the great Exemplar. . . . As really did He meet and resist the temptations of Satan as any of the children of humanity. In this sense alone could He be a perfect example for man. He subjected Himself to humanity to become acquainted with all the temptations wherewith man is beset.” Our High Calling, 57.

Satan has counterfeited everything God has done. He has counterfeited the gospel. He has convinced the Christian world that, in God’s mercy and love, He will save us in our sins. See Matthew 1:21. But anyone who accepts this counterfeit gospel will be lost. Why? Because they have not submitted to the righteousness of perfectly keeping the law by the same power that Christ used in His perfect example of law keeping. “For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.” Romans 10:3. “Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.” Hosea 14:9.

The evangelical world has claimed that Christ abolished God’s perfect law. See Psalm 19:7. This counterfeit gospel makes the cross of Christ appear to be ridiculous. If God could abolish the law at Calvary, why not do it at Eden and save the suffering Christ bore by taking Adam’s fallen humanity and suffering the death at Calvary which we deserved? See The Desire of Ages, 25. This counterfeit gospel has now come in among Seventh-day Adventists and is preached from some of our pulpits as the good news of the gospel. The terrible result of all sin is that it demanded the death of our Creator, so He could become the Re-creator for those only who believe and obey by the power God provides through the Holy Spirit. ☐

Ron Spear, Editor
It is the mission of Hope International and the editors of Our Firm Foundation to clearly present Christ and His truth. The days that yet remain of this world are few, and what we do we must do quickly. We must boldly proclaim the historic truths of Adventism that place us on so firm a foundation in the midst of this troubled world.—Errorroes

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Table of Contents

Vol. 11, No. 5 May 1996

Articles

The Strait Gate That Leadeth Unto Life
Clark Floyd 4
The real gospel legacy of Charles Fitch—“let the dead speak”

Blasphemers
Preston Monterrey 8
Coming “closer to home” than we might think

The Time of the End
Jeff Pippenger 12
The ongoing war between the end-time kings of Daniel 11

God’s Judgment Upon the Midianites
Ellen G. White 16
Is God’s Old Testament “justice” defendable?

Counseling With Others
Vernon Shafer 20
God revealing His will for us through others

In Defense of God’s Law
Jeff Wehr 24
Inscribing His law in our heart as well as in our mind

Ancient Prophecy, Modern Apostasy
Dirk Anderson 28
Could it really be happening to us?

Departments

Editorial .......................... 2 An Editorial Dilemma ............ 19
Letters ............................ 31

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Invitation to Writers

We are accepting article-length (1500–4000 words) manuscripts for possible publication in Our Firm Foundation. We cannot give consideration to longer submissions. Whenever possible, we ask that manuscripts be submitted either on 3-or 5-inch floppy disk in IBM format or neatly typed and double-spaced. Address all correspondence to Editors, Our Firm Foundation, P.O. Box 940, Eatonville, WA 98328.

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We are informed by the apostle Paul that "God our Saviour ... will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of truth." 1 Timothy 2:3-4. But we are advised by Jesus to "enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Matthew 7:13-14.

Significantly, one of those who apparently found the "strait gate" that "leadeth unto life" was Charles Fitch. He had been a Presbyterian minister who became involved in the Great Awakening of the early 1800s. "As early as 1842 the direction given in this prophecy (see Habakkuk 2:1-4) to 'write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it,' had suggested to Charles Fitch the preparation of a prophetic chart to illustrate the visions of Daniel and Revelation. The publication of this chart was regarded as a fulfillment of the command given by Habakkuk." Great Controversy, 392.

In one of her visions recorded in Early Writings, 17, Ellen White spoke of seeing Charles Fitch in heaven after the Second Coming, and refers to his having "preached the gospel of the kingdom" before being laid in the grave.

In the appendix to the book, the publishers give additional information about Brother Fitch: "Charles Fitch, a Presbyterian minister, accepted the Advent message from reading William Miller's lectures and through his meeting with Josiah Litch. He threw himself wholeheartedly into the proclamation of the expected advent of Christ at the close of the 2300-year period, and became a prominent leader in the Advent Awakening. ... He died a little more than a week before October 22, 1844. His death came about through illness contracted through over-exposure in conducting three baptismal services on a chilly autumn day." Ibid., 298.

Recently, a Seventh-day Adventist interested in the writings of these early Advent preachers, was going through the microfilm in the Cleveland, Ohio, library when he found a booklet that had been written by Charles Fitch in 1840, a few short years before his death. This document was written before the formation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and before Ellen White had any visions. I believe it was providential that this document was found at this time in history because of the nearness of the second coming of Jesus, and because of God's great love for the people of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. His book addresses the controversy in our church that has arisen in regard to the complete overcoming of sin before death, with strong voices coming from both sides. A question of what really is the gospel has arisen from this controversy.

God gave an answer through the writings of Charles Fitch, who Ellen White clearly states had preached the "gospel of the kingdom" before being laid in the grave. The question is, Will we as Seventh-day Adventists pay attention to this providence of God, or will we be like those referred to in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead"? Luke 16:31.

Charles Fitch believed, after long study of the Scriptures, that we must be overcomers during our lifetime. This is what he was preaching in the Presbyterian Church, when he was approached by a delegation of the Presbytery. He received the following questions to which an answer was requested:

1. Do you believe that the Bible teaches, men are perfect in holiness in this life? (I ask no more than yes or no.)

2. What cases or characters were without sin in Bible history, except Christ? (Merely name them.)

3. Of all among the martyrs, whose memories have come down to us, how many do you find perfect?

4. In modern times, have not the best of men evidently been sinful more or less, and have they not thought themselves to be so?

5. In the circle of your acquaintance, have those who claimed perfection, generally turned out as well as those who feared always?
"6. Are those around you who claim this, more meekly and heavenly than others?

7. Do not perfection people very frequently run into some palpable inconsistencies?

8. Do you avow the belief, that you are generally without sin, in thought, desire, word, deed, or defect?

9. And have you made up your mind, publicly to teach, and defend the position, that there are men among us who are without sin."

Sin Shall Not Have dominion Over You, 2.

Charles Fitch provided his answers in the small booklet which has recently been published entitled, Sin Shall Not Have dominion Over You. In the balance of this article, I will give you a brief summary of his answers as contained in that booklet. May your heart burn within you as you read his scriptural answers.

Brother Fitch initiates his reply as follows: "In compliance with your request, and my promise, I will now endeavor, in the fear of God, and under sense of my accountableness to Him, to give you my views in full, respecting the points embraced in the questions which you proposed to me. I hope you will not consider it in any sense improper that I give you my views at large on the whole subject, instead of a mere categorical answer to your interrogations. . . . I consider the subject too great, and the interests pending too important, to be disposed of in this summary way. . . . My design is, as far as in me lies, to be full and explicit.

"But I fear that I might suffer much, through the misapprehension of others, respecting my own impressions of truth, if I were not to do something more than you propose in your communication. . . ."

"I shall also give them [my answers], as far as possible, in scripture language, that it may be seen on what I rest my faith, and whether I do, or do not, pervert the Word of God.

"Permit me, then, to commence by saying that I find myself, in my natural state, a transgressor of God's most holy and righteous law; so guilty as to deserve to be 'punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.' 2 Thessalonians 1:9. I also find myself totally unable to make the least atonement for one of all my ten thousand sins, or to find for one of them the least excuse or palliation. In myself, I stand, and must ever stand before the universe, a hopeless reprobate, irrecoverably bound over the damnation of hell. But I learn in the gospel, that the Lord Jesus Christ, by His atoning sacrifice, has rendered full satisfaction, to the justice of God for my sins, and thus opened a way whereby the punishment of my sins may be escaped, provided I have that 'holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.' Hebrews 12:14.

"The all-absorbing question with me, then, so far as my own eternal interests are concerned, is this: How shall I become obedient to that high command of the Most High God, 'Be ye holy; for I am holy.' 1 Peter 1:16; See Leviticus 11:44.'" Ibid., 3-4.

"O help! is the cry that comes up from my inmost soul. Is there, in the universe of God, any way to save a poor, lost sinner, from his own love of sin? Any way to cleanse his polluted heart, and fill it with holiness—pure, perfect, perpetual holiness; without which such a one can never be received into heaven?

"With this inquiry, my dear brother, I approach the Bible. . . . I know of nothing, on which I can safely rest the belief, that death is to be regarded as the means, or the time, of sanctification. I believe that, as the tree falleth, so it lieth (see Ecclesiastes 11:3), that there is neither "work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave," whither we go (Ecclesiastes 9:10); and that if a man leaves the world in his sins, he remains a sinner forever. I believe that this is my only probation, that I must be saved from sin, or never see God's face in peace. I believe, therefore, that my everlasting interests are pending on the question, whether God has made provision to save me from sin, before I leave this world. . . . If there is no salvation from sin before death, I expect to be lost. Here, then, to make the whole subject plain as possible, in the light in which it is apprehended by my own mind, I will make three inquires:

"I. Has God, in the economy of His grace, made provision to save His people from their sins?

"II. If such provision has been made, can Christians avail themselves of it in this life?

"III. In what way may the provisions of God's grace become available, to save His people from their sins?" Ibid., 6-7.

Brother Fitch then answers these questions with scriptural answers, part of which I will here share:

"I. Has God, in the economy of His grace, made provision to save His people from their sins?

"I find it said to Joseph, by the angel, in relation to the promised Messiah, Matthew 1:21: 'Thou shalt call his name Jesus [i.e. Saviour]; for he shall save his people from their sins.' For this very purpose, then, He is my Saviour, to save me from my sins; and this is just the Saviour that I need.

"When John the Baptist pointed out Christ, he said, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which..."
righteousness all the days of our life, I am bound to believe it. I dare not sin against God, by believing that God is not ready to be faithful to His oath; an oath, too, which Christ came on purpose to fulfill. I read that 'he that believeth not God hath made him a liar.' 1 John 5:10. I must not make God a liar by saying He is not true to His oath.

"Again, when the disciples of Christ said, 'Lord, teach us to pray,' (Luke 11:1) one the Apostle has already told us "is freed from sin." Romans 6:7. No man can say, I am fully persuaded, 'I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,' who knows himself to be living in sin. Nor can one who lives in sin say, 'The life which I now live is the life Christ liveth in me.' Galatians 2:20." Ibid., 12. He gives other examples of Paul's writings to prove his point.

We are, therefore, to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, by the promises of God. These contain the truth, through which we may be sanctified, according to our Saviour's prayer.

He directed them to pray, 'Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.' Matthew 6:10. If God's will is done in heaven by sinless obedience, we are taught to pray for the same thing on earth; and I cannot believe that Christ has taught us to pray for a thing which He is unwilling to grant. Again, we are taught to pray that the very God of peace will sanctify us wholly, and preserve our whole spirit, and soul, and body, blameless unto the coming of Christ; and we are assured that He who hath called us is faithful, and will do it. See 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24. Again, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' 1 John 1:9. As faithful, I suppose, in the one case as in the other. I know of no reason for waiting for forgiveness or cleansing till death." Ibid., 9-10.

Who Has Been Free From Sin?

At this point Brother Fitch speaks directly to the question asked. Who besides Christ, mentioned in Bible history, were free from sin? He uses his answer to show that "Christians may avail themselves of God's grace, so as to be saved from sin in this life." Ibid., 10. He then quotes from Paul, Peter, and John, showing that each must have obtained the status of sinless obedience before they died, or their writings would be meaningless.

Galatians 2:20-21 is quoted, and then Brother Fitch says, "I cannot conceive that a man could use such language as this, who was living day by day in sin. If a man is crucified with Christ, he must be dead to sin, and such a

In regard to Peter, Brother Fitch quotes from 2 Peter 1:3-4, and then comments, "I cannot doubt that Peter had experienced in his own heart what he wrote, and I believe, therefore, that in being made a partaker of the divine nature, through the exceeding great and precious promises of God, and 'having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust,' (2 Peter 1:4) he did so abide in Christ, that he sinned not. See 1 John 3:6:" Ibid., 13.

He quotes several verses from John—1 John 1:5, 7, 9; 1 John 3:5-6, 9—and then he states, "I cannot doubt that John was a man who reduced his own principles to practice, especially as he wrote only what he had heard, and seen, and handled of the Word of Life, and therefore that he did so abide in Christ, that he sinned not.

"Thus, dear brother, I have shown you, conclusively, to my own mind, at least, that in the economy of God's grace there are provisions available to enable the Christian to walk before God 'in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life' (Luke 1:75) and so to abide in Christ that he sin not. See 1 John 3:6. In doing so, I have given you my views in full, respecting the attainability of holiness in this life, and the question whether any have actually attained it." Ibid.

How Are God's Provisions Made Available?

Now, the third question is addressed: "I am to consider how the provisions of the grace of God become available to the Christian.

"Our Saviour's prayer was—'sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.' John 17:17.

"By what truth is the Christian sanctified? "1. Not by any precepts of the Bible, through his own unaided efforts to obey them....

"2. The Christian may be sanctified through the promises of God's truth. 'Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.' 2 Corinthians 7:1. 'According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.' 2 Peter 1:3-4.

"3. Let me be fully understood, then, that no man is ever sanctified, who relies on his own efforts to obey the law. Such a one frustrates the grace of God. He would indeed be holy, if he loved God with all his heart, and his neighbor as himself; but this he surely will never do, by any unaided efforts of his own. It must be done by the grace of God, and he must surely frustrates that grace, who does not live the life he now lives in the flesh, by the faith of the Son of God. See Galatians 2:20-21.

"We are, therefore, to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, by the promises of God. These contain the truth, through which we may be sanctified, according to our Saviour's prayer." Ibid., 13-14.

Brother Fitch then asks, "1. What has God promised? 2. How shall we gain the fulfillment of the promises?" Ibid., 14.

He points out that he may look to the promises in the whole Bible, since they were made to Abraham and his seed, and he is one of the seed through belief in Christ. He then quotes many such promises that speak of God making us "clean," "have a new heart," "put his fear in their hearts," "put his law in their inward parts," "bring us to love God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength," and many other promises throughout the Bible.

But how shall we gain the fulfillment of these many promises?

"On this point I remark," says Charles Fitch, "that there is a passage which has served me as a key to unlock the rich treasures of God's word; and which, for some years, has been opening to me more and more the riches of the glory of Christ's inheritance in the saints (see Ephesians 1:18), and which has done very much to bring me where I am, 'by the grace of God,'
today. It is found in 2 Corinthians 1:20: ‘For all the promises of God in him [Christ] are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.’ By this I understand, that while no promise of God is ever fulfilled to us, except for Christ’s sake, we may have the fulfillment of every promise, for the fulfillment of which we trust in Christ; and that when we trust in Christ, and receive for His sake the fulfillment of God’s promises, God is glorified by us.” Ibid., 18–19.

Brother Fitch quotes many promises as examples, and then states, “Through the promises of God, then, we cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God, when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, that these promises will be fulfilled to us for His sake. Herein, it seems to me, there is, in these last days, a great departure from the faith” by the church of Christ. Ibid., 19.

Brother Fitch addresses some of the individual questions asked him by the Presbytery:

“And now, dear brother, I will look directly to your questions. You have already had abundant reply as to the question, whether men are, or may be holy in this life. While I believe that there is little holiness in the world, I believe there is abundant provision made in God’s grace by which Christians may ‘stand perfect and complete in all the will of God’ (Colossians 4:12); and I believe that in the days of Paul, Peter and John, this grace was fully available, through the faith in Christ, for the fulfillment of God’s promises—and no less so now, to all who will in the same way avail themselves of it.

“As it respects the martyrs—I believe that no man ever became a martyr for Christ, who was not actually cleansed from all sin; because, the giving up of the whole world, and life itself, for Christ’s sake, fully evince that such a one must have loved Christ, with his whole and undivided heart, and must therefore, have been free from sin.” Ibid., 20.

He points out that all who have claimed to be holy have not been holy, but their licentiousness should not be chargeable upon the doctrine which they profess to believe. “The more precious the coin, the more desirable the counterfeit, to a wicked man. That the blessed doctrine of being kept from all sin by faith in Christ, will be counterfeitled by ungodly men, for licentious purposes, I have not a doubt; but shall I, therefore, cast away the coin—the most precious that ever fell down to lost man, from the exhaustless mint of heaven?” Ibid., 21.

“And now, as to the greater safety of those that fear always—I answer, that he who trusts in Christ to be kept from sin, is the man, and the only man, that does fear always. He not only fears, but knows that he never shall, in any instance, keep himself, and therefore always flees to Christ; while he who does not fear always, does not trust in Christ, and therefore falls into sin.” Ibid.

“If a man expresses to me his belief that, through the operations of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, received by faith in Christ for the fulfillment of God’s promises, he is enabled, to love God with all his heart, and his neighbor as himself (see Luke 10:27); as much as I know that God has promised to circumscribe his heart, to love the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, I have no right to doubt that the promises of God are thus fulfilled in him, unless I see that in his life he does depart from the right way of the Lord, as it is revealed in His holy Word. But ‘to the law and to the testimony: if they speak not [or act not] according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.’ Isaiah 8:20.” Ibid., 22.

“You ask me, finally, concerning myself. Here, dear brother, I speak with unfeigned diffidence. I love to look at my Saviour, and to hold Him forth in all His fulness to my needy, perishing fellow men. But in myself, aside from what the grace of God has done, and shall do for me, I find nothing but the dark and perfect lineaments of Beezlebul, the prince of devils. I speak sincerely, my brother, I know that if God that they will be fulfilled to me for His sake, to be cleansed from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God. See 2 Corinthians 7:1.” Ibid., 27.

“And now, my brother, as to what I expect to preach, I have only to say, that I expect to uncover to my fellow men, just so far and just so long as my God shall enable me, this fountain which has been ‘opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness.’ Zechariah 13:1. I expect to do all in my power to make my fellow men acquainted with the ‘holy covenant’ of our God, and ‘the oath which he swear . . . that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. Luke 1:73–75,” Ibid., 28.

Now, dear reader, how is it with you? God has not raised Charles Fitch physically from the grave to speak to you, but through his writings, his message—he lives. He says, “The all-absorbing question with me, then, so far as my own eternal interests are concerned, is this: How shall I become obedient to that high command of the Most High God, ‘Be ye holy; for I am holy.’ 1 Peter 1:16; see Leviticus 11:44.” Ibid., 4.

“Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. . . . For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye,” Ezekiel 18:30, 32.

Will you, “like scattered, unbelieving Israel, look for a Saviour yet to come,” or will you believe as God’s Word so clearly states, that God is here now in His Word and by the Holy Spirit to give you the power to overcome all sin in your life?
H ave you ever considered yourself a blasphemer and worthy of God's punishment? Perhaps that thought has crossed your mind at least once in your lifetime. However, it is very possible that you, as a follower of the Protestant Reformation, might have concluded that such a term would not apply to you in particular. You may be thoroughly convinced that the only being or institution on Planet Earth to whom this expression applies is the pope, along with the religious body which he represents—the Roman Catholic Church.

Probably you would try to prove your point by explaining that the Papacy and its priesthood, have taken certain prerogatives through the centuries that belong to the Deity alone. And when any man or institution usurps these powers from the Godhead, he becomes a blasphemer.

Some of these divine prerogatives are:

1. **Infallibility**
2. **Forgiveness of sin**
3. **Setting up kings and rulers**
4. **God's representative on earth**

As a true reformer, abiding by the principle of *sola scriptura*, you would show from the Holy Scriptures that:

1. **Only God is infallible.** "He [the Lord] is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he." Deuteronomy 32:4. "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent." Numbers 23:19. All biblical references are KJV unless otherwise noted.

2. **Only the Deity can forgive sins.** When Jesus healed the paralytic and forgave his sins (see Luke 5:20), the scribes and Pharisees did not realize that Jesus was the Son of the Most High. Thus, they correctly asked: "Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" Luke 5:21.

3. **God is the One who sets up rulers and kings.** "He [God] changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings." Daniel 2:21. "The most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men." Daniel 4:17.

4. **The Holy Spirit is the true Representative or Vicar of Christ on earth.** "I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." John 16:7. "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things." John 14:26. All emphasis supplied unless otherwise noted.

You would eloquently cite the way the Bible had prophesied that such a blasphemous power would come into existence:

"There was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies." Revelation 13:5.

"He [the beast] opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name," and His character, which includes His reputation. Revelation 13:6.

The beast (Papacy) blasphemed God's name (hurt His reputation). The reader may ask, How? Let me explain:

God's forgiveness has always been offered to mankind freely. "Being justified [pardoned] freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Romans 3:24. Thus the Lord can say: "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." Revelation 21:6.

The determining factor in receiving divine forgiveness is our will—neither money, intellect, social position, fame nor race will make up this factor. Simply said, it is the surrendering of our will to God's plan of redemption. Therefore, "let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Revelation 22:17.

Unfortunately, God's name (His reputation) was severely damaged by the papal institution. The popes established the antibiblical system of indulgences; which became very abusive and which was hated by many who sought to be at peace with God.
It was this misrepresentation of God’s character by the Papacy and its priesthood that led honest and sincere souls to abhor—not just the abuses of these prelates—but even Christianity itself.

I now ask the reader, Is the pope the only blasphemer predicted by Bible prophecy? No.

Other Blasphemer

The apostle Paul tells us that there will be “blasphemers” in the last days. See 2 Timothy 3:2. Therefore, the Papacy is not the only blasphemer to be seen in the last days.

Can you and I blaspheme God’s name—His character? Do we need to be associated with the little horn of Daniel 7, the Papacy, who spoke “great words against the most High” (see verse 25) in order to be considered by the Lord as a blasphemer?

Let us study the following Bible verses and consider their application to spiritual Israel today:

“Behold, thou art called a Jew, and restest in the law, and makest thy boast of God.” Romans 2:17. As Seventh-day Adventists, we consider ourselves to be spiritual Jews. “For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly.” Verses 28–29. We also rest or rely upon the law. We have been known among the Christian community as a church that solidly defends God’s commandments. We believe commandment-keeping to be one of the signs of the Lord’s remnant people. See Revelation 12:17. Therefore, we often boast in our relationship to God.

“And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law.” Romans 2:18. Perhaps more than any other religious group that has ever lived on this earth, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, through a knowledge of the law in its broadest sense—the entire instruction provided by the Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy—has been guided to know His will, especially for the latter days, and approve the things that are more excellent for the salvation of mankind.

“And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness.” Verse 19. It is our conviction that “we have the truth” and know “His will” which makes us feel confident to be a guide of those that are blind and in spiritual darkness.

It is our firm belief that we have “in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth” (verse 20, NASB), for a world that is perishing in sin and error. It is this recognition that has compelled us to become “An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes.” Verse 20.

Nevertheless, do we teach ourselves? Do we preach to ourselves about the manner in which we must conduct ourselves? Are we breaking the law we claim to uplift and honor? See verses 21–23.

It is our inconsistent behavior between what we teach and profess, and what we practice, which has brought disgrace and dishonor upon the Lord’s name (His reputation).

“For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.” Verse 24, NASB.

Yes, brethren, we must be honest with ourselves, and admit that we have not been practicing as we should the precious truths that Christ has revealed unto us. Our failure to live up to the light we have has been considered by Inspiration to be blasphemy.

Indeed, dear brethren, we can blaspheme God’s Word by our behavior—by false accusing, lacking holiness, not being sober or discreet, and so forth. See Titus 2:3–5. This is a form of individual blasphemy against the Lord.

There is also a type of blasphemy which exists when we deliberately choose to walk contrary to God’s commands, and thus defame or cast a shadow of misrepresentation upon God’s character.

When we cultivate a spirit of competition (in sports or academics) among the students in our educational institutions, we are blaspheming the character of Jehovah. We are not revealing the image of Him that admonishes us through Paul: “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.” Philippians 2:3.

When we exercise any form of kingly power, to lord over God’s heritage, we are blaspheming against the Holy One. We wrongly portray the image of the Father, who said, through His Son: “All ye are brethren.” Matthew 23:8.

When we encourage men to trust any form of leadership (in either denominationals or self-supporting lines) in a blind, unhealthy manner, following their policies without consulting the Word of God, then we are blaspheming against Christ, who taught us to depend on “every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” Matthew 4:4.

To blaspheme is not limited to that which the Papacy has done against God for centu-

There is also a type of blasphemy which exists when we deliberately choose to walk contrary to God’s commands, and thus defame or cast a shadow of misrepresentation upon God’s character.

Blasphemy in the New Testament

Let us now define the terms “blasphemy” and “to blaspheme” in the original language:

“Blasphemy” comes from the Greek noun blasphemia (blasphemie), Scholars tell us that this word means “abuse against someone, evil speaking, wounding one’s reputation by evil reports, speaking injuriously.”

To “blaspheme” comes from the Greek verb blasphemo (blasphemο), which, we are told, is derived from blapto, which means “to hurt”, or “to injure,” and pheme, which means “fame, reputation.”

The King James Version sometimes translates the Greek verb in the following manner:

1. To Revile, see Matthew 27:39.
2. To Rail, see Mark 15:29.
beg of you for Christ’s sake, let no hasty, rash expressions fall from your lips, let no extravagant language be used, let nothing be uttered that will savor of railing, for all this is human. Christ has no part in it.

“We are never to forget that we are representatives of Christ. We are to use no carnal weapons when unbelieving and a
deled souls come among us. . . . Not an unkind or discourteous word, offensive or offensive, should escape our lips or be traced by our pen. When reviled, we are not to revile again. ‘This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.’ 1 John 5:4.” Lift Him Up, 323. See also Testimonies, vol. 2, 566–567.

2. To Rail: “To express objections or criticisms in bitter, harsh, or abusive language.”

Inspiration says, “Those who advocate the truth can afford to be fair and pleasant. It does not need the human mixing in. It is not for you to use the Holy Spirit of God, but it is for the Holy Spirit to use you. . . .

‘Be careful that you do not rail once. We want the Holy Spirit of God to be life and voice for us. Our tongue should be as the pen of a ready writer, because the Spirit of God is speaking through the human agent. When you use that twit and fling, you have stirred in some of yourself, and we do not want anything of that mixture.” Evangelism, 172.

“I beg of you for Christ’s sake, let no hasty, rash expressions fall from your lips, let no extravagant language be used, let nothing be uttered that will savor of railing, for all this is human. Christ has no part in it. Let the ready writers be careful how they use their pens, lest they may seem to cast ridicule upon the positions of believers or unbelievers. We shall find our only safety in preserving the lowly spirit of Christ, in making straight paths for our feet, lest the lame be turned out of the way. The meekness and lowliness of Christ must take possession of the soul.” Testimonies to Ministers, 219. See also ibid., 222–223.

3. To Defame: “To damage the reputation or character of by slander or libel.”

Let us consider these solemn questions: ‘Is there no law of kindness to be observed? Have Christians been author-
ized of God to criticize and condemn another one another? Is it honorable, or even honest, to win from the lips of another, under the guise of friendship, secrets which have been entrusted to him, and then turn the knowledge thus gained to his injury? Is it Christian charity to gather up every floating report, to unearth everything that will cast suspicion on the character of another, and then take delight in using it to injure him? Satan exalts when he can defame or wound a follower of Christ. He is ‘the accuser of the brethren.’ Shall Christians aid him in his work?” Testimonies, vol. 5, 95; see also ibid., vol. 8, 130.

4. To Speak Evil of: “God has forbidden us to think or speak evil of another. ‘Speak not evil one of another, brethren. . . .’” James 4:11. Those who act toward their fellow men without mercy will one day themselves feel the need of mercy.” Review and Herald, October 29, 1901.

“Who will please God, and set a watch, a continual watch, before the mouth, and keep the door of the lips? Speak evil of no man. Hear evil of no man. If there be no hearers, there will be no speakers of evil. If anyone speaks evil in your presence, check him. Refuse to hear him, though his manner be ever so soft and his accents mild. He may profess attachment, and yet throw out covert hints and stab the character in the dark.” Testimonies, vol. 2, 54.

“I greatly desire that you shall follow the directions that Christ has laid down. As you do this, he will certainly help you to adjust the difficulties that exist. He will help you not to make dissension by magnifying little mistakes. The light that the Lord has given me is that he will greatly bless his people, if they will not think or speak evil of one another, but go directly to the one they think is in the wrong, and in a kind, compassionate manner point out his mistake. May the Lord help those who have learned to criticize, to learn to think no evil, and to speak only good words—words of comfort and healing. Then they will rejoice; for they will have evidence that they are laborers together with God.” Review and Herald, July 21, 1904.

5. To Slander: “1. Oral communication of false statements injurious to a person’s reputation. 2. A false and malicious statement or report about someone.”

Slander is also a form of blasphemy that hurts the reputation or credibility of someone. God in His wisdom, foresaw that man’s envy, jealousy, covetousness and desire for vengeance could easily lead him to slander and bear false witness against his neighbor. Therefore, He prohibited this practice with the ninth commandment. Sister White comments on this divine precept:

‘False speaking in any matter, every attempt or purpose to deceive the neighbor, is here included. An intention to deceive is what constitutes falsehood. By a glance of the eye, a motion of the hand, an expression of the countenance, a falsehood may be told as effectually as by words. All intentional overstatement, every hint or insinuation calculated to convey an erroneous or exaggerated impression, even the statement of facts in such a manner as to mislead, is falsehood. This precept forbids every effort to injure our neighbor’s reputation by misrepresentation or evil surmising, by slander or talebearing. Even the intentional suppression of truth, by which injury may result to others, is a violation of the ninth commandment.’ Patriarchs and Prophets, 309.

Searching for a Balance

It is not the intent of the author to convey the idea that there is never a place for taking a firm stand against error. To do so, however, may sometimes involve exposing a person’s behavior or teachings which may not be favorable to his reputation. However, the important distinction to be made here is that in presenting reproof, correction or exposing error, rather than it being with prideful arrogance, relish or malice, the true Christian will always do so in humility, with the spirit of sadness and as a plea for repentance and reform.

The Holy Scriptures present several situations when Jesus and His apostles stated some things which could be interpreted as
being very damaging to someone’s reputation. Let us examine some of them:

A. John, the beloved disciple, tells us about Diotrephes, who loved to have the preeminence among the brethren, and who received him not; but who spoke against him “with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.” 3 John 9-10.

B. The apostle Paul wrote about Alexander, the coppersmith, who did much evil to his ministry. He finally said “the Lord reward him according to his works.” 2 Timothy 4:14. He also refers to some who have made shipwreck of their faith: “Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.” 1 Timothy 1:19-20.

Some may wonder what it means to be “delivered unto Satan?” Some Bible scholars understand the following: “As in 1 Corinthians 5:3-5, this phrase refers specifically to church expulsion, and was the last measure of discipline that a church community could visit upon an offending member. Because the offender had rejected one or more of the fundamentals of the Christian faith (see 1 Timothy 1:19) he had, by his own acts, really disfellowshiped himself from the spirit and body of the church proper. Because there are only two spiritual kingdoms in this world, that of God and that of Satan, the person who renounces the service of the kingdom of God automatically enters the service of Satan’s kingdom. The church does not actually make the transfer, but ratifies the choice already made by the offending member.” The Seventh-day Adventist Commentary, vol. 7, 292.

Finally, Christ’s own example provides us with a most excellent balance. We see His divine tactfulness in handling the self-righteous Pharisee, Simon, whom He had healed from leprosy. Christ could easily have exposed and humiliated Simon before those at the party he made for His Healer. But our wise and loving Redeemer, while showing Simon that He was aware of the part Simon had played in the downfall of Mary Magdalene, refrained from revealing this information to the general public. Christ’s action was redemptive in its greatest essence for both Mary Magdalene and Simon. It had been a private sin and He handled it in a private manner through the use of a parable. See Luke 7:36-50.

“As did Nathan with David, Christ concealed His home thrust under the veil of a parable. He threw upon His host the burden of pronouncing sentence upon himself. Simon had led into sin the woman he now despised. She had been deeply wronged by him. By the two debtors of the parable, Simon and the woman were represented. Jesus did not design to teach that different degrees of obligation should be felt by the two persons, for each owed a debt of gratitude that never could be repaid. But Simon felt himself more righteous than Mary, and Jesus desired him to see how great his guilt really was. He would show him that his sin was greater than hers, as much greater as a debt of five hundred pence exceeds a debt of fifty pence.

“Simon now began to see himself in a new light. He saw how Mary was regarded by One who was more than a prophet. He saw that with keen prophetetic eye Christ read her heart of love and devotion. Shame seized upon him, and he realized that he was in the presence of One superior to himself. . . .

“Simon was touched by the kindness of Jesus in not openly rebuking him before the guests. He had not been treated as he desired Mary to be treated. He saw that Jesus did not wish to expose his guilt to others, but sought by a true statement of the case to convince his mind, and by pitying kindness to subdue his heart. Stern denunciation would have hardened Simon against repentance, but patient admonition convinced him of his error. He saw the magnitude of the debt which he owed his Lord. His pride was humbled, he repented, and the proud Pharisee became a lowly, self-sacrificing disciple.” Desire of Ages, 566-568.

Christ’s indignation was directed against the hypocrisy, the gross sins, by which men were destroying their own souls, deceiving the people and dishonoring God.

Christ, in the story of Simon, did not harm his reputation—what people thought about him. However, there is another side that is often overlooked—Christ’s pronouncement of woes to the Pharisees. See Matthew 23.

“The interest of the people in Christ and His work had steadily increased. They were charmed with His teaching, but they were also greatly perplexed. They had respected the priests and rabbis for their intelligence and apparent piety. In all religious matters they had ever yielded implicit obedience to their authority. Yet they now saw these men trying to cast discredit upon Jesus, a teacher whose virtue and knowledge shone forth the brighter from every assault. They looked upon the lowering countenances of the priests and elders, and there saw discomfiture and confusion. They marveled that the rulers would not believe on Jesus, when His teachings were so plain and simple. They themselves knew not what course to take. With eager anxiety they watched the movements of those whose counsel they had always followed.

“In the parables which Christ had spoken, it was His purpose both to warn the rulers and to instruct the people who were willing to be taught. But there was need to speak yet more plainly. Through their reverence for tradition and their blind faith in a corrupt priesthood, the people were enslaved. These chains Christ must break. The character of the priests, rulers, and Pharisees must be more fully exposed.” Desire of Ages, 611-612.

“Christ’s indignation was directed against the hypocrisy, the gross sins, by which men were destroying their own souls, deceiving the people and dishonoring God. In the specious deceptive reasoning of the priests and rulers He discerned the working of satanic agencies. Keen and searching had been His denunciation of sin; but He spoke no words of retaliation. He had a holy wrath against the prince of darkness; but He manifested no irritated temper. So the Christian who lives in harmony with God, possessing the sweet attributes of love and
The editors send forth this article with the desire that it will serve to bring out the Betean response of searching the Scriptures daily with all readiness of mind to prove whether these things are so. See Acts 17:11. With our readers, we also look forward to an even clearer understanding of Bible prophecy as the scroll of world events continues to unroll.

—EDITORS

AND at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over. Daniel 11:40. Previously we identified the time of the end as 1798. We noted that throughout Daniel 11, the power which controlled or did the spiritual work of Egypt was the king of the south, and the power controlling or doing the work of Babylon was the king of the north.

In 1798, the power which controlled the spiritual characteristics of Egypt—according to Revelation 11:7-11 and The Great Controversy, 269-270—was France. And at that same point in history the power which controlled the spiritual characteristics of Babylon was the Papacy, according to Revelation 17:1-6 and The Great Controversy, 382.

We found that the word "push" in the first part of Daniel 11:40 means to "war against." When Napoleon had the pope of Rome taken captive in 1798, the first clause of verse 40 was fulfilled: "And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him." We will now take up the rest of this verse.

The next portion of the verse predicts that the king of the north will "come against" the king of the south "like a whirlwind," implying a counterattack at some future point. However, not simply a counterattack, but a mighty reversal of this war is represented, for in the final words of the verse the king of the north "shall overflow and pass over."

We will see below that the word "whirlwind" means to take away fearfully like a storm. This word is placed with the word "against," illustrating not only a powerful sweeping away, but also an ascendency.

The final clause of the verse represents that the king of the north will overrun and remove the southern king, for to "overflow" is to conquer, rush, or wash away, and to "pass over" is to cross over or to overrun.

Let us examine Strong's Hebrew dictionary definitions for some of the key words in Daniel 11:40:

"whirlwind—8175: a primary root; to storm; by implication to shiver, i.e. fear:-bc (horribly) afraid, fear, hurl as a storm, be tempestuous, come like (take away as with) a whirlwind.

"against—5921: same as 5920 used as a preposition (in the singular or plural, often with prefix or as a conjunction with a particle following); above, over, upon, or against..." 5920: from 5927...

"5927: Prim. root; to ascend, intransitively (be high) or actively (mount); used in great variety of senses, primary and secondary, literally and figuratively,..."

"overflow—7857: a primary root; to gush; by implication to inundate, cleanse; by analogy to gallop, conquer..."

"pass—5674: a primary root; to cross over, used very widely of any transition (literal or figurative; transitive, intransitive, intensive, or causative); specifically to cover..." Strong's Exhaustive Concordance. All boldface emphasis supplied.

Verse 40 teaches that sometime after 1798 the northern king would sweep away the southern king in a very powerful fashion, while also ascending, in some sense.

In previous articles we have suggested that Daniel 11:40-45 is a prophecy which was designed by God to be a catalyst for His people's awakening at the end of the world. We proposed that as a parallel to the Millerite movement we should expect to see repeated some of the events which transpired under the pioneer movement. We referred specifically to Josiah Litch's prophecy of the fall of the Ottoman Empire as an illustration of what impact the fulfillment of prophecy has on God's people and the world.

In connection with that historic event and the prediction that some of the experiences of the pioneer movement will be repeated, we suggested that the recent fall of the Soviet Union was a possible modern counterpart to the fall of the Ottoman Empire, with the exception that this prophecy lacked the element of specific prophetic time, and so God's people were not benefitted by an advance public prediction of the event. This proposition raises the question, How did the king of the south begin as France and then become the Soviet Union?

Throughout the ebb and flow of history, as marked out in Daniel 11, the kings of the north and south rose and fell as new powers emerged to overthrow the previous kingdoms. After 1798, the crown of the south also changed hands.

France wore the crown of king of the south in 1798 as it manifested the spiritual characteristics of Egypt (atheism). Yet after the French Revolution the philosophy of
atheism began to grow and refine, while the government of France moved away from atheism as the fundamental principle of its philosophy of government.

Beginning in the seedbed of France, atheism eventually spread across Europe, and even the whole world. Though growing in its intellectual influence, atheism had ceased to have a voice, for to have a voice prophetically requires a government.

"The 'speaking' of the nation is the action of its legislative and judicial authorities." The Great Controversy, 442.

The king of the south is not seen again until another nation fulfills the qualifications necessary to assume the crown, through exalting and incorporating the characteristics of atheism into their government.

It is interesting to note that one characteristic of atheism's work as a force in the history of nations is that it was always accompanied by revolution. Beginning with the French Revolution, atheism placed the palace of the king of the south in France; however, by 1917, atheism moved the palace of the southern king to Russia in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution. In 1917, the king of the south came out of exile and continued its ongoing battle against the forces of Catholicism. Sister White implies that these principles of atheism would continue and reach a higher state of importance than simply the French Revolution:

"The centralizing of wealth and power; the vast combinations for the enriching of the few at the expense of the many; the combinations of the poorer classes for the defense of their interests and claims; the spirit of unrest, of riot and bloodshed; the worldwide dissemination of the same teachings that led to the French Revolution—all are tending to involve the whole world in a struggle similar to that which convulsed France." Education, 228. All emphasis supplied unless otherwise noted.

Tracing the history of the Soviet Union's conquests through the following years is enlightening in many ways. First is the fact that as country after country came under the control of this kingdom, the primary mode to accomplish such a feat was revolution. The design of Communism was to infiltrate, indoctrinate, and bring about a revolution.

Another aspect of this growth is that almost all the countries which were eventually brought under the umbrella of the Soviet Union had previously been Catholic-dominated nations. One by one, Catholicism was losing its power base.

As communism's revolutions spread throughout the world, the Papacy was provided with a tool to identify the Soviet Union as a common enemy of themselves and the United States. This common enemy ploy prepared the way for the alliance described in verse forty, which is also the alliance more broadly addressed in Revelation 13.

Verse 40 teaches that the king of the north would eventually sweep the king of the south away—"with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships." Identifying these prophetic symbols points to the role of the United States in this war.

The recent historical record describing the fall of the Soviet Union echoes the history of Clovis as it identifies the military and economic pressure supplied by the United States coming to the aid of the Papacy to sweep away the southern king.

We understand that "chariots" and "horsemen" are symbolic of military power in Bible prophecy: "Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, I will be king: and he prepared him chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him." 1 Kings 1:5. "And Benhadad the king of Syria gathered all his host together: and there were thirty and two kings with him, and horses, and chariots: and he went up and besieged Samaria, and warred against it." 1 Kings 20:1.

"Ships" are often associated with economic strength in Bible prophecy: "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters." Psalm 107:23.

"For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, and cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city! And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate." Revelation 18:17-19.

The king of the north (the Papacy) was "grieved" when it lost its political power in 1798. In Daniel 11:30, the emperors of the Roman Empire had been grieved by their inability to resist the onslaught of the three horns of Daniel 7, representing the Goths, Vandals, and Heruli. France became the first Catholic nation when its king, Clovis, dedicated his nation to removing these three horns. The recent historical record describing the fall of the Soviet Union echoes the history of Clovis as it identifies the military and economic pressure supplied by the United States coming to the aid of the Papacy to sweep away the southern king.

Daniel 11:40 states that when the king of the north sweeps away the southern kingdom, "he shall enter into the countries." This clause pinpoints that the kingdom of the south would be a confederacy of countries. That was certainly true of the former Soviet Union and its many satellite countries.

Prophecy Fulfills

Sister White makes a statement which will allow us to test the scenario we have just set forth against the testimony of the historical record.

"Historical events, showing the direct fulfillment of prophecy, were set before the people, and the prophecy was seen to be a figurative delineation of events leading down to the close of this earth's history. The scenes connected with the working of the man of sin are the last features plainly revealed in this earth's history." Selected Messages, book 2, 102.

As the "historical events" associated with the collapse of the Soviet Union were recorded by the secular press, we find the history of the ongoing war between atheism and Catholicism described. The alliance between the United States and the Papacy is addressed, including the military and economic role played by the United States. Incredibly, we find the authors of these secular articles were frequently led to choose words in illustrating their stories which are the same words found in the biblical description of verse 40. God intends for His people to see that these "historical events" are a "direct fulfillment of prophecy." God would have us recognize this sequence of events as a wake-up call to Laodicea.

Confirmation in the Secular Press

"Gorbys' Bow To The Roman Legions"—Title in the U.S. News & World Report.

"When the Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV decided to seek pardon of Pope Gregory VII in 1077, he stood barefoot for three
days in the snow outside the papal quarters in Canossa, Italy. Gorbachev’s concordat
with the church was no less significant in its way.” *Time*, December 11, 1989.

“The Soviet president’s session Friday with Pope John Paul II is the latest
development of a revolution in the Communist world that the
pope helped spark and Gorbachev has allowed

“Until recently, the battlefields of Marxism
seemed to have the upper hand over the
Vatican, he was told. **Pushed** too far, his
country’s Catholics might become counterrev-
olutionary. Stalin’s great massacre amplified
his sneer. ‘The Pope. And how many divisions
has he?’ The answer then was that he has none.
The answer now is that he **needs** none. The
structures of Communism are crumbling to the

“The rush to freedom in Eastern Eu-
rope is a sweet victory for John Paul II.”

**The meeting of the two men symbolizes the**
end of the 20th century’s most dramatic
spiritual war, a conflict in which the seemingly
irresistible force of Communism battered
against the immovable object of Christianity.

The word “rush” is the verb used to
describe the spread of this freedom. He
“shall overflow [rush] and pass through.”
The word “pushed” was chosen by this
author to describe the war that Communism
was waging against Catholicism.

“Of all the events that have shaken
the Soviet bloc in 1989, none is more fraught
with history—or more plausible—than the
polite encounter to take place this week
in Vatican City. There, in the spacious
library of the 16th century Apostolic
Palace, the czar of world atheism, Mikhail
Gorbachev, will visit the Vicar of Christ,
Pope John Paul II.

“The moment will be electric, not only
because John Paul helped inflame the fervor
for freedom in his Polish homeland that swept
like brush fire across Eastern Europe. Beyond
that, the meeting of the two men symbolizes the
end of the 20th century’s most dramatic spiri-
tual war, a conflict in which the seemingly
irresistible force of Communism battered against
the immovable object of Christianity.” *Time*,
December 4, 1989.

“His [Pope John Paul II’s] triumphant
tour of Poland in 1979, says Polish bishop, altered the
‘mentality of fear, the fear of police and tanks,
of losing your job, of not getting promoted, of
being thrown out of school, of failing to get
drive. People learned that if they ceased to
fear the system, the system was helpless. Thus
was born Solidarity, backed by the church and
led by such friends of the pope as Lech Walesa
and Tadeusz Mazowiecki, who subsequently
became the Soviet bloc’s first Christian Prime

“In 1935 Josef Stalin, absolute ruler of the
Soviet Union, was given some unsolicited
advice. Make a propitiatory gesture to the
Communism. Secular authors recognize
Communism as—atheism.

“The Triumph Of John Paul II—The
tide of freedom washing over Eastern
Europe answers his most fervent prayer.”

The word “overflow” means to “wash
away,” as with water. Who was choosing the
words for these secular reporters?

**“Days of the Whirlwind” Title in News-
**week, December 25, 1989, for an article
that is a chronology of the fall of Commu-
nism. The author thought the best title for
the article was the same word Daniel twice
used—to prophetically describe the very
same event.

**Chariots and Horsemen**

“In 1981, the Communist bloc got another
shock. A new American President, Ronald
Reagan, began fulfilling his promise to chal-
lenge the Soviets, not placate them. Over the
next few years, he accelerated the military
buildup and announced the Strategic Defense
Initiative (SDI), a space-based system for pro-
tecting against missile attack. He backed anti-
Communist rebels in Nicaragua, Angola, Cam-
bodia, and Afghanistan. And with American
troops, he liberated the island of Grenada from
Communist thugs.

“The Soviets’ confidence was shaken...”

“The Western Europeans also pressed
the Soviets. NATO forged ahead with mili-
tary modernization. German voters spurred
Soviet ‘peace overtures’ and elected a gov-
ernment that voted to deploy new interme-
diate-range missiles...”

“Military pressure from America and its
Western allies had caused the Soviets to
flinch.” *Reader’s Digest*, March 1990.

**With Many Ships**

“Gorbachev has also grasped the fact that
political and economic survival depends upon
the goodwill of the Soviet people, among
whom Christians have always outnumbered
Communists. Gorbachev, moreover, needs the
cooperation of the West, observes Father Mark,
reform-minded Orthodox priest in Moscow,
who considers Gorbachev’s program within
the U.S.S.R. ‘a result of foreign policy necessi-

“In the 1980s, communist economies,
always inefficient, went belly up. Before, they
had lacked consumer and luxury goods.
Now perennial shortages of staples wor-
sened as well. When Soviet miners went on
strike in 1989, their demands included soap,
toilet paper, and sugar.” *Reader’s Digest*,
March 1990.
"For Gorbachev, the ferment in the Baltics is shaking not just a small corner of the empire built by Lenin and Stalin, but the foundations of the empire itself. The nationalities question is a potent distillation of many other signs, from a crumbling economy to violent ethnic clashes, that the breathtaking disintegration of the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe may not stop at the Soviet border. As the economy deteriorates and shortages grow, public disillusionment with Communism and with Gorbachev himself is rising, and hostile republics, nationalities and interest groups are competing more fiercely for political power and for shares in the shrinking economy. Corruption and crime are rampant; miners and railway workers threaten to cut off fuel supplies during the bitter winter; Azerbaijanis cut the rail line to an Armenian enclave in their midst; farmers hoard food, leaving city shelves bare." U.S. News and World Report, January 15, 1990.

The Whirlwind Begins

"In Poland the freedom movement was born almost three decades ago when the bishop of Krakow sought approval to build a new church. When Communist authorities denied his application, the bishop had a giant cross erected and celebrated open-air masses. The Communists tore it down. The church members replaced it over and over until finally the Communists gave up." Jubilee, April 1990.

Who was that bishop of Krakow? None other than Pope John Paul II.

"With the Pope's support, Solidarity (Polish Labor Union) was formed, and John Paul II sent word to Moscow that if Soviet forces crushed Solidarity, he would go to Poland and stand with his people." Reader's Digest, March 1990.

"When Tadeusz Mazowiecki took over in August 1989 as Poland's first non-Communist prime minister in forty-five years, he was asked if he was a socialist. 'I am a Catholic,' he answered tersely." U.S. News and World Report, May 21, 1990.

"Last year Lithuania's two leading bishops were returned to head dioceses after a combined 53 years of internal exile, and the cathedral in Vilnius, previously used as an art museum, was restored for worship. This year the Belarusian republic got its first bishop in 63 years. That paved the way for Archbishop Anglo Sodano, who oversees the Vatican's foreign relations, to make the arrangements for Gorbachev's historic visit to the Holy See.

"These concessions to Catholicism are only part of Gorbachev's religious liberalization." Time, December 4, 1989.

"Three new Catholic bishops have recently been named in Czechoslovakia. And this month Gorbachev meets Pope John Paul II during a visit to Italy—the first face-to-face encounter between leaders of the Kremlin and the Vatican. The sessions may lead to legalization of the long-banned Ukrainian Catholic Church in the U.S.S.R." Life, December, 1989.

"The revival of religious freedom is expected to include lifting of an official ban on the five-million-member Ukrainian Catholic Church, which has survived underground since 1946 when Stalin ordered it absorbed into the Russian Orthodox Church. Winning legalization for the Ukrainian Church has been a primary aim of the pope's. Officials in the Soviet Union say they will clear the way for legalization by permitting Ukrainian Catholics to register, as other religious groups are now required to do under Soviet law." U.S. News and World Report, December 11, 1989.

World news presents that Catholicism allied itself with the United States, using economic, social, religious, political, and military pressure to bring about the collapse of Communism. In spite of the wonderful stories of evangelistic triumphs in Eastern Europe we can rest assured that the Catholic Church is rapidly moving to reclaim its former stranglehold upon those countries. Our window of opportunity is indeed very short, for this verse teaches that Catholicism will overrun and cross over these countries as she "overflows and passes through." Time magazine, February 24, 1992, chose the title, "Holy Alliance," to discuss this coming event.

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God’s Judgement Upon the Midianites

Moses’ work for Israel was almost done; yet one more act remained for the aged leader to perform, ere he should go to his long rest. “Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites,” was the divine command; “afterward shalt thou be gathered unto thy people.” Numbers 31:2. This mandate was communicated to Israel, not as the word of Moses, but of Christ, their invisible Leader; and it was immediately obeyed. One thousand men were selected from each of the tribes of Israel, and sent out against the Midianites. In the battles which followed, that people were defeated, with great slaughter.

The men who promptly and speedily executed the divine judgments upon those heathen nations have been pronounced harsh and unmerciful in destroying so many human lives. But all who reason thus, fail to understand the character and dealings of God. In His infinite mercy, the Lord had long spared those idolatrous nations, giving them evidence upon evidence that He, the mighty Jehovah, was the God whom they should serve. He had commanded Moses not to make war upon Moab or Midian, for their cup of iniquity was not yet full. Additional evidence was to be given; clear and distinct light from the throne of God itself was to shine upon them.

When the king of Moab had called Balaam to pronounce a curse upon Israel, and thus accomplish their destruction, the goodness and mercy of God was strikingly displayed. That corrupt and hypocritical gain-seeker, whose heart longed to curse God’s people for reward, was constrained to pronounce upon them the richest and most sublime blessings. The Moabites themselves could see that it was the power of God which controlled the avaricious prophet, and compelled him in the most exalted strains of inspiration to proclaim Israel God’s chosen, and His almighty power her protection. Here the last ray of light shone upon a stiff-necked people who had set their wills in defiance to the will of God. When, at the suggestion of Balaam, the snare was laid for Israel, which resulted in the destruction of many thousands, then it was that the Midianites filled up the measure of their iniquities. Then their day of probation ended, the door of mercy was to them closed, and the mandate went forth from Him who can create and can destroy, “Vex the Midianites, and smite them: for they vex you with their wiles.” Numbers 25:17-18.

Those who would complain of God, or question the wisdom and justice of His dealings with His creatures should realize their own incompetence, with their finite wisdom, to determine what conduct is befitting to the Judge of all the earth. They should make it their chief anxiety to so conduct themselves as not to become subjects of His wrath, and should leave the Lord to deal with the work of His hands according to His own wise purposes.

Moses had been filled with grief and indignation at the deceitful wiles by which Israel had been enticed to sin and thus bring upon themselves the wrath of God. In the command to make war upon the Midianites, Moses saw not only the justice of God in visiting His judgments upon the guilty, but His mercy in giving Israel the victory over a people who were seeking by every hellish art to accomplish their destruction. The Israelites were to engage in this warfare, not to gratify malice or revenge, but as God’s instruments, to do His bidding, being influenced solely by zeal for the divine glory.

Men do not understand what they are doing, when they permit themselves even for a moment, to doubt the wisdom and benevolence of God—to regard as a species of cruelty the judgments visited upon the stubborn and rebellious. Few realize the malignity of sin. It is a deadly leprosy, contaminating all who are brought in contact with it. If men persist in showing contempt for divine authority, God, who created them, and whose property they are, has a perfect right to take from them the blessings which they have abused. God’s name and authority as Ruler in the universe must be maintained. When idolatry is rearing its proud head, when blasphemy and rebellion are strengthening, then God refutes the sins of the nations, and the manifestations of divine
anger which they had provoked come upon the transgressors of His law. The Most High delivers His word of doom, and chooses the instruments to perform His will. These messengers of God are required to faithfully perform the work appointed them, however repugnant it may be to their natural feelings. Sacred history records no instance in which these men were reprieved for too great thoroughness and severity; but God has many times reproved His servants for lack of faithfulness in executing His judgments. In all this, God would teach us the lesson that in the future judgment retribution will surely be visited upon every soul of man that doth evil, according to the deeds done in the body. See Romans 2:6, 9.

God's method of dealing with sin is not in harmony with the views cherished by a large class who occupy a prominent position among the professors of Christ. Many of these men cherish sin, and laud the benevolence and long-suffering of God, and dwell upon the loving character of Jesus— all mercy, all tenderness—while they pass over the threatenings of God's wrath against sin and sinners, and our Saviour's scathing denunciations of hypocrisy and self-deception. It is those who have not a keen sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin that are ready to question the justice of God in punishing with such severity the sins of the Amalekites, Canaanites, and Midianites. Those who love sin are unable to comprehend God's dealings with His subjects.

In our day, as in ancient times, there is disagreeable work to be done in reproving sin. In this work, God uses men as His instruments—men of determined purpose, whom no threat or peril can intimidate, no hardship turn aside from the path of duty—men who will never forget their sacred commission as servants of the Most High. The Lord calls for men to act promptly, with the courage of heroes, and the firmness and faith of martyrs, to tear down the idolatrous images that have usurped His place in the minds of men, and meet the armed force of wrong on battlefields. But in all this there is no excuse for any to indulge in harshness or severity to gratify their own wrong feelings.

God wants men whom he can use to his own glory, either to bear reproof and execute justice, or, with a heart full of piety and benevolence, to carry light into darkened homes, to speak peace to the troubled soul, and point the sinner to the pardoning love of Christ. The great want of this age is men fitted to do God's will—men who will listen with praying hearts for God's words, and will hasten to obey His voice.

There are men full of zeal, who claim to be doing God's will, while in reality they are governed by human impulse. They feel at liberty to question, criticize, and challenge everyone who does not act in harmony with their ideas. They make themselves offensive to God and to the people. They wound continually, and by their wrong course create in others a just retribution upon a guilty people, of whom the women had been the principal criminals. Had these idolatrous, licentious women been preserved as captives, their presence would have constantly endangered the morals of Israel. The sympathy which would spare these transgressors was contrary to the will of God.

The offensive character of sin can be estimated only in the light of the cross. When men urge that God is too merciful to punish the transgressors of His law, let them look to Calvary.

There is a sympathy for sin and sinners that is dangerous to the prosperity of the church at the present day. You must have charity is the cry. But that sentiment that would excuse wrong and shield the guilty, is not the charity of the Bible. The friendship of the wicked is more dangerous than their enmity; for none can prevail against the servants of the living God, except by tempting them to disobedience.

The offensive character of sin can be estimated only in the light of the cross. When men urge that God is too merciful to punish the transgressors of His law, let them look to Calvary; let them realize that it was because Christ took upon Himself the guilt of the disobedient, and suffered in the sinners stead, that the sword of justice was awakened against the Son of God. It was to save us from shame and everlasting contempt that He endured the scorn and mockery which the world heaped upon Him. It was our sins that caused the Saviour of the world such intense agony, pouring darkness into His soul, and extorting from His pale lips the anguished cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Mark 15:34.

He was numbered among the transgressors; He made His soul an offering for sin, that in His righteousness the believing, repenting sinner might stand justified before God.

After all this, if man refuses to respond to the great sacrifice which has been made to ennable and to save him, if he obstinately chooses the path of sin, will the great Judge of all the earth excuse the willful transgression of His holy law? Surely, everything that is noble and generous in our natures must respond to such love as Jesus manifested in suffering for our sake. It was an unexampled humiliation for
Hi to take upon Himself the nature of fallen man, and sacrifice His life for a race of rebels; and the manner of His death makes that humiliation more apparent. He "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Philippians 2:8.

Jesus was not insensitive to ignominy. He felt the disgrace of sin as much more keenly than it is possible for man to feel it, as His divine and sinless nature was exalted above the nature of man. We should never entertain the thought that the Majesty of Heaven, so holy and undefiled, was not acutely sensitive to scorn and mockery, abuse and pain. He asks the murderous mob in Gethsemane, "Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves?" Matthew 26:55. This shameful treatment Jesus keenly felt, yet for our sakes He endured the most ignominious and most painful death which it was possible for mortals to experience; a death which was appropriate for the basest of criminals was that which the Lord of Glory suffered to ransom guilty man. Let none flatter themselves that they can continue in sin, and yet share in the great salvation which Christ has so dearly purchased. God is merciful and compassionate, but He is also just. Let the cross of Cavalry forever settle this matter. As surely as Christ, the guiltless, suffered for the guilty, so surely will the wrath of God fall upon the heads of those who persist in their transgression of His law.

Signs of the Times, January 6, 1881

The Time of the End
Continued from 15
these events in just one verse, containing only fifty words.
In his book, Keys of This Blood, Malachi Martin, a Vatican insider, goes to great pains to illustrate that the attempted assassination of the pope was viewed by John Paul II as divine evidence that he should be the pope to ascend to the throne of the world. The pope saw his attempted assassination as a sign from Mary, confirming the message sent to the Catholic Church and to the world—through the supernatural manifestation of the so-called "virgin" of Fatima, Portugal. This miracle, and the messages connected to it, are the guiding force for Catholicism as it prepares for the next millennium of peace. The Fatima miracle has specific information concerning Communism, Russia, and the conversion of the world. Strangely enough, this miracle occurred in 1917—the very year of the Bolshevik Revolution.

The healing of the deadly wound identifies the restoration of power to the Papacy as a geopolitical power. The Vatican lost its throne in 1798, when the king of the south began a war against the king of the north. It is also noteworthy that the 1891 assassination attempt against the Pope—the king of the north—was apparently ordered by the king of the south—the Soviet Union.

In a caption connected with two photographs showing the assassination attempts on both the pope and Ronald Reagan, the following statement was made:

"A Common Brush With Death—At their first meeting, Reagan and John Paul II discussed something else they had in common: both had survived assassination attempts that occurred only six weeks apart in 1981, and both believed God had saved them for a special mission. And both referred to the ‘miraculous’ fact that they had ‘survived.’"

"In May 1981, before a vast audience in St. Peter’s Square, Pope John Paul was shot and severely wounded by Mehmet Ali Aga. There was immediate speculation that the Turkish gunman had been sent by East bloc plotters from Bulgaria, sponsored by the Soviet secret police. Their aim: to silence the one man capable of shaking the foundations of international Communism." Life, December 1989.

"With the Pope’s support, Solidarity (Polski Labor Union) was formed, and John Paul II sent word to Moscow that if Soviet forces crushed Solidarity, he would go to Poland and stand with his people. The Soviets were so alarmed that they hatched a plot to kill him. . . . The Pope cautioned Solidarity leaders, particularly his friend Lech Walesa, to proceed slowly. They did. In 1988 General Wojciech Jaruzelski, the Polish Communist leader, went to them offering a deal. Solidarity insisted on an election, which it carried with some 80 percent of the vote.

When the Communist government fell, the impact on Eastern Europe was electrifying." Reader’s Digest, March 1990.

The final movements in the healing of the deadly wound of the Papacy have begun, and ironically, the reigning pope himself received a deadly physical wound during this time period. The fulfillment of Daniel 11:40 is the first step of three steps which are necessary for the complete healing of the Papacy’s deadly wound. The first step is now past history. The historical record of the war between these two kingdoms confirms that it continued to the very end. The next area of conquest for the Vatican is the glorious land of the United States.

Possibly the most significant point of verse 40 is that the United States has already formed an alliance with the enemy which is preparing to bring her under his control. This is an echo of how the Papacy originally came into the control of the world, for just as Clovis surrendered his pagan beliefs when he came to the aid of the Popes, likewise the United States surrendered its Protestant beliefs when it came to the aid of the Popacy. This is true because to meet the definition of Protestant, one must protest popery, and maintain a firm denial of any type of alliance with Catholicism. We will address the consequences of this alliance as we continue this series.

And This Gospel of the Kingdom . . .
by Vernon Sparks

With a biblical and Spirit of Prophecy explanation of the nature of man and his fall, this book leads the reader into a clearer understanding of the nature of sin and of the human nature of Christ. By harmonizing what some claim are contradictory statements regarding Christ’s nature, the author shows how Christ’s perfected character, while He was living in the “flesh,” is indeed the attainable pattern for all mankind—the achievement of which is essential for the final and full vindication of God’s law and character, and the setting of the great controversy. A book to read, to study, and then to share. Paperback, 5½ by 8½ inch size, 153 pages. Only US $7.25. Ten or more copies for US $5.40 each. See page 3 for shipping and tax information.
An Editorial Dilemma

The presentations which began in January, addressing the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, created an environment here at Hope International which has become a testing ground for study, patience, examination, discernment—and more study. These presentations had been under consideration well before January, but obstacles have arisen all along the way. Sometimes it is difficult to know whether an issue is an obstacle to overcome or a door which has been divinely closed.

One obstacle involves the study of prophecy itself. The Lord purposely concealed the messages of prophecy in order to protect the divine messages contained therein from the casual, unconsecrated student. The concealment of prophecy through symbols, parallels, signs, and other prophetic techniques, creates difficulties for an editorial committee—in the sense that it requires all to see at least a majority of the revealed information, though some members of the committee have rightly spent their biblical studies in other fields of truth. A new truth may be quickly seen by one mind, but will generally require much more time for a group of minds. It has taken time to go through the process of evaluating these prophetic messages—a process which takes place here at Hope International before information can be turned into the printed page.

Another obstacle to prophetic truth is the variety of interpretations which are blowing through Adventism today. Some of these winds are easily identified as false prophecy, but others are more subtle. To guard against the influence of these false ideas regarding the interpretation and application of prophecy, is also necessary before an article can be published.

Another obstacle is the priority of information which should fill the pages of Our Firm Foundation. Some interesting prophetic truths, though true, do not qualify as present truth. Top priority is given here at Hope to presenting present truth to our readers.

Yet another obstacle which confronted us in this series was the broad depth of its message. We not only recognized the overall message as present truth for this hour of history, but we recognized its connection with many significant aspects of the three angels' messages. The dilemma here was how to share a message this important, yet this broad, within the confines of a four to five-page article—once a month. Some have suggested that a book would be the best format in which to convey this message, and we agree. A book is now in the final stages of production; yet, if the primary theme of this presentation is correct, if we are coming perilously close to a national Sunday law, perhaps taking advantage of the format which Our Firm Foundation provides, is an appropriate tool in which to begin to raise the warning.

Our next dilemma was the response of our readership to the new series. Indeed, we have been receiving responses. So far, the vast majority of them have been favorable, but there are criticisms which have come and which have caused us to restudy and re-evaluate our decisions. The majority of the criticism received has been almost totally from our brothers and sisters who understand that the book Daniel and the Revelation, by Uriah Smith, is essentially accurate from beginning to end. We recognize the endorsements which Sister White gave to that book; however, we have not understood those endorsements to be blanket acceptance of all Brother Smith's positions.

The minority of the criticism received has been an expression of the view that these presentations are speculative and that the authors are dogmatic. I hope, and believe, that this observation is incorrect, but I do see why some folks might have a certain amount of reason to view these articles in that light.

We recognize the difficulty which we undertook when we decided to run such a long series of generally unfamiliar understandings within Our Firm Foundation, which typically has not emphasized the prophetic word. Our avoidance was not because we do not accept the prophetic word, but because we saw the difficulties and dangers involved in conveying prophetic messages in such a limited format.

This series is ultimately designed to demonstrate that we are on the verge of a national Sunday law in the United States, and it is for this reason that we chose to run the risk of appearing to be speculative. Some of the issues that we raised in the earlier articles will not be soundly defended until we get further into the series, yet those points must be made in order to maintain the integrity of the overall presentation.

Some of the items presented may be viewed as dogmatic for another reason. An author must strive to leave room for ideas in areas where that type of room is demanded, and he should recognize his humanity with all its limitations. In this regard, the obstacle for the author to overcome is to not be locked into concrete on every idea, and yet, to strive to place the proper importance on the solemn issues which are being presented.

Brothers and sisters, this presentation is solemn and important in its significance. This presentation is a wake-up call alerting us to the nearness of the time which we have been told would “come as an overwhelming surprise.” We pray that you will consider our dilemma in presenting this information, and support us with a little latitude as this material continues to unfold, for, if our conclusions are correct, the ability to share this type of information will reach another obstacle very soon. That obstacle will be the attack which comes from laws which will be written by a government that has gone far in grasping hands with Roman Catholicism—and will begin to earnestly speak as a dragon.

We would appreciate your comments, observations, and questions, as well as your criticisms. We would ask though, when sending the criticisms, that you be specific about your issue, in order that we may accurately address your concern. We also ask for your patience as we prayerfully research the response to your input.

May the Holy Spirit bless us all and enlighten our minds as we study these vital end-time prophecies.

Jeff Pippenger, Associate Editor
Knowing God’s Will, Part 3

Counseling With Others

If we are to follow God’s Word in seeking to know His will in regard to the important decisions we have to face in life, we must deal with the question of how we should relate to the counsel of others. In Proverbs 12:15 we are told that, “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.” That would certainly tell us that it is important to talk with other people. In Proverbs 11:14—a text Ellen White referred to frequently—we are advised that “Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.” Again, in Proverbs 13:22 we are told that, “Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.” Proverbs 19:20 reads this way: “Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end.”

Now that is counsel from God’s Word. It must mean that we really ought to pay some attention and talk to other people about our plans and decisions. Ellen White wrote a tremendous amount on this particular subject. Let me share a bit of this advice:

“Every worker needs to guard himself against thinking that he is a complete whole. My brother, you should learn that wherever you are in God’s service, other minds besides yours should be brought into connection with the work. You will desire to do things that in your judgment should be done. But your will is not always to be followed. On some lines other minds may be more capable of giving wise counsel than is yours; therefore you need to counsel with your brethren. In your board meetings let the other members fully express their minds. Do not regard your judgment as fully sufficient to decide matters without any other voice.”

Ellen G. White 1888 Materials, 1787

That sounds like solid counsel. We should be open and teachable. But the Bible is just as emphatic that we must use great caution in depending on the advice of friends or well-meaning counselors. David advises us that, “It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.” Psalm 118:8-9. Again the Psalmist warns us, “Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help.”

Psalm 146:3. Incidentally, the Hebrew word from which that word “help” is translated also conveys the idea of deliverance, salvation or victory. The Psalmist is telling us that we should beware of putting our trust in men, or of depending on them, because they do not have the power to deliver us from the clutches of sin and Satan, our mortal spiritual enemy.

Ellen White says it this way, “Let all look to God, trust in Him, and believe fully in His power. Yoke up with Christ, and not with men; for men have no power to keep you from falling.” Ibid., 1620.

Here we are faced with an apparent dilemma. At first glance it seems that we are being given conflicting counsel. It is not uncommon in situations like this, for a person with strong convictions on one point of view, to collect only those Bible and Spirit of Prophecy statements that appear to support his ideas. Such a person may totally disregard often voluminous counsel that balances this view with a much broader, comprehensive perspective on the subject, giving us a more complete understanding of God’s will and purpose for us. So it is with this topic. Where we find what appears to be statements that are in conflict with each other it is of vital importance that we carefully study all that the Lord has revealed to us on the subject. With closer investigation, I believe it will become clear that there is a basic harmony between two very important principles that are critical to our spiritual growth and welfare.

The first is that when we subdue self, and confidence in our own wisdom and power, we will become teachable and open to learning. And in this, there are indeed persons who can be of great help to us. But we will also discover that God has defined, quite specifically, very special qualifications that these counselors must have.

The second principle tells us that, though we need to be humble and open to learning from others, we are decidedly warned against putting such trust and confidence in others that we tend to lean and depend upon them in place of making God our only Source of direction and strength.

Being Open to Learning

“We have many lessons to learn, and many, many to unlearn. God and heaven alone are infallible. Those who think that they will never have occasion to give up a cherished view,

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never have to change an opinion, will be disappointed. As long as we hold to our own ideas and opinions with determined persistency, we cannot have the unity for which Christ prayed.” Testimonies to Ministers, 30.

A Christian friend may remind us of principles in God’s Word that we may have overlooked, or even point out to us some tendency or habit in our own character in which we have not been obedient to instruction the Lord has already given. Sometimes they may help us see how some of our own prejudices or selfish desires may be getting in the way of our clear vision of God’s leading. Though at times their words may be hard to accept, such a person is indeed a true and loving friend.

Sometime before his death, my father was telling about his early experiences as a young ministerial intern under the tutelage of an older, more experienced evangelist. While traveling together one day, father was telling this man about the wonderful family he had. He related with pride how when he came home, my mother was always ready to wait on him and look after his wishes. The children were taught that the largest piece of dessert was always left for Daddy, and so forth. Then turning to his friend he queried, “Don’t you think that’s wonderful?”

“You, I think it is awful!” His friend replied.

“But, but why? In what way?” father gushed in shock and dismay.

“Why, it’s one of the most selfish things I’ve heard. Have you ever thought of the example of selfishness that you are daily demonstrating to your family?”

Of course, he had not. And in the telling, father still keenly recalled the shock and guilty humiliation that had blasted into his awareness as he became conscious of the truth that had just been kindly pointed out to him. He realized how he had only been thinking of himself, wanting to be catered to, rather than thinking how he might serve others. It was a painful realization that called for confession and a sincere petition for forgiveness and strength in the struggle to overcome this trait in his character. For all his life, father regarded that elder minister as a very special Christian friend.

The Lord has instructed us that, “We must be willing to take advice and caution from our fellow laborers.” Testimonies to Ministers, 500.

Sometimes our own stubborn nature can get in the way of not only our relations with our fellow men but with God as well. At times such barriers may call for rather pointed counsel. Note the following case where the Lord’s messenger counsels:

“You, my sister, will prove a trial to God’s people unless you are willing to learn, willing to be counseled. You must not continue to feel that you know it all. You have much yet to learn before you can be perfect before God. The sweetest and best lesson to be learned will be that of humility. ‘Learn of me,’ says the humble Nazarene; ‘for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.’ Matthew 11:29. This lesson of are to seek their counsel, and when they give it, we are not to cast it away, as if they were enemies.” Ibid., 500.

And then the Lord’s messenger emphasizes the fundamental issue in this whole concern with words that need to be deeply embedded in our minds. “Unless we humble our hearts before God, we shall not know His will.” Ibid. Emphasis added.

You must not walk independently of all counsel. It is your duty to counsel with your brethren. This may touch your pride, but the humility of a mind taught by the Holy Spirit will listen to counsel, and will banish all self-confidence.

Much of the Spirit of Prophecy instruction in this regard relates to the need for those involved in soul-winning efforts to counsel and plan together. But it is important to notice how this is to be done. The emphasis is placed on jointly seeking the Lord’s guidance, rather than one or few persons telling others how the work must be done.

“The Lord has given us the promise, ‘If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him,’ James 1:5. It is in the order of God that those who bear responsibilities should often meet together to counsel with one another, and to pray earnestly for that wisdom which He alone can impart. Talk less; much precious time is lost in talk that brings no light. Let brethren unite in fasting and prayer for the wisdom that God has promised to supply liberally. Make known your troubles to God. Tell Him, as did Moses, I cannot lead this people unless thy presence shall go with me. See Exodus 33:15; And then ask still more; pray with Moses, ‘Shew me thy glory!’ Exodus 33:18. What is this glory?—The character of God. This is what He proclaimed to Moses.” Gospel Workers, 417.

“I have been instructed that it is Satan’s special effort to lead men to feel that God is pleased to have them choose their own course, independent of the counsel of their brethren.

“Herein lies a grave danger to the prosperity of our work. We must move discreetly, sensibly, in harmony with the judgment of God-fearing counselors; for in this course alone lies our safety and strength. Otherwise God cannot work with us and by us and for us.” Testimonies to Ministers, 489.
What Kind of Counselor?

But you go to ten different people and ask them what you should do, and it is possible to get ten different answers. From the instruction we have just read, we have found that it is often appropriate and helpful, in fact, our duty, to counsel with another person. But if it is so important for us to be willing to counsel together with others, how can we know what kind of person would be a safe counselor? Fortunately, God has not left us without some very clear instruction in this matter as well. In fact, the qualifications He gives are quite specific:

First, in our wish to know and follow God's will, we must always remember that He is the Source of all true wisdom. For, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever." Psalm 111:10. God must always come first when we think of counselors. Through the words of the prophet Isaiah the Lord speaks of Himself, as, "Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6.

In the Bible we also have examples of human counselors that the Lord used to bring wise advice to men of God. We have the account of Jethro whom God used to counsel Moses in matters of organization and management. See Exodus 18:17. Joseph of Aenatem, the man who had the courage to go boldly and ask for the body of the crucified Jesus, was known as "an honourable counsellor." Mark 15:43.

Ellen White has assured us that, "There are men whom God has raised up as counselors, men whom He has taught, and whose heart and soul and life are in the work. These men are to be highly esteemed for their work's sake. There are some who will wish to follow their own crude notions; but they must learn to receive advice and to work in harmony with their brethren, or they will sow doubt and discord that they will not care to harvest." *Testimonies*, vol. 5, 270.

"Some men have insight into matters, having ability to counsel. It is a gift of God. In moments when the cause of God is in need of words, sound and solemn and solid, they can speak words which will lead minds perplexed and in darkness, to see as a quick flash of sunlight the course for them to pursue, [the answer to the question] which has filled them with perplexity and baffled their minds in study for weeks and months. There is an unraveling, a clearing up of the path before them, and the Lord has let His sunlight in, and they see their prayers are answered, their way is made clear." *Selected Messages*, book 2, 361-362.

So it is clear that the Lord at times does use human counselors to help us more clearly understand His will. You will also notice in these references that we have some qualifying characteristics of counselors whom the Lord can use.

Because of space limitations, in most cases below, we have only listed God's qualifications for counselors with the references, rather than giving the whole quotation. The reader is encouraged to study these passages in their original context.

Qualities to Look for in a Counselor

There are men whom God has raised up as counselors, men whom He has taught, and whose heart and soul and life are in the work. These men are to be highly esteemed for their work's sake.
Those who are "under the reproof of God." Testimonies, vol. 8, 188.


Those who deviate from righteous principles. See ibid.

Those who are in need of help themselves because their souls are not right with God. See Gospel Workers, 414–415.

Those who "undertake the job of tinkering up the defective characters of others. . . . would better leave God to do His own work." See Testimonies to Ministers, 191.

Those full of self-confidence:
"But when men, full of self-confidence, think that it is their place to give counsel instead of desiring to be counseled by their experienced brethren, they will listen to voices that will lead them in strange paths." Testimonies to Ministers, 501.

Those who eat improperly. This may be a quality that most of us would be inclined to overlook. But it is apparent that God does not. For the Lord warns us that we cannot have confidence in such a counselor. "But if your brain is so benumbed by your wrong course of living that you cannot give us the right counsel, do we not meet with a loss? . . . What care we for the judgment of such persons? They see through a mass of undigested food." Testimonies, vol. 2, 357.

So it is part of God's plan that we should be open to counsel from godly persons who meet these rigorous standards. Talk to them, let them listen to you sort out the issues, and help you clarify your own thinking. They may be of help with input and information that you need in order to make your decision. Let them join with you in your prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the challenge of the decision-making process in which you are involved. Such a person, who helps you keep your focus on the one and only Source of true wisdom, can be of help and encouragement. But in the end you are the one who must decide. The caution is clearly given that we should beware of people who are always ready to tell you exactly what you should or should not do. The danger is that we may come to depend upon the impressions and judgments of men and women who are just as apt to be influenced by their humanity as we are. Therefore, all counsel from others must be carefully measured and tested against a "Thus saith the Lord." If the Lord is able to give someone else an impression regarding what you should do, God is just as able to give you the same instruction. For us to depend on someone else to make decisions for us is to decide by default. These decisions were placed in our path for a purpose. For us to avoid accepting this responsibility is to fail to exercise the faculty of sanctified judgment that God so wishes for us to develop. If we depend on others to tell us how we should decide, we are counseled you to buy of Him. You are learning to go to God in all your troubles; and as you learn these precious lessons of faith, you will teach the same to others." Gospel Workers, 418–419.

Yes, it is part of God's plan that self be subdued, along with confidence in our own wisdom and power, that we may become teachable and open to learning from wise counselors. But that is only the beginning of the much greater goals that God has for us in our spiritual development.

To be continued.

God is your counselor, and we are always in danger of showing distrust of God when we seek for the advice and counsel of men who do not make God their trust.
In Defense of God’s Law

Jesus said, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:17–19.

I am compelled to write this series of articles on defending the Ten Commandments because:

- God’s law is “holy, and just, and good, ... [and] spiritual” Romans 7:12, 14;
- we will all be judged by this “law of liberty” James 2:12;
- Jesus overcame and condemned sin in our flesh and blood “that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” Romans 8:4;
- many in Christianity teach that Christians are under no obligation whatsoever to keep God’s moral law;
- the Papacy purports to have the authority to change God’s law; and
- many Protestants are currently working with the Vatican to legislate mandatory Sunday laws, which are neither constitutional nor biblical.

Many of the most respected Christian scholars have recognized the binding claims of God’s Ten Commandments:

Dwight L. Moody said, “The law that was given at Sinai has lost none of its solemnity. Time cannot wear out its authority or the fact of its authorship. ... I have never met an honest man that found fault with the Ten Commandments. ... The commandments of God given to Moses in the mount at Horeb are as binding today as ever they have been since the time when they were proclaimed in the hearing of the people.” Weighed and Wanting, 11, 15.

The founder of the Presbyterian Church, John Calvin, said, “We must not imagine that the coming of Christ has freed us from the authority of the law; for it is the eternal rule of a devout and holy life, and must therefore be as unchangeable as the justice of God, which it embraced, is constant and uniform.” Calvin’s Comment on Matthew 5:17 and Luke 16:17, in Commentary on a Harmony of the Gospels, vol. 1, 277.

Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon said, “The law of God must be perpetual. There is no abrogation of it, nor amendment of it. It is not to be toned down or adjusted to our fallen condition; but every one of the Lord’s righteous judgments abideth forever. ... To show that He never meant to abrogate the law, our Lord Jesus has embodied all its commands in His own life.” Branson, In Defense of the Faith, 21–22.

Methodist Dr. Adam Clarke writes, “Thus it appears that man cannot have a true notion of sin but by means of the law of God. ... And let it be observed, that the law did not answer this end merely among the Jews in the days of the apostle; it is just as necessary to the Gentiles to the present hour. Nor do we find that true repentance takes place where the moral law is not preached and enforced. Those who preach only the gospel to sinners, at best only heal the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly. The law, therefore, is the grand instrument in the hands of a faithful minister, to alarm and awaken the sinners; and he may safely show that every sinner is under the law, and consequently under the curse, who has not fled for refuge to the hope held out by the gospel; for, in this sense also, Jesus Christ is the end of the law for justification to them that believe. [See Romans 7:13],” A Commentary and Critical Notes, New York: Lane and Scott, 1851.

Presbyterian scholar Dr. Albert Barnes wrote, “We learn hence: 1. That all the law of God is binding on Christians. Compare James 2:10. 2. That all the commands of God should be preached in their proper place, by Christian ministers. 3. That they who pretend that there are any laws of God so small that they need not obey them, are unworthy of His kingdom. And 4. That true piety has respect to all the commandments of God. Compare Psalm 119:6.” Barnes, Commentary, note on Matthew 5:19.

The great preacher John Wesley wrote, “The ritual or ceremonial law, delivered by Moses to the children of Israel, containing all the injunctions and ordinances which
related to the old sacrifices and service of the temple, our Lord indeed did come to destroy, to dissolve, and utterly abolish. To this bear all the apostles witness. . . . This ‘handwriting of ordinances’ our Lord did blot out, take away, and nail to His cross. See Colossians 2:14.

“But the moral law contained in the Ten Commandments, and enforced by the prophets, He did not take away. It was not the design of His coming to revoke any part of this. This is a law which can never be broken, which ‘stands fast as the faithful witness in heaven.’ The moral law stands on an entirely different foundation from the ceremonial or ritual law. . . . Every part of this law must remain in force upon all mankind and in all ages; as not depending either on time, or place, or any other circumstance liable to change; but on the nature of God and the nature of man, and their unchangeable relation to each other.” Sermons on Several Occasions, vol. 1, 221-222.

In another place John Wesley said, “The most surprising of all the circumstances that attend this strong delusion is, that they who are given up to it really believe that they honor Christ by overthrowing His law, and that they are magnifying His office while they are destroying His doctrine! Yea, they honor Him just as Judas did, when he said, ‘Hail, Master,’ and kissed Him. See Matthew 26:49. And He may as justly say to every one of them, ‘Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?’ Luke 22:48. It is no other than betraying Him with a kiss to talk of His blood and take away His crown; to set light by any part of His law, under pretense of advancing His gospel. Nor indeed can any one escape this charge who preaches faith in any such a manner as either directly or indirectly tends to set aside any branch of obedience; who preaches Christ so as to disannul, or weaken in any wise, the least of the commandments of God.” Works of Wesley, vol. 1, 225-226.

So what is God’s law? The Ten Commandments of God are His moral rules that govern His creation. The first four commandments define our loving relationship to God and the last six define our loving relationship with our fellow man. If these commandments were strictly kept, it would produce communities of decency and domestic tranquillity. There would be no idolatry, profanity, Sabbathbreaking, dishonoring of parents, murder, adultery, stealing, lying, or coveting. How would you like to live in a community like that?

God’s law is as eternal and unchanging as God Himself. The Bible says, “All his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever.” “Every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.” Psalm 111:7-8; 119:160.

Some teach that God’s law has been abolished, but Jesus said, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” Jesus said of Himself, “I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in His love.” John 15:10. In fact, the prophet Isaiah said of the Saviour, “He will magnify the law, and make it honourable.” Isaiah 42:21. Did Jesus magnify the law and honor it by abolishing the law? God forbid! Christ came and lived a sinless life “that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Romans 8:4.

How did Christ then magnify the law? Jesus said, “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” Matthew 5:27-28. Did Jesus abolish the seventh commandment? Certainly not! He did just the opposite. Christ defined adultery beyond the physical act. He magnified the law by declaring that you can commit adultery in your heart.

Never in the Scriptures are any of the Ten Commandments degraded or abolished. Paul asks the very question of whether the law is abolished. “Do we then make void the law through faith? What is his answer? ‘God forbid, yea, we establish the law.’ Romans 3:31.

Throughout the Bible, God’s law is exalted. Paul said, “Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. . . . For we know that the law is spiritual: . . . For I delight in the law of God.” Romans 7:12, 14, 22. Paul does not say that the law was holy, good, and spiritual. Paul declares that the law is holy, good, and spiritual. After all, the psalmist says, “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.” Psalm 19:7. And Solomon wrote, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.” Ecclesiastes 12:13.

The beloved John declared, “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” 1 John 2:4. James said, “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.” James 2:10-11.

When a young man came to Jesus and asked how he might receive eternal life, Jesus said, “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.” Matthew 19:17.

When Jesus reproved the religious leaders of His day for their hypocrisy, He said, “Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother.” Matthew 15:3-4.

These moral principles existed long before the entrance of sin and the creation of this world. The Bible says, “All unrighteousness is sin.” 1 John 5:17. “Sin is the transgression of the law.” 1 John 3:4. “Where no law is, there is no transgression.” Romans 4:15. And, “sin is not imputed when there is no law.” Romans 5:13. Consequently, where there is sin there are the binding claims of God’s law.

The covenant that God wants to make with us includes His law. The Bible says, “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” Hebrews 10:16-17. See also Jeremiah 31:33.

God wants to inscribe His law in our hearts and in our minds. He wants us to not only know His commandments (in the mind), but He wants us to love His commandments
God wants to inscribe His law in our hearts and in our minds. He wants us to not only know His commandments (in the mind), but He wants us to love His commandments (in the heart).

And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” Matthew 22:37-40.

Paul declares that the “end” or the fulfillment of the commandment is charity. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” Romans 13:8-10.

In the end, God will again have a people who will keep all Ten Commandments by His grace. The Bible declares, “Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.” And the dragon was wound with the woman [the church], and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Revelation 14:12; 12:17.

These last-day saints will choose to keep His commandments because:
- Christ is worthy of our obedience;
- we want to please Him who created us and died for us;
- we desire to show forth our love to both God and man;
- the commandments are a delight;
- we want to protect ourselves from the sure results of transgressing them;
- we must prepare ourselves, through God’s grace, to live in the sight of a holy God; and
- we need to prepare ourselves by faith to live in harmony with the holy angels and the inhabitants of fallen worlds. After all, “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.” Revelation 22:14. □

Twenty-one Days With Jesus
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Blasphemers
Continued from 11
the world of Satan’s devisings. We must give the trumpet a certain sound to signal the approach of the enemy of our souls.
This duty is one of the reasons why “in the very time in which we live the Lord has called His people and has given them a message to bear. He has called them to expose the wickedness of the man of sin who has made the Sunday law a distinctive power, who has thought to change times and laws, and to oppress the people of God who stand firmly to honor Him by keeping the only true Sabbath, the Sabbath of creation, as holy unto the Lord.” Evangelism, 233; see also Testimonies to Ministers, 118.
Nevertheless, let us constantly depend on the guidance of the Lord to show us when, and how, to act properly according to the circumstances. There is “a time to keep silence, and a time to speak.” Ecclesiastes 3:7. May He grant us His divine eyesalve so that we may behold His glory and restore His children with a spirit of meekness. See Galatians 6:1.

Summary
As we close the study of this most solemn subject, we must keep in mind that: (1) We must not blaspheme any man. See: Titus 3:2; Ephesians 4:1-3.2. We must put off blasphemy. See Colossians 3:8.
If we have been guilty of the sin of blasphemy, let us not despair. Paul found grace and overcame, in spite of the fact that he had been a blasphemer. 1 Timothy 1:12-15.

Beloved brethren, to achieve the experience of controlling our tongues will not be easy. Nevertheless, through the power of the Holy Spirit, it can and must be attained. The Word of the Lord says: “For with God nothing shall be impossible.” Luke 1:37.
May we behold Christ more and more, allowing the meek and lowly Jesus to transform our thinking, speech and behavior into His divine image. May He help us to keep a balance, knowing when it is “a time to keep silence, and a time to speak.” Amen.


See page 3 for shipping, handling and tax information.
The prophet Ezekiel is sitting down in his home with some of the elders of Judah sitting around him when suddenly a Man with the appearance of fire stands before him. The Man reaches out and grabs Ezekiel by the hair and lifts him up into vision.

God has a vision of utmost importance to reveal to Ezekiel. He is about to be shown a startling vision of the progressive growth of apostasy in the nation of Israel. This vision will also unveil the marking in the forehead of those who remain loyal to God, and the terrible judgments to be visited on those who do not receive His mark. This prophecy was given not only for Ezekiel’s day but has great significance for those in God’s church at the end of time.

The First Abomination

The vision begins with the revealing of four abominations, each of which is progressively worse than the previous abomination. The first abomination is found in Ezekiel 8:5: “Then said he unto me, Son of man, lift up thine eyes now the way toward the north. So I lifted up mine eyes the way toward the north, and beheld northward at the gate of the altar this image of jealousy in the entry.” Ezekiel was shown a wicked image that had been set up at the gate of God’s temple. All the people entering and leaving the temple court by this gate had to pass by this image.

Modern idolatry is different in some aspects from ancient idolatry. No longer do we bow down to images of gold, silver, and wood. However, idolatry exists as verily among us as it did in ancient Israel. Paul explains what modern idolatry is, “For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.” Ephesians 5:5–6. Immorality, impurity, and greed are as surely idolatry as worshipping an image of stone.

Paul further writes, “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: for which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience.” Colossians 3:5–6.

Paul makes it clear that moral impurity is idolatry. Impure acts, words, and thoughts drive God’s presence and power from us, and make us idolaters, the children of disobedience. We can recognize the significance of this prophecy for our time because it is these sins that will bring the final wrath of God upon this world. Impurity is the “special” sin of the age in which we are now living.

God’s servant writes, “A terrible picture of the condition of the world has been presented before me. Immorality abounds everywhere. Licentiousness is the special sin of this age. Never did vice lift its deformed head with such boldness as now. The people seem to be benumbed, and the lovers of virtue and true goodness are nearly discouraged by its boldness, strength, and prevalence. The iniquity which abounds is not merely confined to the unbeliever and the scoffer. Would that this were the case, but it is not. Many men and women who profess the religion of Christ are guilty. Even some who profess to be looking for His appearing are no more prepared for that event than Satan himself.” Testimonies, vol. 2, 346.

God continues to speak to Ezekiel, “He said furthermore unto me, Son of man, seest thou what they do? even the great abominations that the house of Israel commits here, that I should go far off from my sanctuary?” Ezekiel 8:6.

God accounts the whole “house of Israel” as guilty of this abomination that is driving His presence from them, leaving them in darkness. God’s servant reveals how He holds the entire body of believers responsible for dealing with the sins committed in the church:

“He would teach His people that disobedience and sin are exceedingly offensive to Him and are not to be lightly regarded. He shows us that when His people are found in sin they should at once take decided measures to put that sin from them, that His frown may not rest upon them all. But if the sins of the people are passed over by those in responsible positions, His frown will be upon them, and the people of God, as a body, will be held responsible for those sins. In His dealings with His people in the past the Lord shows the necessity of purifying the church from wrongs. One sinner may diffuse darkness that will exclude the light of God from the entire congregation.” Testimonies, vol. 3, 265.

The Second Abomination

After Ezekiel witnesses the first abomination God says to him, “... but turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations.” Ezekiel 8:6. Ezekiel is taken to the wall of the temple and shown a hole in the wall. He digs his way through the wall and finds himself facing a door.

“And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here. So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed upon the wall round about. And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood

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Jezaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censor in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up." Ezekiel 8:9-11.

The leaders of Israel had failed to take decided measures against the first abomination. Now we find that idolatry has progressed to the point where the leaders of Israel are not only tolerating idolatry in the people, but are now actively participating in the most vile acts of idolatry in the hidden rooms of God’s temple.

There is no hiding from God. The leaders of Israel may have felt they were safely hidden, but God sees what is done behind closed doors. There is a Witness to every impure act done in secret. We may be able to hide our corruptness from others, but there is no hiding from God’s all-seeing eyes. Sister White writes, “The great Searcher of hearts knoweth every sin committed in secret by the workers of iniquity. These persons come to feel secure in their deceptions and, because of His long-suffering, say that the Lord seeth not, and then act as though He had forsaken the earth. But He will detect their hypocrisy and will open before others those sins which they were so careful to hide.” Testimonies, vol. 5, 211-212.

Are we allowing idolatry to come into our soul temples? Paul writes, “And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” 2 Corinthians 6:16.

Even the secret thoughts hidden in the chambers of our mind are open to God’s inspection. “And the Spirit of the Lord fell upon me, and said unto me, Speak; Thus saith the Lord; Thus have ye said, O house of Israel: for I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them.” Ezekiel 11:5. God’s prophet declares that even our thoughts will be judged by God. “You are responsible to God for your thoughts. If you indulge in vain imaginations, permitting your mind to dwell upon impure subjects, you are, in a degree, as guilty before God as if your thoughts were carried into action. All that prevents the action is the lack of opportunity.” Testimonies, vol. 2, 561.

The Third Abomination

“He said also unto me, Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations that they do. Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the Lord’s house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz.” Ezekiel 8:13-14.

In the previous abomination we saw the leaders of Israel practicing idolatry in secret. Now is revealed the sure harvest that resulted from the seeds of sin secretly sown into the hearts of the leaders. In this abomination we now find the people themselves openly participating in idolatrous practices. It is important here to understand what the worship of Tammuz entailed.

“In Scripture he is referred to under the name of Tammuz, but he is commonly known among classical writers under the name of Bacchus, that is, ‘The Lamented one.’ To the ordinary reader the name of Bacchus suggests nothing more than revelry and drunkenness, but it is now well known, that amid all the abominations that attended his orgies, their grand design was professedly ‘the purification of souls,’ and that from the guilt and defilement of sin.” Alexander Hislop, The Two Babylons, 1959, 21-22.

The religion of Tammuz was a false religion that deceived its adherents into believing they could be cleansed from the guilt and defilement of sin while engaged in drunkenness, revelry, and debauchery.

There is a modern equivalent to the religion of Tammuz. It is the theology of carnal Christianity. It is a theology that sees sin as a condition only—not as acts of disobedience. It is a theology by which a person is declared righteous, but is not made righteous through the indwelling power of God. It is a theology pleasing to those who wish to have heaven, but who are not willing to pay the price of denying self.

God’s prophet writes, “The ministers preach smooth things to suit carnal professors. They dare not preach Jesus and the cutting truths of the Bible; for if they should, these carnal professors would not remain in the church. But as many of them are wealthy, they must be retained, although they are no more fit to be there than Satan and his angels. This is just as Satan would have it. The religion of Jesus is made to appear popular and honorable in the eyes of the world. The people are told that those who profess religion will be more honored by the world. Such teachings differ very widely from the teachings of Christ. His doctrine and the world could not be at peace. Those who followed Him had to renounce the world. These smooth things originated with Satan and his angels. They formed the plan, and nominal professors carried it out. Pleasing fables were taught and readily received, and hypocrites and open sinners united with the church. If the truth had been preached in its purity, it would soon have shut out this class. But there was no difference between the professors of Christ and the world.” Early Writings, 228.

The Fourth Abomination

The fourth and final abomination is the most shocking of them all. “And he

In His dealings with His people in the past the Lord shows the necessity of purifying the church from wrongs. One sinner may diffuse darkness that will exclude the light of God from the entire congregation.
fore 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. All who proved 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." Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 7, 976.

The Seal of God

After the vision of the fourth abomination a loud cry rings out: "He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand." Ezekiel 9:1.

As the judgment swiftly approaches, a Man clothed in linen is instructed, "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof." Ezekiel 9:4. The mark is literally the Hebrew letter tav, the final letter of the Hebrew alphabet, which has the form of a cross. Only those who are mourning over the abominations being practiced in the church will receive the mark. Sister White elaborates on who these people are:

"These sighing, crying ones had been holding forth the words of life; they had reprieved, counseled, and entreated. Some who had been dishonoring God repented and humbled their hearts before Him. But the glory of the Lord had departed from Israel; although many still continued the forms of religion, His power and presence were lacking.

"In the time when His wrath shall go forth in judgments, these humble, devoted followers of Christ will be distinguished from the rest of the world by their soul anguish, which is expressed in lamentation and weeping, reproofs and warnings. While others try to throw God to see religion despised in the very homes of those who have had great light. They lament and afflict their souls because pride, avarice, selfishness, and deception of almost every kind are in the church. The Spirit of God, which prompts to reproof, is trampled underfoot, while the servants of Satan triumph. God is dishonored, the truth made of none effect." Testimonies, vol. 5, 210-211.

We will need more than an intellectual knowledge of truth to save us. Sister White writes, "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 were so familiar with prophecy and the treasures of divine wisdom should have acted their faith." Testimonies, vol. 5, 213-214.

There will be none with carnal hearts among God's sealed servants. We must turn to God and accept His precious promise of a new heart, "And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God." Ezekiel 11:19-20.

The Judgment

The final judgment is depicted in graphic language: "Slay utterly old and young, both maidens, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house." Ezekiel 9:6.

Those who had great light, those who cried "peace and safety," those who failed to warn others, were the first to suffer the wrath of God. Judgment began at the Lord's house, and all who were not sealed were slain.

"Here we see that the church—the Lord's sanctuary—was the first to feel the stroke of the wrath of God. The ancient men, those to whom God had given great light and who had stood as guardians of the spiritual interests of the people, had betrayed their trust. They had taken the position that we need not look for miracles and the marked manifestation of God's power as in former days. Times have changed. These words strengthen their unbelief, and they say: The Lord will not do good, neither will He do evil. He is too merciful to visit His people in judgment. Thus 'Peace and safety' is the cry from men who will never again lift up their voice like a trumpet to show God's people their transgressions and the house of Jacob their sins. These dumb dogs that would not bark are the ones who feel the just vengeance of an offended God." Testimonies, vol. 5, 211.

As we see end-time prophecies unfolding before our eyes we must realize that Jesus is coming back very soon. Preachers cry "peace and safety" while their followers slumber in carnal security. Spiritual idolatry has invaded our churches and driven the presence and power of God from us. Soon those who "sigh and cry" over the condition of the church will be sealed and the final judgments will begin. Soon probation will close and every person's destiny will have been decided.

Now, while there is yet time, we must turn to Jesus and ask Him to take away our carnal heart and replace it with a pure heart. Now, before it is too late, we must take hold of the strength of God and put away impurity, worldliness, and idolatry.

"Now is the time to prepare. The seal of God will never be placed upon the forehead of an impure man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of the ambitious, world-loving man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of men or women of false tongues or deceitful hearts. All who receive the seal must be without spot before God—candidates for heaven." Testimonies, vol. 5, 216.

"I saw that the remnant were not prepared for what is coming upon the earth. Stupidity, like lethargy, seemed to hang upon the minds of most of those who profess to believe that we are having the last message. My accompanying angel cried out with awful solemnity, 'Get ready! get ready! get ready! for the fierce anger of the Lord is soon to come.' " Early Writings, 119.
May God continue to bless all your activities. We are so anxious to have God’s name vindicated before the whole universe. Thank you for the part you are playing in finishing the work. Oh, what a glorious experience it will be to hear our Lord say, Well done, enter into the joys of the Lord!  

FC, Idaho

Your article in the March issue of Our Firm Foundation entitled “History in Transition” and your editorial are excellent in every way, to say the least. It has renewed my faith as an Adventist. I have never read anything any better—and coming at the right time.

WB, Ohio

I personally appreciate and praise God for your ministry through Hope International publications. I am sending a donation of $100 for that cause. Continue in Christ, for His return is soon!

VG, Illinois

I have really appreciated the articles by Jeff Pippenger and Jeff Wehr in the last Firm Foundation issues concerning Daniel and Revelation and last-day events. We need to be wide awake on these things. May God help us to realize how late the hour is in which we are living.  

FJ, North Carolina

Please use the enclosed donation in whatever way the Lord guides you. And may He continue to bless your ministry.

JF, Virginia

We are enjoying the copies of your literature so much! Do we ever need these warnings and admonitions, along with measures of God’s love!  

JG, Oklahoma

Please, may I continue receiving Our Firm Foundation? I am not able to send money, but I do not want to lose the subscription you are sending me. Thank you for your work in warning others of these last days.

BB, Ohio

I am a Presbyterian member, but am touched with the messages in these copies that I borrowed from an SDA friend. Please, if you have them, I need them urgently!

TM, Malawi

Just a short note thanking you for all your Bible study materials. Enclosed find a couple of dollars to help you people out. Would have liked to donate more to your wonderful cause, but I’m out of work. Thanks again for all your materials.

AM, Hawaii

I would love to receive your 24 prophetic studies. I very much enjoyed the Truth For Today studies. God bless you.

EG, Connecticut

I read your pamphlet entitled Earth’s Final Warning and I was really impressed! If you have them available, please, let me have fifty or more, and I will be glad to pay by check.

KB, Florida

Other Letters From Overseas

Please, sir, I am a boy of 16 years of age. The reason I am writing you this letter is that I need your help in sending me the English Bible. My problem is that I was a Muslim and was under the devil’s hand. I was following the Islamic teaching, which I saw could not help me, but [I continued in it] because of my parents, who always put pressure on me to worship. In school, a friend of mine always preaches the good news to me, saying that Jesus Christ is our Saviour because He came to die for us.

I have also some Muslim friends who have been converted to be Christians, but don’t have a Bible. Please, sir, if you have some booklets or a video cassette on the life of Jesus, please send us some, but we are more interested in the Bible.

BN, Ghana

We receive from developing countries many requests like the one above for Bibles. If you have an extra Bible (preferably KJV) that you could share with someone who has none, please mail it to Hope International,

“Attention: Literature Assistance Dept.” Donations to aid in our efforts to send out free literature may be earmarked “Literature Assistance.”

Editors

The magazines (Our Firm Foundation) that you are sending me have been a good help to me and to individuals I am sharing them with. It is through literature that we spread the word. Ours is to introduce people and get them into the literature. If possible please mail some more magazines for some more people who have not received them due to the scarcity of the ones you are sending.

My work is preaching the gospel through literature. I pass from house to house, preaching the good news and conducting prayers. But the weakness I have learned is that most people—almost all—do not have the literature they need to get the required message. In fact, the few who are fortunate to have books have very few. Many need the Conflict of the Ages series. These books are of great need to people, but it is unfortunate that most people are lacking these books. They also lack most of the other Spirit of Prophecy books.

I feel I should help these people, but now I am requesting you to help send some literature you may find so that it will help me with the work I am doing. When I pray at someone’s house, I should introduce them to the literature and leave some with them. Brothers, we are sailing in the most solemn period of the world’s history. We must not sleep even a minute. Let us wake up so the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus will not take us by surprise.

JO, Kenya

Thank you for sending me your overseas free gift of Our Firm Foundation which has informed me very much about present truth and the time in which we are living. I also thank you for the two packages of books which are a blessing in our lives now.

I am writing this letter to renew my request for Our Firm Foundation for the year 1996. I have no money to contribute toward the success and progress of your work except my prayers to the Lord.

MM, Sudan

May 1996  Our Firm Foundation  31

Responses From Outreach Literature

I would like to ask you if you could send me an Earth’s Final Warning magazine, Rome’s Challenge and the Great Controversy book.

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