The Bible and Vegetarianism
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As It Was, So Shall It Be

See page 4
ELIJAH stood before the church, its leader—King Ahab—and the men of renown, on Mount Carmel, and fearlessly confronted the prophets of Baal. He then proceeded to appeal to the Living God for an end to the three and one-half years of drought. Then in a glorious response to his supplication, the rains came! God vindicated His prophet, His name, and His authority.

Elijah raced before the chariot of Ahab to the gates of Jezreel. However, at the threat of Jezebel, he ran again—this time to the wilderness where God fed him by His angel and communed with him. God questioned His prophet, “What dost thou here, Elijah?”

The same question comes to God’s Seventh-day Adventist leaders, pastors and laity in this final crisis hour, “What dost thou here?” It was God’s plan to cut His work short in righteousness before the turn of the century. We read from God’s prophet these inspired words:

“God had committed to His people a work to be accomplished on earth. The third angel’s message was to be given, the minds of believers were to be directed to the heavenly sanctuary, where Christ had entered to make atonement for His people. The Sabbath reform was to be carried forward. The breach in the law of God must be made up. The message must be proclaimed with a loud voice, that all the inhabitants of earth might receive the warning. The people of God must purify their souls through obedience to the truth, and be prepared to stand without fault before Him at His coming.

“Had Adventists, after the great disappointment in 1844, held fast their faith, and followed on unitedly in the opening providence of God, receiving the message of the third angel and in the power of the Holy Spirit proclaiming it to the world, they would have seen the salvation of God, the Lord would have wrought mightily with their efforts, the work would have been completed, and Christ would have come ere this to receive His people to their reward.

“But in the period of doubt and uncertainty that followed the Disappointment, many of the Advent believers yielded their faith. Dissensions and divisions came in. The majority opposed with voice and pen the few who, following in the providence of God, received the Sabbath reform and began to proclaim the third angel’s message. Many who should have devoted their time and talents to the one purpose of sounding the warning to the world, were absorbed in opposing the Sabbath truth, and in turn, the labor of its advocates was necessarily spent in answering these opponents and defending the truth. Thus the work was hindered, and the world was left in darkness. Had the whole Adventist body united upon the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, how widely different would have been our history!

“It was not the will of God that the coming of Christ should be thus delayed. God did not design that His people, Israel, should wander forty years in the wilderness. He promised to lead them directly to the land of Canaan, and establish them there a holy, healthy, happy people. But those to whom it was first preached, went not in ‘because of unbelief.’ Hebrews 3:19. Their hearts were filled with murmuring, rebellion, and hatred, and He could not fulfill His covenant with them.

“For forty years did unbelief, murmuring, and rebellion shut out ancient Israel from the land of Canaan. The same sins have delayed the entrance of modern Israel into the heavenly Canaan. In neither case were the promises of God at fault. It is the unbelief, the worldliness, unconsecration, and strife among the Lord’s professed people that have kept us in this world of sin and sorrow so many years.” Selected Messages, book 1, 67–69.

Like Elijah, we have retreated into the wilderness, and God now asks what we are doing here. What has happened to us—God’s remnant people, in the final hours of the great controversy? God made an attempt to bring His church into an understanding of the great message of the sanctuary and the three angels’ messages in 1888 by the pen and voice of our prophet, Ellen White, and the preaching of Elders Waggoner and Jones. God was attempting at that time to take His beloved church out of the wilderness of this sin-cursed world into the heavenly Canaan. However, we refused, and rejected the message of the Lord—righteousness by faith, victory over all hereditary and cultivated weaknesses in sin. See Selected Messages, book 1, 234–235, 362–363; Testimonies to Ministers, 91–107; The Desire of Ages, 311–313; The Acts of the Apostles, 564–567; Christ’s Object Lessons, 330–333; Steps to Christ, 34–47; Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, 140–143; Testimonies, vol. 5, 512–515; The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 7, 985.

Disobedience and insubordination to God’s orders and plans for His beloved church have kept us in this world for these many years. Our worldliness, our rebellion, our disregard for the Spirit of Prophecy’s directions, have kept us earthbound when we should have been heavenbound. We surely have repeated the apostasy of the Ancient Church. See Testimonies, vol. 5, 75–76, 94, 160, 217; Selected Messages, book 1, 197–205. What do we do now?

After a close encounter with God and his submission to the Holy Spirit, Elijah turned his retreat in the wilderness into a glorious victory. He went forth valiantly to restore the school of the prophets. Without fear he gave the straight testimony to the church, and gave his mantle to Elisha as he ascended up into heaven, whereupon a double portion of Elijah’s spirit fell upon Elisha. Because of his fearless obedience to God’s orders and directions, Elijah was translated to the heavenly Canaan. Only those who render explicit, loving obedience to God’s orders and plans will be translated. Only those who make a resolute stand in God’s behalf will have His approval.

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.—Editors

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As It Was, So Shall It Be

EVERYONE wants to know the future. With a blind faith, millions read the daily astrology forecasts, while others call upon psychic counselors to reveal to them their future. Christians study the prophecies with diligence hoping to gain some insight into future events.

Solomon was also interested in the future. What this wise man understood is what many overlook today. In his wisdom he realized that which is perhaps the greatest indicator of what is to take place in the future. Notice what he wrote, "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun." Ecclesiastes 1:9. If you want to know what is going to take place in the future, look into the patterns of cause and effect that we find throughout history. If you want to safeguard the future of the church, you must learn the appropriate lessons from what has happened in the past.

The stars were shining in the sky above Jerusalem as the disciples sat relaxing on the hillside after a busy day. As they gazed out over the peaceful, slumbering city they recalled the words of Jesus foretelling its destruction. Coming to the Saviour they asked Him what would be the sign of its destruction, and the sign of His coming. Christ paints a fearful picture of the condition of the world before His return. He warns His disciples, "And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. . . . Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot . . . thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." Luke 17:26-30. Christ points to two of the lowest points in human history to describe the condition of the earth at His coming.

During the days of Noah the people had become so evil and corrupt that God had no choice but to wipe out virtually the entire race. It has been estimated that there were hundreds of millions, if not billions, of people living upon the earth at the time of the flood. Of all these people, only eight were found worthy to escape the coming destruction. In the sprawling metropolis of Sodom, only one family was found worthy to escape the doom.

As we rapidly approach the second coming of Christ, we would do well to study the events surrounding the destruction of the antediluvians and the Sodomites to learn how we can be among the faithful few who will escape the coming destruction of the world. Let us now examine the conditions of the world during the days of Noah and the days of Lot so that we can better prepare ourselves for the future.

The Sons of God Saw

Of the nearly 2,000 years of pre-flood history, the Biblical account in Genesis provides us with only one solitary verse to explain what caused the horrible corruption that existed in the world. It is found in Genesis 6:2: "That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose." The sons of Seth became involved with the daughters of Cain. Much of the violence and corruption that filled the antediluvian world can be traced back to this fatal mistake. Through their association with worldly women, the godly men lost their power. They became tainted with the world, and they no longer possessed the moral will or ability to restrain the resulting tide of moral corruption that flooded the world.

First, they saw; then, they took. The women of the world were beautiful and attractive. The first step taken down the
path to destruction was succumbing to the temptation to look. Thus Satan used sight—one of the avenues of the soul—to tempt and deceive.

In the last days Satan has developed an array of media by which he seeks to entrap men, even godly men, through the lust of the eyes. One man sits in front of the TV for hours every evening with little discretion for what he watches. Captivating actresses parade their beauty before his riveted eyes. Another man flips through the pages of a magazine, stopping here and there as the breathtaking beauty of the sensuous models grabs his attention. Another rents movies and watches scenes of debauchery that deaden his conscience. Still another man walks onto the crowded public beach, knowing that a feast of beauty awaits his gazing eyes. Yet another man sits at home late at night captivated by forbidden scenes of impurity on the Internet.

Through the lust of the eyes godly men are being led away captive by Satan to do his bidding. One of Satan's most effective ways of destroying man's spiritual nature is through sensuality. The lust of the eyes destroys spiritual life. "Sensuality has quenched the desire for holiness and withered spiritual prosperity." Testimonies, vol. 2, 348. The only safety for men in these last days is to follow the Biblical examples of godly men who were tempted as we are, yet learned to overcome the lust of the eye. David said, "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes." Psalm 101:3. Job said, "I have made a covenant with my eyes; Why then should I look upon a young woman?" Job 31:1. RSV. Impure desires are aroused by the things we see and hear. Men, let us follow the example of David and Job by making an agreement with our eyes to never look at anything that will arouse impure thoughts or passions in us.

"You are to be men who will walk humbly with God, who will stand before Him in your God-given manhood, free from impurity, free from all contamination from the sensuality that is corrupting this age. You must be men who will despise all falsity and wickedness, who will dare to be true and brave, holding aloft the blood-stained banner of Prince Emmanuel." Review and Herald, June 16, 1891.

Tragically, Satan has also targeted women through many of these same channels to pervert their emotions, imagination, and their understanding of true beauty. Women also have important responsibilities to help men remain pure and holy. First, the godly woman will dress and act with modesty at all times. Second, the godly woman will assist in keeping the home pure by not allowing the evils of Satan's media to invade it. The home environment needs to be free from all contaminating influences.

In this age of "do-nothing," "believe-only" religion, we must be careful to maintain our vigilance against sin. God has given us a work to do in closing the avenues of our soul to the influences of sensuality as far as is reasonably possible. If we fail to perform this work we are opening our souls to be captivated and deceived by Satan. If we fail to do our work in closing the avenues of our souls to Satan's media, one day we will find ourselves outside of the Holy City, and we will have no one to blame for our eternal loss except ourselves.

The Sons of God Took

After they saw, then they took. By their association with worldly wives the godly sons of Seth were corrupted. The same is happening in our day. Whether through marriage or friendship, we are being corrupted through our associations with worldly, pleasure-loving companions.

"Worldly associations tend to throw obstructions in the way of your service to God; and many souls are ruined by unhappy unions, either business or matrimonial, with those who can never elevate or ennoble. Because of this, many men and women are without hope and without God in the world. Their noble aspirations are dead; by a chain of circumstances they are held in Satan's net." Signs of the Times, November 26, 1896.

There is a danger in associating too closely and constantly with world-loving people. Christ associated with worldly people constantly, not to join them in their worldly pleasures, but in order to lead them heavenward. Do we think we are safe in associating with worldly people—that we are having a good influence on the world-loving person, and that our association is beneficial to the other person? If our focus is constantly upon Christ and how we might lead the worldly to Him, we may be safe for a time. See Messages to Young People, 403-406. However, how often are we really honest with ourselves? How often do we associate with worldly people because we still find ourselves attracted to the things of the world?

If we still have a love for the things of the world, we may not realize the incalculable harm we are doing to ourselves through worldly associations. Often we may be completely unconscious of the effect our worldly companions are having upon us. God has given us explicit instruction to avoid such associations, and we are under the most solemn obligation to obey that instruction or risk eternal loss. Sister White wrote, "The Lord has repeatedly warned His people not to mingle with those who have not the fear of God before them. While we pray, 'Lead us not into temptation' (Matthew 6:13), we are to shun temptation as far as possible. We must obey the Divine Word on every point, if we would have the strength of Israel's God as our support and our defense." Signs of the Times, January 13, 1881.

"Christians who connect themselves with worldly associations are injuring themselves as well as misleading others. Those who fear God cannot choose the ungodly for companions, and remain themselves unharmed. In worldly societies they are brought under the influence of worldly principles and customs, and through the power of association and habit the mind becomes more and more conformed to the worldling's standard. Their love for God grows cold, and they have no desire for communion with Him. They become spiritually blind." Review and Herald, August 25, 1910.
The Iniquity of Sodom

When we are asked about the sins of Sodom we are likely to think of sins such as immorality, homosexuality, and perversion. As horrible as these sins are, they were only symptoms of the true cause of the downfall of Sodom. The Bible clearly explains why God destroyed Sodom: "Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness, Saviour, whose life and death established mankind's true self-worth.

The second sin that caused the destruction of Sodom was "fullness of bread." These people had plenty. They were rich and increased with goods. They had need of nothing. Such is the state of the Laodicean church in these last days. We say that we are rich. We have the Spirit of Prophecy. We have the last message of warning to the world. We evening watching television, but seem to have no time to study their Bibles and the Spirit of Prophecy. Others find plenty of time to go to the theme park, the theater, and other places of entertainment, but have no time to share the truth with their neighbors. Others always have time to party, play some card games, play some board games, and have a wonderful time, but cannot seem to make enough time to hold a prayer meeting in their home. Others spend hours playing basketball, baseball, tennis, and racquetball, but have no time to walk door-to-door passing out literature. How does God regard our use of time?

"Our time belongs to God. Every moment is His, and we are under the most solemn obligation to improve it to His glory. Of no talent He has given will He require a more strict account than of our time. The value of time is beyond computation. Christ regarded every moment as precious, and it is thus that we should regard it. Life is too short to be trifled away. We have but a few days of probation in which to prepare for eternity. We have no time to waste, no time to devote to selfish pleasure, no time for the indulgence of sin." Christ's Object Lessons, 342.

The fourth sin mentioned of Sodom is that she did not help the "poor and needy." When I worked in a large Adventist healthcare institution, I parked my car in the lot where many of the administrators parked. Walking through the lot, I would often look at the Mercedes, the Jaguars, and the exotic sports cars, little realizing that "Sodom" was parading its sin before my eyes. In a world where billions of people cannot afford proper nourishment, Sodomites flaunt their wealth by buying fancy cars, big homes, and luxurious furnishings. In a world where millions of people die every year of starvation, Sodomites eat out at fancy restaurants without a thought or a care for the starving children in India. While thousands of children die every day for lack of proper nutrition and medicine, Sodomites go on Caribbean cruises and expensive vacations.

A weak, frail father in Africa falls despairingly to his knees at night begging God to send him enough food to feed his family, while an executive in America smiles gleefully as the salesman hands him the keys to his new luxury sedan. In India a listless six-year-old boy lies down at night in agony, his distended stomach revealing that yet another day has gone by without food, while a couple take their seats in an airplane that is about to take them to their annual luxurious vacation resort. An amazingly frail two-year-old girl lying still in the arms of her

Instead of spending time building up our self-esteem we need to be spending time esteeming the humble Saviour, whose life and death established mankind's true self-worth.

was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy." Ezekiel 16:49.

The first sin mentioned is pride. Pride is the sin of the Laodicean church that thinks it is in need of nothing. Pride, worldliness, and lust are inseparable friends. Notice what the apostle John wrote: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." 1 John 2:15–16.

We are living amidst a proud generation. We are proud of our possessions. We show off our beautifully furnished homes. We take people for rides in our luxurious cars. We wear expensive apparel to impress others. We are proud of our attainments. We brag about our work, our education, and our knowledge. We listen too carefully to the modern teachers who tell us that all of our problems are rooted in our lack of self-esteem. Then we go to the bookstore and buy books on self-improvement, and we study, and read. Some of us go to therapy sessions and put forth great effort to try to build up our self-esteem. Then, once we get pumped full of self-esteem, we go to church and express our superior knowledge of the doctrines to our brothers and sisters, and ridicule anyone who disagrees with us. No wonder God said that "every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord." Proverbs 16:5. Instead of spending time building up our self-esteem we need to be spending time esteeming the humble have the truth. What more do we need? Why would God say that He wants to spit us out of His mouth? "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Revelation 3:17. There is an immense difference between having an intellectual knowledge of the truth and exemplifying the truth in daily living. The Sodomites were rich, but their riches did them absolutely no good. Many in the Adventist church today are rich in truth, but sadly that truth is doing them no good. If we wish to escape the doom of the Sodomites we must realize our true wretched and miserable condition and come to Christ in humility asking Him to clothe us in His spotless robe of righteousness.

The third sin that resulted in Sodom's destruction was "abundance of idleness." Idle time is Satan's playground. The Spirit of Prophecy admonishes us, "I have been shown that much sin has resulted from idleness. Active hands and minds do not find time to heed every temptation which the enemy suggests, but idle hands and brains are all ready for Satan to control.
The mind, when not properly occupied, dwells upon improper things. Parents should teach their children that idleness is sin." Testimonies, vol. 1, 395.

Have you ever wondered how it is that people have so much idle time on their hands that they can spend hours in useless activities? Some people sit for hours every evening.
starving mother closes her eyes for the last time and gasps her last breath, while a laughing group of church members at the local bowling alley decides to purchase another round of Saturday evening bowling. The same God who hears the cries of the starving millions keeps an account of how we use our money. “All we possess is the Lord’s, and we are accountable to Him for the use we make of it. In the use of every penny, it will be seen whether we love God supremely and our neighbor as ourselves.” Christ’s Object Lessons, 351. There is a day of judgment coming, and those who mistakenly think that God does not keep a strict accounting of the way in which we spend our money will have a rude awakening. “But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.” Matthew 11:24.

When Good Becomes Bad

The abuse or misuse of those things which are good in themselves results in evil. In describing the world of Noah, Jesus declared, “They did eat, they drank, they married wives . . .” Luke 17:27. Eating and drinking and marrying are all good things. Jesus was not warning against the rightful practice of these activities. Jesus was warning us against excess in these activities. “The same sins exist in our day which brought the wrath of God upon the world in the days of Noah. Men and women now carry their eating and drinking to gluttony and drunkenness.” Testimonies, vol. 3, 163.

“God did not condemn the antediluvians for eating and drinking; He had given them the fruits of the earth in great abundance to supply their physical wants. Their sin consisted in taking these gifts without gratitude to the Giver, and debasing themselves by indulging appetite without restraint. It was lawful for them to marry. Marriage was in God’s order; it was one of the first institutions which He established. He gave special directions concerning this ordinance, clothing it with sanctity and beauty; but these directions were forgotten, and marriage was perverted and made to minister to passion.” Testimonies, vol. 3, 163.

“A similar condition of things exists now. That which is lawful in itself is carried to excess. Appetite is indulged without restraint. Professed followers of Christ are today eating and drinking with the drunken, while their names stand in honored church records. Intemperance benumbs the moral and spiritual powers and prepares the way for indulgence of the lower passions.” Patriarchs and Prophets, 101.

Satan’s plan to drive the people of God to excess has two dimensions. First, intemperance so weakens the spiritual powers of the mind that the individual becomes susceptible to the doctrines of devils and the deceptions that we are seeing in the last days. The mind that has been numbed through indulgence loses its ability to discern between right and wrong. Indulgence of appetite strengthens the lower passions, and Satan leads the captive on to greater sins until he is morally ruined. The most unfortunate aspect of this is that church members have been taught that they are already saved, that all they need to do is believe, and that they need not put forth a special effort to resist overeating, eating the wrong foods, and indulging in sexual excess. Under the false impression that they are already saved, they relax their standards and indulge their appetites. Then such people wonder why they seem to have no power in their lives. They wonder why they fall prey to sin so easily. Some pray to God for help, but it is as if their prayers never go past the ceiling. What the last-day church needs to learn is the lesson that “The Lord does not propose to do that which we can do ourselves.” Signs of the Times, October 21, 1889. We have a responsibility to exercise restraint in our appetites. As we choose to exercise restraint, God unites His strength with our weakness providing us with the grace and power we need to overcome.

There is a day of judgment coming, and those who mistakenly think that God does not keep a strict accounting of the way in which we spend our money will have a rude awakening.

The second dimension of Satan’s plan to drive us to excess involves absorbing us in the pursuits of pleasure of this world: “The Bible declares that in the last days men will be absorbed in worldly pursuits, in pleasure and money-getting. They will be blind to eternal realities.” Christ’s Object Lessons, 228.

When the occupation, when the building and furnishing of the home, when the earning of money, is taken to excess, the mind is blinded, and the individual is again susceptible to the deceptions of Satan.

We must avoid all gluttony and all overindulgence in the pursuit of pleasure and money-getting. These are the sins of the last days which the Spirit of Prophecy indicates are being practiced by members of God’s remnant church. “The day of God will find men absorbed in like manner in the business and pleasures of the world, in feasting and gluttony, and in indulging perverted appetite in the defiling use of liquor and the narcotic tobacco. This is already the condition of our world, and these indulgences are found even among God’s professed people, some of whom are following the customs and partaking of the sins of the world.” Testimonies, vol. 4, 309.

There is an Ark of Safety

God has revealed our future to us. What has been, will be again. The way it was, is the way it will be again. As it was, so it is, and so shall it be. The world quivers on the brink of destruction. The lust of the eyes beckons the sons of God. The pride and the fullness of the good things of life blind us to our wretched condition. The indulgence of appetite and the pursuit of worldly business, deaden our spiritual lives. The sound of distant thundering can be heard. A torrent of destruction is soon to be unleashed upon the world. There is a place where we can come and hide from the approaching storm. There is an “Ark of Safety” where we can hide. “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” Psalm 46:1. Turn your eyes away from the seductive beauty of the world and behold the matchless beauty of the Saviour. Turn away from pursuing wealth and riches and pursue righteousness. Turn your eyes upon the loving Saviour. He is begging you to come into the “Ark of Safety” before it is too late. Take hold of the hand of Jesus and trust in His strength, and you will be kept safe through the coming storm.
The Christian Life

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed;

because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. Romans 5:1-6.

"Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from genera-

tions, but now is made manifest to his saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily." Colossians 1:25-29.

A solemn responsibility rests upon the men who teach God's Word. They are not to try to work the Holy Spirit; they are themselves to be worked by the Holy Spirit.

We greatly desire that at this time the Holy Spirit may show every professing Christian the fullness and perfection of Christ's atoning sacrifice. It was a whole and entire sacrifice that Christ made for the sins of the world. We are living and working and breathing in a low atmosphere. Now and then we get glimpses of Christ, but much selfishness is manifested. Our failure to appropriate the grace of Christ leaves us defective and faithless, unable correctly to represent Christ. By clinging to self, ministering to our selfish interests, we dishonor God, and the Sacred Word [that] we minister is made to taste of the uncleaned vessel through which it is communicated. Self is so largely revealed that the sacredness of the truth is lost sight of.

Will not those who profess to be Christians walk in the light of the Sun of Righteousness showing by their life and character that they realize the value of the atoning sacrifice of Christ our Saviour? The truth is not to be rendered lusterless by a manifestation of our own unsanctified, selfish spirit. The truth must shine forth in the life; then Christ is glorified. Emptied of self we must be, else we cannot show that Christ is formed within, the hope of glory. The Lord would have self hidden, for when it appears, souls are misled. The preciousness and importance of truth must appear, and will appear, when self is hid with Christ in God; then Jesus will be revealed in our lives. Our characters will be molded after the divine similitude. Then the Holy Spirit will control the human agent. Men will possess the attributes of Christ.

The minds of many are clouded with unbelief because those who unite with the church as the chosen of God do not reveal the virtues that are the fruits of the Spirit. Joining the church is not a sure evidence that a man has joined himself
to Christ. The new birth is a rare experience in this age of the world. This is the reason why there are so many perplexities in the churches. Many, so many, who assume the name of Christ are unsanctified and unholy. They have been baptized, but they were buried alive. Self did not die, and therefore they did not rise to newness of life in Christ.

Thousands who claim to be religious are not Christians. Paul was very strict in carrying out his religion, but he was not a Christian until Christ revealed Himself to him and talked with him, showing him that he was persecuting his Master in the person of His saints. Then Paul was converted. He became one of the sect he had despised and hated; and for his love of Christ he received the same cruel treatment that he had once cooperated with others in giving.

The churches have an abundance of the religion and zeal that Paul had. Many persecute those who differ from them in religious matters. But no true Christian will persecute one who conscientiously differs from him in faith. Those who try to force the consciences of their fellowmen do it because Christ is not abiding in their hearts. They do not realize that they have the attributes of Satan, but he delights to make them his instruments to bear witness against God’s chosen ones. They strive to make them observe rites above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” Colossians 3:12-17.

“And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.” Verses 23-25.

What does God require? Perfection, nothing less than perfection. But if we would be perfect, we must put no confidence in self. Daily we must know and understand that self is not to be trusted. We need to grasp God’s promises with firm faith. We need to ask for the Holy Spirit with a full realization of our own helplessness. Then when the Holy Spirit works we shall not give self the glory. The Holy Spirit will graciously take the heart into His keeping, bringing to it all the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness. We shall be kept by the power of God through faith.

When we are daily under the control of God’s Spirit, we shall be commandment-keeping people. We may show to the world that obedience to God’s commands brings its own reward, even in this life, and in the future life eternal blessedness. Notwithstanding our profession of faith, the Lord by whom our actions are weighed, sees but an imperfect representation of Christ. He has declared that such a condition of things cannot glorify Him.

It means much to commit the keeping of the soul to God. It means that we are to live and walk by faith, not trusting in or glorifying self, but looking to Jesus our Advocate as the Author and Finisher of our faith. The Holy Spirit will do His work upon the heart that is contrite, but never can He work upon a self-important, self-righteous soul. In his own wisdom such a one would mend himself. He interposes between his soul and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will work if self will not interpose.

Where is our dependence? Where is our help? God’s Word tells us: “The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” John 14:26.

The Holy Spirit is ready to cooperate with all who will receive Him and be taught by Him. All who lay hold on the truth and are sanctified through the truth are so united with Christ that they can represent Him in word and action. They have put on Christ, and they possess a power that enables them to reveal the truth to others. May the Holy Spirit speak to the hearts of God’s chosen people, that their words may be as choice as gold, as they give the bread of life to those in transgression and sin.

“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him ... Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me.” John 14:21-24.

If through the imputed righteousness of Christ we strive to keep God’s commandments, we shall not be fractious [inclined to make trouble] when things do not please us. We will say, “I am not my own, I am bought with a price. I am the property of Christ, who has bought me with His own blood.” “Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” 1 Corinthians 6:20.

“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me,
and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.” John 15:4-5. We show that we are fruit-bearers by pure words, unselfish planning in the meekness and lowliness of Christ, by softened hearts full of sympathy, love, and compassion.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.” Galatians 5:22-26.

God’s people are justified through the administration of the “better covenant,” through Christ’s righteousness. A covenant is an agreement by which parties bind themselves and each other to the fulfillment of certain conditions. Thus the human agent enters into agreement with God to comply with the conditions specified in His Word. His conduct shows whether or not he respects these conditions.

Man gains everything by obeying the covenant-keeping God. God’s attributes are imparted to man, enabling him to exercise mercy and compassion. God’s covenant assures us of His unchangeable character. Why then are those who claim to believe in God changeable, fickle, untrustworthy? Why do they not do service heartily, as under obligation to please and glorify God? It is not enough for us to have a general idea of God’s requirements. We must know for ourselves what His requirements and our obligations are. The terms of God’s covenant are: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.” Luke 10:27. These are the conditions of life. “This do,” Christ said, “and thou shalt live.” Verse 28.

Christ’s death and resurrection completed His covenant. Before this time, it was revealed through types and shadows, which pointed to the great offering to be made by the world’s Redeemer, offered in promise for the sins of the world. Anciently believers were saved by the same Saviour as now, but it was a God veiled. They saw God’s mercy in figures. The promise given to Adam and Eve in Eden was the gospel to a fallen race. The promise was made that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head, and it should bruise His heel. Christ’s sacrifice is the glorious fulfillment of the whole Jewish economy. The Sun of Righteousness has risen. Christ our Righteousness is shining in brightness upon us.

God did not lessen His claim upon men in order to save them. When as a sinless offering Christ bowed His head and died, when by the Almighty’s unseen hand the veil of the temple was rent in twain, a new and living way was opened. All can now approach God through the merits of Christ. It is because the veil has been rent that men can draw nigh to God. They need not depend on priest or ceremonial sacrifice. Liberty is given to all to go directly to God through a personal Saviour.

It is God’s pleasure and will that the blessings bestowed on man shall be given in perfect completeness. He has made provision that every difficulty may be overcome, every want supplied through the Holy Spirit. Thus He designs that man shall perfect a Christian character.

The Lord abides with the contrite soul. “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” “Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.” Isaiah 57:15; 66:1-2.

The work of gaining salvation is one of copartnership, a joint operation. There is to be co-operation between God and the repentant sinner. This is necessary for the formation of right principles in the character. Man is to make earnest efforts to overcome that which hinders him from attaining to perfection. But he is wholly dependent upon God for success. Human effort of itself is not sufficient. Without the aid of divine power it avails nothing. God works and man works. Resistance of temptation must come from man, who must draw his power from God. On the one side there is infinite wisdom, compassion, and power; on the other, weakness, sinfulness, absolute helplessness. The Acts of the Apostles, 482.
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The Bible and Vegetarianism
Part I

MY QUEST in favor of a vegetarian diet began twenty years ago, back in 1977, when some friends introduced me to a new lifestyle. They invited me to visit a vegetarian restaurant operated by members of a New Age group in the capital city of Managua, Nicaragua. I must admit that I found their food healthful and tasty. Back in those days I was not aware of the inroads that ancient spiritualism, disguised in the modern form of the New Age movement, was making into our western societies. I did not become a Seventh-day Adventist until 1979, when the fog of error began to dissipate from my mind through the warmth and beams of the Sun of Righteousness.

The scientific reasons provided in behalf of vegetarianism are solid, clear and reasonable. It was while studying those reasons that I became shocked at the realization that I was eating cadavers (dead animals). What a scary thought! I stayed on this no-meat diet about six months. I disassociated from my New Age friends when they invited me to attend a series of meditation sessions directed to worshiping the picture of one of their spiritual gurus. I knew well that only God deserves supreme adoration and reverence.

Looking back, I recognize that intellectually I was convinced about the superiority of a vegetarian diet over a flesh-meat diet. However, my heart was not touched. My entire soul was not committed to this new way of eating. Therefore, I went back to the old ways. To make things more difficult, I was at that time only fourteen years old, and I did not have a job, thus depending on the food supply provided by my parents and relatives, which besides beef, pork and chicken, included some items considered delicacies such as: armadillos, possums, iguanas, rabbits, eels, clams, and so forth. I really marvel at the fact that, in spite of 6,000 years of abuse of the human body caused by the violation of natural laws established by the Creator, the human race is still in existence.

Two more years went by before I stopped partaking of the list of the unclean foods given in Leviticus 11. Then, on December 31, 1979, I made a New Year's resolution—in fact, a resolution for a new decade: I would abandon my flesh foods, including "clean animals." I would fully embrace vegetarianism.

Before continuing further, I shall define the term "vegetarianism":

Vegetarianism consists of a lifestyle—particularly a dietary regime. A vegetarian diet is composed of fruits, grains, vegetables, beans, nuts, seeds, and foods derived from these products, such as tofu, pasta and TVP (texturized vegetable protein), which is used to give the shape and appearance of meat.

There are different degrees of vegetarianism, for example: Lacto-ovo vegetarians use milk and eggs in their various forms, in addition to the items mentioned above. Vegans do not consume meat or any animal products.

There are many reasons why different segments of the population favor a vegetarian diet. Some become vegetarians because of ecological reasons. Much less land is required to raise vegetables and grains than is necessary to raise cattle, and other animals for food.

Others embrace vegetarianism because of humane and health reasons, when they realize that many animals and poultry are farmed in close confinement, not to mention the industrial additives given them. Furthermore, as pointed out by Suzanne Sutton: "Offal [waste parts of butchered animals] from sheep, cattle and other animals, as well as animal feces, is routinely fed to
American food animals (cattle, pigs, poultry and fish) in the form of rendered pellets, powder or meal. In addition, massive quantities of blood meal, bone meal and other animal byproducts find their way into food animal's feed." Our Firm Foundation, April 1997. I must agree with Mrs. Sutton that "It is grossly unnatural and dangerous to feed blood and other animal parts to cattle, which are natural vegetarians." Ibid.

Some people become vegetarians for ethical reasons—nonviolence. Among these we find the Buddhists, Hindus and Jains.

While I do share some of the ecological, health and ethical concerns, my fundamental rationale for my dietary regime is founded in my Judeo-Christian beliefs—my understanding of the sacred writings of the Holy Scripture. As is already suggested by the title of this article, the scope of our present study is the Bible and vegetarianism.

To begin our research we must go back to the very genesis of mankind. It was in this pristine [uncorrupted] state in which the Creator Himself provided a diet for man—a dietary regime devoid of flesh foods. So we read in the Holy Writ:

"And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat." Genesis 1:29.

It was not God's intent that another creature should suffer, experiencing pain and the agony of death, in order to satisfy the perverted appetite of man.

In the immaculate environment of the Garden of Eden, even animals were designed to feed themselves from the vegetable kingdom.

"And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so." Genesis 1:30. (All emphasis supplied unless otherwise noted.)

But then sin came into the picture and cast the shadow of suffering and death. See Genesis 3. However, it should be emphasized, that in spite of the fall of man into sin, God still basically required a diet free of flesh foods. Thus our Maker said to our earliest ancestors after their fall: "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb [Heb. Eset: 'plant or vegetation'] of the field." Genesis 3:18.

With the introduction of sin into our planet, a set of three curses were inflicted upon nature in a greater or lesser degree. These curses are found in the following passages: Genesis 3:17 after Adam's sin; Genesis 4:11-12 after Cain's crime against his brother; and Genesis 6:11-17 after the increasing perversion of humanity that ended with the obliteration of nearly the entire human race and increase in oxygen levels, just to mention a few—which may well be factors that we cannot ignore—nevertheless, we cannot exclude the fact that man's dietary regime was also altered.

Many Bible scholars agree with this conclusion. Inspiration confirms it:

"God gave our first parents the food He designed that the race should eat. It was contrary to His plan to have the life of any creature taken. There was to be no death in Eden. The fruit of the trees

He [God] permitted that long-lived race to eat animal food to shorten their sinful lives. Soon after the flood the race began to rapidly decrease in size, and in length of years."

the animal kingdom by the waters of the flood.

"The first curse was pronounced upon the posterity of Adam and upon the earth, because of disobedience. The second curse came upon the ground after Cain slew his brother Abel. The third most dreadful curse from God came upon the earth at the flood." Counsels on Diet and Foods, 373.

It should be pointed out that with the latter curse and vast destruction that affected the entire globe, God had in mind to shorten man's existence so they would not become masters in the dark science of sin. Man's participation in this hellish science caused "that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Genesis 6:5. "And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years." Genesis 6:3.

We can identify these 120 years to refer to either (A) the ministry of Noah before the flood or (B) the shortening of man's life span.

We need to ask ourselves the question, What brought on the reduction of man's life span? What was he exposed to after the flood which severely shortened his evil existence?

While some creationists and geophysicists scientists attempt to explain this drop of life span from the viewpoint of titanic changes in atmospheric pressures, exposure to ultraviolet radiation, and a decrease in oxygen levels, just to mention a few—which may well be factors that we cannot ignore—nevertheless, we cannot exclude the fact that man's dietary regime was also altered.

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"God gave our first parents the food He designed that the race should eat. It was contrary to His plan to have the life of any creature taken. There was to be no death in Eden. The fruit of the trees

in the Garden, was the food man's wants required. God gave man no permission to eat animal food until after the flood. Everything had been destroyed upon which man could subsist, and therefore the Lord in their necessity gave Noah permission to eat of the clean animals [seven pairs of clean animals entered the ark, see Genesis 7:2] which he had taken with him into the ark. But animal food was not the most healthful article of food for man..."

"After the flood the people ate largely of animal food. God saw that the ways of man were corrupt, and that he was disposed to exalt himself proudly against his Creator and to follow the inclinations of his own heart. And He permitted that long-lived race to eat animal food to shorten their sinful lives. Soon after the flood the race began to rapidly decrease in size, and in length of years." Ibid., 373.

After the vegetation was utterly destroyed by the flood and Noah came out of the ark, God gave permission to mankind to eat flesh foods. "And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth... Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things." Genesis 9:1-3. There was, however, a restriction placed upon the human race: "But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat." Genesis 9:4.
This restriction was reaffirmed after the children of Israel left Egypt. Through the prophet Moses, God said: “It shall be a perpetual statute for your generations throughout all your dwellings, that ye eat neither fat nor blood.” Leviticus 3:17.

Orthodox Jews have followed these Levitical restrictions generation after generation.

Bernard J. Bamberger, in his article entitled “Kosher,” defines the term and describes the implementation of these Levitical principles: "Kosher" says Mr. Bamberger, is a “rabbinic term, usually applied to food permitted to be eaten by traditionally observant Jews, kosher (or kosher) is a Hebrew word that means 'fit, proper.' The Jewish dietary laws, based on the Bible (Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14) as interpreted in the Talmud, concern animal products only. Kosher foods include barnyard fowl, the meat of cattle, sheep, and goats (and their milk), and such fish as have fins and scales—excluding shellfish, eels, and so on. Poultry and quadrupeds must be killed by specially trained and licensed slaughterers in accordance with detailed rules; the carcasses are drained of blood and inspected to ensure that the animals were not diseased. Unless it is to be broiled, meat must be thoroughly salted and later rinsed before cooking, to remove any remaining blood.” — "Kosher" Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia, 1997 edition.

Furthermore, a violation of such principles would result in the separation of the transgressor from the congregation of Israel. “And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people.” Leviticus 17:10.

To eat the blood of animals, which is almost always present in the meat with the blood. Then they told Saul, saying, Behold, the people sin against the Lord, in that they eat with the blood. And he said, Ye have transgressed: roll a great stone unto me this day. And Saul said, Disperse yourselves among the people, and say unto them, Bring me hither every man his ox, and every man his sheep, and slay them here, and eat; and sin not against the Lord in eating with the blood. And all the people brought every man his ox with him that night, and slew them there.” Verses 52–34.

These facts clearly show that eating flesh foods with blood is unquestionably a sin. However, the majority of Christian believers seem to ignore this divine prohibition under the rationale that since it is part of the Levitical law, the law of commandments contained in the ordinances, it was abolished with Christ's death on the cross. See Ephesians 2:15 and Colossians 2:14. While we recognize that this restriction could well be included as part of the Levitical law, any honest Bible scholar will acknowledge that this restriction is more hygienic than ceremonial.

It would behoove those who believe that, under the gospel dispensation, mankind is free to ignore the Old Testament prohibition of eating blood with the meat tissue, to seriously consider the special consensus that the Council of Jerusalem (A.D. 50) took regarding this specific topic. The apostle James, chairman of this ecclesiastical council, in his closing remarks summarized the unanimous resolution arrived at the church at large through the Holy Spirit. Here are his words:

“For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.” Acts 15:28–29.

Or as another version renders this very same passage:

“The Holy Spirit and we have decided to lay no further burden on you other than these necessary things—that you must have nothing to do with meat which has formed part of a sacrifice to an idol, that you must not use as food the flesh of animals from which the blood has not been properly drained away, and which have been killed by being strangled.” The New Testament, Volume 1, A New Translation, by William Barclay, 228.

Let us not overlook that this resolution took place under the guidance of the Holy Spirit after the death of Christ on the cross and His resurrection. Thus Biblical evidence supports the concept...
that these health-related regulations of the Old Testament are still binding today. They were not "nailed" to or abolished on the cross, as happened with the ceremonial laws, which were a type or a symbol of Christ and His ministry of salvation.

The other restriction given in Leviticus 3:17 forbade the eating of the meat of the fleshhook and flesh with blood.

1 Samuel 2:12-17. See Patriarchs and Prophets, 576.

Dear reader, the willful ignorance, negligence, or disobedience to a plain command from the Lord has grievous consequences for both our life and happiness now, and for our eternal destiny. These young men lost their lives and Heaven's approval.

How many of us are living in ignorance, unaware of the fact that partaking of flesh foods with blood and/or fat is an abomination before God.

animal fat, which is almost always present in meat served in various restaurants, or purchased over the counter. In many cases it is the presence of this burned fat—its flavor and odors—which is very appealing to many people. Whereas, those who have "educated" their taste buds, according to sound Biblical and physiological principles, find these odors and flavors repulsive.

In the first book of Samuel we find an insightful story of two individuals who were victims of a perverted appetite—particularly regarding the eating of flesh with fat in it:

"Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord. And the priests' custom with the people was, that, when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a fleshhook of three teeth in his hand; and he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fleshhook brought up the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh, unto all the Israelites that came thither. Also before they burnt the fat, the priest's servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw. And if any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and then take as much as thy soul desireth; then he would answer him, Nay; but thou shalt give it me now: and if not, I will take it by force. Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord: for men abhorred the offering of the Lord."

The above story should be sufficient evidence for us to avoid the eating of meat with fat or blood. We also have learned through scientific research about the unhealthfulness of saturated fats found in animal products. Those who have greater esteem for the opinions of science than for Biblical evidence, should carefully consider the following statement released thirty-five years ago by the Council of Food and Nutrition of the American Medical Association:

"Saturated fat content in the diet should be reduced. The main reduction of fat in the diet should be obtained from two main groups of food that contribute mostly to the formation of saturated fats: dairy products and meats."—The Journal of the American Medical Association, 181:411, 1962, as quoted in Fundamentos de Nutrición Vegetariana, 25, by Nelsy de Resirepo, MD.

Sad to say, the lives of millions of people could have been healthier and happier if they had followed the restrictions that God lovingly gave nearly 4,000 years ago.

Dear reader, the Word of the Lord clearly teaches us that His original plan for both man and animals was to eat from the vegetable kingdom. See Genesis 1:29-30. In the book of Revelation, chapter 21, verse 4, we are shown that in God's recreated Earth there will not be pain, suffering, or death afflicting the animal kingdom. Because of man's sinfulness, God permitted mankind to eat animals, however, only those He defined as clean. Even that shortened their wicked lives, but He firmly forbade the eating of the blood or fat. This prohibition is still binding, even after Christ's death and resurrection. How many of us are living in ignorance, unaware of the fact that partaking of flesh foods with blood and/or or fat is an abomination before God, unaware that at one time the Lord declared that those who violated this law should be disfellowshipped and separated (cut off) from Israel.

As I share these principles in my preaching engagements, I am often asked: "Pastor, we now know that it is sin to eat meat with blood or fat, but please tell me now: Is it a sin to eat meat itself?"

This question, along with other Biblical principles and stories that shed light on the topic of vegetarianism, will be addressed in our next article. Therefore, "stay tuned." □

To be continued...

Responsibility for Light

"At the time the light of health reform dawned upon us, and since that time, the questions have come home every day, 'Am I practicing true temperance in all things? Is my diet such as will bring me in a position where I can accomplish the greatest amount of good?' If we cannot answer these questions in the affirmative, we stand condemned before God, for He will hold us all responsible for the light which has shone upon our path. The time of ignorance God winked at, but as fast as light shines upon us, He requires us to change our health-destroying habits, and place ourselves in a right relation to physical laws."

Counsels on Diet and Foods, 19-20.
I know the Lord says all things work for good, but sometimes I wonder. I really wonder. My friend gingerly sat down on the seat at my dining room table. To see her, you would wonder why it had happened to her. She was a conservative woman in her fifties, had had a double mastectomy, and wore support hose for her varicose veins. As she talked on, she revealed that she had been kidnapped, taken to a hidden river site, and repeatedly raped by four young men just a few hours before she visited me. I admired her for the fact that she could express any faith at all at this point so soon after its happening.

All of us can sympathize with this woman's questioning of God. We have all been there. All of us have had various trials in which we have asked, "Why me, Lord? Why me?"

David was anointed to be king. King Saul appointed him as one of three generals over his army. He ate at the King's table. All was going so well!

However, the next thing he knew he was a fugitive in the wilderness, running for his life from a mad king. David cried in Psalm 42: "O my God, my soul is in despair within me." NASV. Verse 6. "My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all day long, Where is your God?" Verse 3. Yet David always ended in faith, "Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God." Verse 11. Those years of running in the wilderness trained David to become Israel's greatest king, who depended on God's wisdom to rule Israel. He was known as a man after God's own heart.

Joseph was a tender, pampered seventeen-year-old when he was sold by his jealous older brothers to slave traders. He was torn away from home and country to a strange land and language. While watching his home disappear from sight, he began to dissolve into tears. But his father's religious training sustained him in this time of need, and he determined to remain faithful to his God, despite what was happening to him.

For ten years Joseph served Pharaoh's chief captain, Potiphar, in his house, eventually becoming his steward with full control over all of his possessions. Then he found himself unjustly shoved into prison. After many years in Egypt, Joseph discovered what he had been in training for. Overnight he became Pharaoh's right-hand man. Through this position he was able to deliver his family, the origins of God's chosen people, from a severe famine. See Patriarchs and Prophets, 213-240.

However, our trials do not always "turn into roses" with an obvious benefit for this life as they did for Joseph and David. Always, though, they can work for the glory of God. John the Beloved was so despised for his success as an evangelist and as a
pillar in the early Christian church that his enemies tried to boil him in oil. But the Lord intervened with His protecting hand. So his enemies tried to silence him by isolating him on the rocky, barren prison island of Patmos. God drew so close to him at this time that He gave John a series of visions, and the apostle wrote the book of Revelation, which has continued to speak for centuries.

However, our trials seem in our limited vision to have no benefit at all in this life. Paul, the apostle, had bad eyesight, and he could not wear glasses. He prayed three times for healing, yet the Lord answered, “My grace is sufficient for you.” Two times in relating this experience Paul makes it plain that the Lord withheld healing lest I should be exalted above measure.” That is, lest pride reduce his dependence upon the Lord as his source of strength. Therefore, he could “take pleasure in infirmities... for when I am weak, then am I strong.” See 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. Paul will learn in eternity why the Lord decided that he would continue with bad vision. All trials are beneficial in some way for the glory of God, even if the reason is unknown to us.

Habakkuk wrote of the coming invasions of Babylon: “When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble:... Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds’ feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places.” Habakkuk 3:16-19. KJV. This is the ultimate test of faith in God, revealing His glory to the world, when we can trust to His guiding love, even when all sustenance and support is crumbling all around us. He is our Sustenance to be true survivors. It can still be said, in spiritual sight rather than physical sight, “All things work together for good to them that love God.” Romans 8:28. KJV. And those who love God desire to live for His glory.

If we say this in faith, what would our heavenly Father have us do when trials come upon us? How would He have us react to them? The articles that are to follow will treat many different aspects of trials in our lives, and should answer many questions. However, I do not claim to have the answers to all of life’s questions.

Causes of Trials

Dan and Vera were in a serious car accident. The accident had been purposely caused by someone seeking to sue them, but it had turned out to be much worse than even the perpetrator expected. Vera spent months in a body cast and Dan was injured so badly that he was able to work only on odd jobs. They could get no aid other than food stamps. Moreover, none of their fellow church members visited them to see if they needed help.

One of life’s biggest questions is, Where do all these bad things that happen to me come from? Who is bringing these difficulties upon me? Hardships come from these places: from our own mistakes, from Satan, and from God. Let us look at these three sources of trials:

1. The first source of trials is from our own mistakes. When we look away from God and follow our own inclinations, rather than consulting the Lord in Bible study and prayer, we can make decisions that will result in trouble for us. For example, we can overindulge our desires and go into debt, or fall into a wrong relationship which could produce a baby out of wedlock.

King Saul made some wrong decisions that led him into trouble for himself. Time and time again the Lord spoke to him through the prophet Samuel, but King Saul decided to follow his own wisdom rather than the Lord’s. Finally, Samuel died. The Philistines came to war against Israel. As Saul looked upon the larger encampment of the Philistines, his heart trembled, and he wondered what he should do. He tried different methods of asking the Lord, but the Lord would not answer him. Then, instead of repenting of his sins and trying to put himself right with the Lord, he went even deeper into sin. He consulted a witch to ask for wisdom from the dead. The supposed ghost of Samuel told him that the next day he and all his sons would die in battle. And so it happened.

King Saul brought all this trouble upon himself by making wrong decisions and not consulting with the Lord. Let us purpose in our lives to put God’s will first, so that we can avoid this major source of trouble.

2. The second source of problems is that Satan directs trials into our lives to try to separate us from God. Satan is in a life-and-

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that he was able to work only on odd jobs. They could get no aid other than food stamps. Moreover, none of their fellow church members visited them to see if they needed help.

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death struggle, and he is determined to drag as many of us down as he can. His intelligence must not be underestimated, for he was the most intelligent angel ever created by God. He has been studying human nature for six thousand years, and knows it better than the best psychiatrist. All this information should make you flee to the refuge of your Rock—Jesus Christ—for Satan is a roaring lion who will surely devour you if you fail to seek the Lord. Yet your loving heavenly Father controls what He allows Satan to bring into your life. He says in 1 Corinthians 10:13, “God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able.” KJV.

Paul, the apostle, speaks of his trials as “... in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeysings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, infastings often, in cold and nakedness.” 2 Corinthians 11:23–27. KJV.

3. The third source of trials is from our loving heavenly Father—God Himself. He does not send trials to us out of a delight to punish us for things we have done wrong. “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.” Jeremiah 29:11. KJV. The trials that God sends to us will result in our good, if we will
just rest and trust in Him. He is our Father who is discipling and teaching us as we walk with Him. “My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.” Hebrews 12:5-10. KJV.

For decades Abraham had waited for the arrival of his son of promise. By a miracle, Isaac had been born in Sarah’s old age. Isaac was the son of inheritance. Abraham deeply loved this son of his old age. However, Abraham received instructions from the Lord which he could hardly believe—and he could not understand. Abraham was being instructed to sacrifice his son on an altar to the Lord. How could this be if Isaac was the son of inheritance as promised? Abraham just did not understand, but the message was clearly repeated. Then Abraham knew he must obey, no matter how painful it was.

Abraham loaded up his donkey to travel to a faraway mountain. He did not tell Sarah what his mission was. He was still hoping somehow to bring Isaac back. He did not tell Isaac what his mission was until they arrived.

Along the way, Isaac asked his father, “Father, where is the lamb for the sacrifice?” Abraham just answered, “The Lord will provide the sacrifice.” He was thinking down the ages when the heavenly Father would send the ultimate sacrifice of His Son.

Upon arriving and building the altar, Abraham tearfully explained the sacrifice son, your only son, from me.” Genesis 22:12. NASV. Abraham grasped his son, and hugged him. Then he turned around and found the sacrifice provided by the Lord—a ram caught by the horns in a nearby thicket. He sacrificed it in gratitude, understanding the great sacrifice the Father would one day make in his behalf by offering His Son. “Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.” James 2:21-23.

No matter the source of the trial, our heavenly Father can use it to bring material or spiritual blessings to us, if we allow Him to do so. For decades Abraham had waited for the arrival of his son of promise. By a miracle, Isaac had been born in Sarah’s old age. Isaac was the son of inheritance. Abraham deeply loved this son of his old age. However, Abraham received instructions from the Lord which he could hardly believe—and he could not understand. Abraham was being instructed to sacrifice his son on an altar to the Lord. How could this be if Isaac was the son of inheritance as promised? Abraham just did not understand, but the message was clearly repeated. Then Abraham knew he must obey, no matter how painful it was.

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No matter the source of the trial, our heavenly Father can use it to bring material or spiritual blessings to us, if we allow Him to do so. Whenever trials come, we should run to the Lord as fast as we can, whether or not we brought the trial on ourselves, for the Lord is the only Source of Wisdom to know the best way to handle the problem. He has promised us, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” 1 Corinthians 10:13. KJV. And James 1:5 says, “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.” KJV. □

To be continued . . .
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The Test of Faith Repeated

Then we turned, and took our journey into the wilderness by the way of the Red sea, as the Lord spake unto me: and we compassed mount Seir many days. And the Lord spake unto me, saying, Ye have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you northward. Deuteronomy 2:1-3. After almost forty years of wandering around the mountains of Seir, the call to enter the Promised Land was repeated. The message was almost identical with the one given at Mount Horeb more than thirty-eight years before. See Deuteronomy 1:6-8. It is evident that the Lord intended to cut short the forty-year sentence He had given at Kadesh-barnea, hoping that His people had learned their lesson. During these years of sojourn in the wilderness no heaven-sent message came to the Israelites for the purpose of leading them out of the wilderness and into Canaan. The message was one of good tidings to the weary pilgrims who had wandered so long in “the great and terrible wilderness.” It must have filled the camp with rejoicing to know that the long delay or tarrying time was about ended.

School of Experience

The wilderness sojourn had been for the benefit of God’s people. It was a school of experience to prepare them for entrance into the Promised Land. It took Moses forty years in the wilderness to become qualified for the leadership of the Exodus movement. “Such was the experience that Moses gained by his forty years of training in the desert. To impart such an experience, Infinite Wisdom counted not the period too long or the price too great.” Education, 64. This experience doubtless helped Moses to be more patient and sympathetic with the Israelites during their wilderness term in the desert school of experience. See Deuteronomy 8:1-3. “The varied experience of the Hebrews was a school of preparation for their promised home in Canaan.” Patriarchs and Prophets, 293. Now the message comes that they had spent “long enough” in this school of training and preparation.

Back to Kadesh

“Then came the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, into the desert of Zin in the first month: and the people abode in Kadesh; and Miriam died there, and was buried there. And there was no water for the congregation: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. And the people chode with Moses, and spake, saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the Lord!” Numbers 20:1-3.

That this is the same Kadesh where Israel had failed thirty-eight years before is evident. It is located in or near “the wilderness of Paran” and “the desert of Zin.” Numbers 13:26, 20:1. “The wilderness of Zin which is Kadesh.” Numbers 33:36. In Numbers 21:1, the Kadesh to which they returned is called “the way of the spies” which definitely identifies it as the same Kadesh from which the twelve spies entered the Promised Land thirty-eight years before. We are told that Kadesh was “the appointed route to Canaan.” Patriarchs and Prophets, 414. The Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopedia declares that Kadesh is the place “at which the Israelites twice encamped with the intention of entering Palestine, and from which they were sent back.”

Further Evidence

In proving that there was but one Kadesh the above mentioned authority continues: “It was left for Dr. Kittto to show that one Kadesh would sufficiently answer all the conditions required. According to this view Kadesh was laid down in the map prepared under his direction, in the same line, and not far from the place which has since been assigned to it from actual observations by Dr. Robinson. This concurrence of different lines of research in the same result is curious and valuable, and the position of Kadesh will be regarded as now scarcely open to dispute.” Ibid. The authors of The Pulpit Commentary also contend that there was but one Kadesh to which Israel came and encamped twice. Sir William Smith in his Dictionary of the Bible says of Kadesh: “This place,
the scene of Miriam’s death, was the farthest point to which the Israelites reached in their direct road to Canaan; it was also that whence the spies were sent, and where, on their return, the people broke out into murmuring, upon which their strictly penal term of wandering began.”

Spirit of Prophecy

While Bible students have only recently come to the conclusion that there was but one Kadesh, the Spirit of Prophecy gave us the same information years ago and at a time when most of the authorities were contending that there were two. “Again the congregation of Israel was brought into the wilderness, to the very place where God proved them soon after their leaving Egypt. The Lord brought them water out of the rock, which had continued to flow until just before they came again to the rock, when the Lord caused that living stream to cease, to prove His people again, to see if they would endure the trial of faith, or would again murmur against Him.” Spirit of Prophecy, Testimonies, vol. 1, 309. This volume was published in 1870.

Test Repeated

The Lord led Israel back to the same place where they had failed thirty-eight years before and again tested their faith to see if they would follow His leadership into the Promised Land. To bring this test, the Lord caused the miraculous flow of water to cease. See Numbers 20:2. “Just before the Hebrew host reached Kadesh, the living stream ceased that for so many years had gushed out beside their encampment. It was the Lord’s purpose again to test His people. He would prove whether they would trust His providence or imitate the unbelief of their fathers. They were now in sight of the hills of Canaan. A few days’ march would bring them to the borders of the Promised Land. . . . Before God permitted them to enter Canaan, they must show that they believed His promise. The water ceased before they had reached Edom. Here was an opportunity for them, for a little time, to walk by faith instead of sight. But the first trial developed the same turbulent, unthankful spirit that had been manifested by their fathers.” Patriarchs and Prophets, 413–414.

The Second Failure

Numbers 20:3–13. The Israelites displayed the same spirit of unbelief and murmuring as they did at the same place thirty-eight years before. What was intended to be the gateway to Canaan became “the water of Meribah” or “Strife.” Margin. The command “turn you northward” together with the cessation of the flow of water should have strengthened the faith and courage of the Israelites. Deuteronomy 2:2–6. “These directions should have been sufficient to explain why their supply of water had been cut off; they were about to pass through a well-watered, fertile country, in a direct course to the land of Canaan. God had promised them an unmolested passage through Edom, and an opportunity to purchase food, and also water sufficient to supply the host. The cessation of the miraculous flow of water should therefore have been a cause of rejoicing, a token that the wilderness wandering was ended. Had they not been blinded by their unbelief, they would have understood this. . . . The people seemed to have given up all hope that God would bring them into possession of Canaan, and they clamored for the blessings of the wilderness.” Ibid., 414. Because of this second failure at Kadesh, the Exodus movement had to make a long detour around Edom and thus entrance into the Promised Land was further delayed.

The Antitype

Because modern Israel rejected the message that began in 1888, the Lord declared that He would “lead them on a long journey” and that they would be “brought over the ground again” and “will be tested again on the same points where they failed then” in “the test and trial at Minneapolis.” See Our Firm Foundation, November 1996. We are also told that many who failed the first time will not stand the test when it is repeated, but will oppose the message again and that “the same spirit will be revealed.” It is an interesting fact that in the 1920s the same message that was given at Minneapolis began to be repeated to God’s remnant people. The Advent movement was brought back to the same issues and therefore back again to the very borders of the heavenly Canaan. It is also an interesting fact that during our wilderness wanderings between the two Kadesh-barnea antitypes, the Laodicean message was not preached and justification by faith was virtually forgotten as a doctrine and largely unknown as an experience.

The Same Spirit

The repetition of the Laodicean message with its remedy was met with the same spirit of opposition on the part of many as was manifested at Minneapolis. Some of the same leaders who fought the message and criticized the messengers in 1888 have manifested the same bitter spirit as the message has been repeated. Many others who did not pass through the 1888 crisis have shown a passive resistance, if not an open opposition, to the heaven-sent message that is to bring the latter rain and prepare the remnant people of God to enter the heavenly Canaan. To them it has sounded new and strange and has aroused their fears of fanaticism and that we are in danger of departing from the good old methods of preaching the law and the doctrines. Exactly the same arguments used by the opponents of the 1888 message have been and are still being repeated by those who resist the same message in its second presentation.

Spirit of Prophecy

“It is thus that God still tests His people. And if they fail to endure the trial, He brings them again to the same
point, and the second time the trial will come closer, and be more severe than the preceding. This is continued until they bear the test, or, if they are still rebellious, God withdraws His light from them and leaves them in darkness.”  

Patriarchs and Prophets, 437.  

“To accuse and criticize those whom God is using is to accuse and criticize the Lord who has sent them. . . The prejudices and opinions that prevailed at Minneapolis are not dead by any means; the seeds sown there in some hearts are ready to spring into life and bear a like harvest. The tops have been cut down, but the roots have never been eradicated, and they still bear their unholy fruit to poison the judgment, pervert the perceptions, and blind the understanding of those with whom you connect, in regard to the message and the messengers,” Testimonies to Ministers, 466–467. The truthfulness of this statement has been abundantly demonstrated during the last few years.

Heaven-sent Message

The Lord has given abundance of evidence that He is again speaking to His people. The same blessed fruits are seen in the lives of those who accept this heaven-sent message as were manifested in the lives of those who accepted it forty years ago. It has the same definite ring of certainty and brings its hearers to the same conviction. It convinces God’s remnant people.

The strongest temptation cannot excuse sin. However great the pressure brought to bear upon the soul, transgression is our own act. . . .

that the end is near and that our wilderness wanderings are about over. It virtually says, “You have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you northward.” In fact this statement is often used as a text in the giving of the message of which it was the type. As the message is being repeated the Holy Spirit bears witness to its divine origin and truthfulness. The fact that the 1888 message is being repeated is one of the greatest evidences that the coming of Christ is near and that the Lord has set His hand to lead the Advent movement into the heavenly Canaan.

Waters of Strife

The very message and experience that should have brought unity and joy to the members of the Exodus movement, resulted in strife, confusion and defeat. “And the people chode with Moses.” Chode means to “scold, reprove, rebuke, blame or censure; to make a rough clamorous roaring noise.” The entire camp seems to have been thrown into strife and confusion and some of the scenes and experiences of thirty-eight years before were at least partially re-enacted. The repeating of the 1888 message to the Advent people brought the movement back to the same crisis and created the same opposition. The message should have brought increased unity and faith to the whole movement and filled the camp of the modern Israel with joy and rejoicing. While it has accomplished this for the thousands who accepted the message and entered into the spiritual experience demanded by it, the opposition to the message and the criticism of the messengers have created much strife and confusion and brought the Advent movement to “the waters of Meribah.” Some of the scenes and experiences of the 1888 crisis have been at least partially re-enacted. It is significant that Kadesh means “the judging of the
The Advent Movement

Patience is also one of the chief qualifications for leadership in the Advent movement. Those who triumph with the movement will have “the patience of the saints.” Revelation 14:12. This patience will give them complete control of their tongues for in their mouths will be “found no guile.” Verse 5. It is impatience that produces anger and causes people to speak “unadvisedly” with their lips. The use we make of our words constitutes an evidence of the condition of the heart and character and will therefore determine our fate in the judgment. Matthew 12:24-27. The perfect control of our tongues as the result of patience is also the evidence of the perfection of character. James 1:2-4; 3:2-18. “We must subdue a hasty temper and control our words, and in this we shall gain great victories. Unless we control our words and temper, we are slaves of Satan. We are in subjection to him. He leads us captive. All jangling, and unpleasant, impatient, fretful words are an offering presented to his Satanic majesty.” Testimonies, vol. 1, 310.

Cause of Failure

There can be no greater test of patience than that which comes to those who proclaim a heaven-sent message that is rejected by the professed people of God, especially when the acceptance of that message is the only means by which God’s work can be finished and the eternal rewards obtained. The acceptance of the Laodicean message with its remedy of the imputed and imparted righteousness of Christ received by faith, is the only means of obtaining the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the showers of the early and latter rain which will cut short God’s work and lead modern Israel into the heavenly Canaan. The failure of some of the leaders who proclaimed the 1888 message was due chiefly to a loss of patience because of the strife and opposition and even persecution produced by their preaching which finally resulted in its rejection and the turning of the Advent movement back into the Laodicean wilderness causing a long delay of the coming of Christ. In the letter to Elder O. A. Olsen, previously quoted from, the servant of the Lord intimated that the pressure and persecution brought against the preachers of righteousness might cause them to give way and fail in their personal experience, and this is what did happen. The same danger faces all who proclaim the same message at the present time. Their greatest need is to develop and maintain “the patience of the saints.”

Live by Faith

The cutting off of the water supply at Kadesh was the final test by which the Lord attempted to teach the children of Israel to walk and live by faith instead of sight. Only a people of faith could triumph and enter the Promised Land and therefore during the last part of the journey they must learn to walk and live by faith. The same is true in the Advent movement. “In the last great conflict of the controversy with Satan those who are loyal to God will see every earthly support cut off.” Desire of Ages, 121. This will be the Lord’s last lesson to teach His remnant people to walk and live by faith. While many will fail to meet this test as in ancient Israel, and will cast away their confidence and lose the promised reward, God will have a people whose faith and patience will cause them to triumph with the triumphant movement. Then “the just shall live by faith.” See Hebrews 10:35-39.
The very mention of the wedding ring produces resentment with some people. The recent deluge of “Christ-centeredness” and antilegalism crusading tends to provoke a “Who cares?” response whenever issues of conduct arise. But because of my conviction that any subject addressed by Inspiration deserves attention, that the Bible nowhere distinguishes man’s spiritual success from the Lord’s well-reasoned guides for behavior, I believe a few thoughts are in order.

Historically, Seventh-day Adventists have taken seriously the Bible’s statements on outward adornment. Paul wrote to Timothy, “In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but which becometh women professing godliness with good works.” 1 Timothy 2:9-10. Peter likewise declared concerning Christian women, “Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart.” 1 Peter 3:3-4.

There seems to be evidence that the early church viewed the marriage ring as being in this category. Says one scholar: “Neither the Bible nor the Talmud speaks of the ring as symbolic of marriage. As a matter of fact, early Christians frowned upon the ring as an outward adornment.” James Remington McCarthy, Rings Through the Ages, 118.

To my knowledge, no Biblical scholar has provided evidence that the above scriptures had a culturally confined application with which modern Christians need not be concerned (similar, say, to Paul’s command that women be silent in church). I can recall one person remotely suggesting this possibility, but he offered no proof. What amazes me is that of the many believers I know who question the Adventist standard on jewelry, none have seriously attempted to deal with these passages. I am afraid that many thoughtlessly conclude that this is an “Ellen White problem,” and do not look at the Biblical injunctions regarding it.

Ellen White plainly connects the aforementioned Biblical counsel to the wedding ring. After citing the passage from 1 Timothy, she declares: “Here the Lord, through His apostle, speaks expressly against the wearing of gold. Let those who have had experience see to it that they do not lead others astray on this point by their example. That ring encircling your finger may be very plain, but it is useless, and the wearing of it has a wrong influence upon others.” Testimonies, vol. 4, 630.

Elsewhere she writes: “Some have had a burden in regard to the wearing of a marriage ring, feeling that the wives of our ministers should conform to this custom. All this is unnecessary. We need not wear the sign, for we are not untrue to our marriage vow, and the wearing of the ring would be no evidence that we were true. I feel deeply over this leavening process which seems to be going on among us, in the conformity to custom and fashion. Not one penny should be spent for a circlet of gold to testify that we are married.” Testimonies to Ministers, 180-181.

However, she qualifies the instruction with reference to believers in lands where customs differ from those of North America.

Kevin Paulson is a Seventh-day Adventist layman and a good student of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. He resides in California, USA.
America: "In countries where the custom is imperative, we have no burden to condemn those who have their marriage ring; let them wear it if they can do so conscientiously." *Ibid.*, 181.

At the 1972 Fall Council the issue was discussed by the General Conference officers, relative to the claim that American custom had significantly changed since Ellen White's instruction, thus rendering acceptable the use of the wedding band. While the brethren agreed that one conscientiously persuaded of a ring's necessity should not be denied baptism, they maintained that "because, in our judgment, the wearing of the wedding band still is 'not regarded as obligatory' or an 'imperative' custom in North America, we discourage the use of the wedding band, and instruct our ministers not to perform ring ceremonies." General Conference Officers, "Counsel Regarding the Wedding Band in North America," October 2, 1972, 2.

I am unaware of any study showing clearly those changes in American society which demand that the marriage ring now be worn. As with the Biblical statements, it does not appear that any precise cultural shift can be documented. In my experience with friends, both in and out of the church, I have seen far too many girls with rings on the finger designated for marriage, whom I know were neither married nor engaged. Others, I am sure, can testify to the same fact. I find the claim of cultural necessity less than convincing, especially when so many Adventists who work outside of the church have yet to be embarrassed due to the absence of a ring.

The issue of cultural expectation in the United States looks even more suspect in view of the following statement made a number of years ago:

"In the U.S., where the marriage rate now stands at 1,669,934 couples a year, having receded from the all-time peak of 2,291,045 in 1946, wedding rings are manufactured at a rate of about $50,000 a month. If all of these rings were to be used by brides in genuine weddings, every adult American female would have a ring finger decorated like the neck of an Ubangi, and would have to contract—shocking as it may seem—a new marriage every five years. Obviously most of the rings are used merely for immoral purposes. The big ten-cent stores do a remarkable business in cheap wedding rings, selling six or seven million a year to both occasional and steady customers. The rings are well made, neatly polished and cannot be distinguished from the genuine article at a distance of two feet, which is as close as the manager stands to the hotel register." Robert Wallace, "With This Ring. . ." *Life*, June 18, 1951.

This is not to say, of course, that the presence of a wedding band instantly raises moral questions. It does, however, dampen assumptions as to a ring's respectability.

Occasionally people will tell me of persons they know who have decided to wear a ring because they have grown weary of romantic advances. The logic here escapes me. How difficult is it to say, "I'm married"? Moreover, my guess is that anyone not decent enough to back off under such circumstances would probably not be stopped by a ring.

One question I have is: Why do we seem embarrassed to tell others what we believe, and why are we afraid to tell people what the Bible says on this point? Has the wedding ring, in a curious way, become a substitute for witnessing?

It is time we asked: What is the true basis for the recent surge in the popularity of wedding rings in North American Adventism? The average believer who wears a ring will doubtless answer, "Because I wish to show that I'm married." In response, we inquire: Are we then to assume that the church now has a deeper regard for the sacredness of marriage than in the past? Are we wearing more rings today because we wish more than ever to be faithful to the marriage vow? Has the increased popularity of wedding bands been paralleled by a decrease in the rate of divorce and infidelity? I am almost afraid to ask.

The disturbing truth is that the period during which wedding rings have grown popular in the church has witnessed an increasingly critical attitude toward the writings of Ellen White, the emergence of a misguided perception of legalism which reduces emphasis on standards of behavior, and the fiercest attack our message has suffered since its beginning. Church members from throughout North America could testify that in the recent conflict the absence or presence of a wedding band has become one (although certainly not the only) indication of a person's theological stand. A newspaper article covering one pastor's theologically related dismissal spoke of how, out of "related liberation" from Ellen White, this minister went out and bought his wife of twelve years her first wedding band. (What this has to do with marriage we are permitted to guess.)

Could it be that in Adventism the wedding ring has come to signify remarkably little in the way of marriage or its obligations? Has it become, instead, a tool in the hands of church critics, a gesture of defiance against historic Adventism? How well I remember one critic's article which cited the recent proliferation of wedding bands as proof that the church's historic beliefs are falling by the wayside, and that "straight-laced, old-fashioned conservatives" had better get on the bandwagon of change. Loyal believers will want no part in writing speeches for the church's foes.

Without wishing to be judgmental, I have found that church members who shake off their Laodicean slumber, deciding without reserve to follow their Lord, tend to leave wedding rings behind. By contrast, the apathetic, the cynical, and the uncaring tend to continue to wear them. The day North American Adventism finds a new commitment to Jesus Christ will be the day wedding rings pass from the scene. □
IN the Christian life everything depends upon the Word of God. It is true that God is able and desires to keep us from sinning, but this must be done through His Word. So it is written, “By the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer.” Psalm 17:4. “Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.” Psalm 119:11. This is the way that God has appointed, and there is no other way to have this thing accomplished.

Nor is this way appointed merely because He arbitrarily chose that this should be the way and then laid it upon men that this must be the way that they should go. His Word is the way of salvation and the way of sanctification (Christian living) because this is the way that the Lord does things, because this is the way that He manifests Himself. It was by His Word that He created all things in the beginning. It is by His Word that He creates men anew, and it will be by His Word that He will recreate this world and all things pertaining to it. “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. . . . For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.” Psalm 33:6–9. “Being born again . . . by the word of God.” 1 Peter 1:23. “And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. . . . And he said unto me, It is done.” Revelation 21:5–6.

It is not only that the worlds were created by the Word of God, but they are also sustained by the same Word. “By the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water, whereby [by the Word of God] the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store.” 2 Peter 3:5–7. So also it is not only that the Christian is created by the Word of God, but by that same Word He is sustained, nourished, and caused to grow. God holds up “all things” by His powerful Word. And the Christian is among this “all things” no less than any or all the worlds.

There can be no question whatever that all the worlds are held up and held in their places by the Lord. But it is not only all the worlds, it is “all things” that are held up and held in place by the Lord. And it is as true of the Christian as it is of any star in the firmament or any world on high. Nor can there be any question that the stars and the worlds are held up and held in their courses by the Word of the Lord. And no less than this can there be any question that the Chris-
The word of God is quick [‘living,’ R. V.], and powerful.” Hebrews 4:12. “Powerful” means “full of power.” The Word of God is living and full of power, to do for you, with you, and in you, all that that Word says. Believe that Word, trust it, for it is the Word of the living God. It is the Word of the pitying Saviour. “Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.” James 1:21. “I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up.” Acts 20:32. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” Colossians 3:16. You “are kept by the power of God through faith.” 1 Peter 1:5. The power of God is manifested through His Word and therefore it is His powerful Word. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God; therefore, it is the faithful Word, the Word full of faith. Therefore when He says, you “are kept by the power of God through faith” (1 Peter 1:5), it is only saying in another way, You are kept by the Word of God, “unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” 1 Peter 1:5. Believe that Word, trust it, and find its keeping power.

Look for our “Upcoming Meetings” announcements in future issues. If you need more information please call Hope International, (360) 832-6602, and ask to speak to someone in the Evangelism and Revival (E&R) Department.
FINALLY, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. "Philippians 4:8.

The dealings of God with His people often appear mysterious. His ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts. Many times His way of dealing is so contrary to our plans and expectations that we are amazed and confounded. We do not understand our perverse natures; and often when we are gratifying self, following our own inclinations, we flatter ourselves that we are carrying out the mind of God. And so we need to search the Scriptures, and be much in prayer, that, according to His promise, the Lord may give us wisdom.

Our work is aggressive. We are to be awake and discerning as to the devices of Satan, and to press the triumphs of the cross of Christ. While Satan is planting his dark banner among us, perhaps even in our families, we should not be indifferent and inactive. But though we have an individual work and an individual responsibility before God, we are not to follow our own independent judgment, regardless of the opinions and feelings of our brethren; for this course would lead to disorder in the church. It is the duty of ministers to respect the judgment of their brethren; but their relations to one another, as well as the doctrines they teach, should be brought to the test of the law and the testimony; then, if hearts are teachable, there will be no divisions among us. Some are inclined to be disorderly, and are drifting away from the great landmarks of the faith; but God is moving upon His ministers to be one in doctrine and in spirit.

Brethren sometimes associate together for years, and they think they can trust those they know so well just as they would trust members of their own family. There is a freedom and confidence in this association which could not exist between those not of the same faith. This is very pleasant while mutual faith and brotherly love last; but let the “accuser of the brethren” gain admittance to the heart of one of these men, controlling the mind and the imagination, and jealousies are created, suspicion and envy are harbored; and he who supposed himself secure in the love and friendship of his brother, finds himself mistrusted and his motives misjudged. The false brother forgets his own human frailties, forgets his obligation to think and speak no evil lest he dishonor God and wound Christ in the person of His saints, and every defect that can be thought of or imagined is commented upon unmercifully, and the character of a brother is represented as dark and questionable.

There is a betrayal of sacred trust. The things spoken in brotherly confidence are repeated and misrepresented; and every word, every action, however innocent and well-meaning, is scrutinized by the cold, jealous criticism of those who were thought too noble, too honorable to take the least advantage of friendly association or brotherly trust. Hearts are closed to mercy, judgment, and the love of God; and the cold, sneering, contemptuous spirit which Satan manifests toward his victim is revealed.

The Saviour of the world was treated thus, and we are exposed to the influence of the same malicious spirit. The time has come when it is not safe to put confidence in a friend or a brother.
As in the days of Christ, spies were on His track, so they are on ours now. If Satan can employ professed believers to act as accusers of the brethren, he is greatly pleased; for those who do this are just as truly serving him as was Judas when he betrayed Christ, although they may be doing it ignorantly. Satan is no less active now than in Christ’s day, and those who lend themselves to do his work will represent his spirit.

Floating rumors are frequently the destroyers of unity among brethren. There are some who watch with open mind and ears to catch flying scandal. They gather up little incidents which may be trifling in themselves, but which are repeated and exaggerated until a man is made an offender for a word. Their motto seems to be, “Report, and we will report it.” These talebearers are doing the devil’s work with surprising fidelity, little knowing how offensive their course is to God. If they would spend half the energy and zeal that is given to this unholy work in examining their own hearts, they would find so much to do to cleanse their souls from impurity that they would have no time or disposition to criticize their brethren, and they would not fall under the power of this temptation. The door of the mind should be closed against “they say” or “I have heard.” Why should we not, instead of allowing jealousy or evil surmising to come into our hearts, go to our brethren, and, after frankly but kindly setting before them the things we have heard detrimental to their character and influence, pray with and for them? While we cannot love and fellowship with those who are the bitter enemies of Christ, we should cultivate that spirit of meekness and love that characterized our Master—a love that thinketh no evil and is not easily provoked.

This is a matter that rests between God and our own souls. We are living amid the perils of the last days, and we should guard every avenue by which Satan can approach us with his temptations. A fatal delusion seizes those who have had great light and precious opportunities, but who have not walked in the light nor improved the opportunities God has given them. Darkness comes upon them; they fail to make Christ their strength, and fall an easy prey to the snares of the deceiver. A mere assent to the truth will never save a soul from death. We must be sanctified through the truth; every defect of character must be overcome, or it will overcome us, and become a controlling power for evil. Commence without a moment’s delay to root out every pernicious weed from the garden of the heart; and, through the grace of Christ, allow no plants to flourish there but such as will bear fruit unto eternal life.

Cultivate whatever in your character is in harmony with the character of Christ. Cherish those things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report; but put away whatever is unlike our Redeemer. Selfishness is cherished to an extent that few realize; guard against it at all times and in all places. Do not excuse yourself in any error. If you have one objectionable trait which you find it difficult to subdue, do not talk of your weakness that others must bear with. Do not soothe your conscience with the thought that you cannot overcome the peculiarities that deform your character, nor listen to Satan’s suggestion that they are not very grievous. There is no way by which you can be saved in sin. Every soul that gains eternal life must be like Christ, “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.” Hebrews 7:26. The followers of Christ must shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

Some seek to control their surroundings, thinking that if they are placed in favorable positions, the bad traits in their character will not be developed. But God orders our surroundings, and He will place us where we shall have test after test, to prove us and to reveal what is in our hearts. Again and again we shall be brought into strait places, that it may be known whether we are indeed crucified with Christ or full of self-love. How will this proving, testing process end with each of us? The prince of darkness will put forth all his power to retain us in his possession; but we have a Mighty Helper.

Self-love will prompt to a much better opinion of self than the Word of God will warrant, for “the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” Jeremiah 17:9. God’s Word is the standard that we must all reach. It is unsafe to consult feeling or trust to our own heart; for the wise man declares, “He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool.” Proverbs 28:26. And yet how prone we are to trust this deceptive heart, and have confidence in our own goodness!

Church membership will not guarantee us heaven. We must abide in Christ, and His love must abide in us. We must every day make advancement in the formation of symmetrical character.
A NOther scene was then presented before me. I was brought into the presence of a female, apparently about thirty years of age. A physician was standing by her, and reporting that her nervous system was deranged, that her blood was impure and moved sluggishly, and that her stomach was in a cold, inactive condition. He said he would give her active remedies, which would soon improve her condition. He gave her a powder from a vial upon which was written "Nux vomica." I watched to see what effect this would have upon the patient. It appeared to act favorably. Her condition seemed better. She was animated, and even seemed cheerful and active.

My attention was then called to still another case. I was introduced into the sickroom of a young man who was in a high fever. A physician was standing by the bedside of the sufferer, with a portion of medicine taken from a vial upon which was written "Calomel." He administered this chemical poison, and a change seemed to take place, but not for the better.

I was then shown still another case. It was that of a female, who seemed to be suffering much pain. A physician stood by the bedside of the patient, and was administering medicine taken from a vial upon which was written "Opium." At first this drug seemed to affect the mind. She talked strangely, but finally became quiet, and slept.

My attention was then called to the first case, that of the father who had lost his wife and two children. The physician was in the sickroom, standing by the bedside of the afflicted daughter. Again he left the room without giving medicine. The father, when alone in the presence of the physician, seemed deeply moved, and inquired, impatiently, "Do you intend to do nothing? Will you leave my only daughter to die?"

The physician said: "I have listened to the sad history of the death of your much-loved wife and your two children, and have learned from your own lips that all three died while in the care of physicians, and while taking medicines prescribed and administered by their hands. Medicine has not saved your loved ones; and as a physician, I solemnly believe that none of them need, or ought to, have died. They could have recovered if they had not been so drugged that nature was enfeebled by abuse, and finally crushed." He stated decidedly to the agitated father: "I cannot give medicine to your daughter. I shall only seek to assist nature in her efforts, by removing every obstruction, and then leave nature to recover the exhausted energies of the system." He placed in the father's hand a few directions, which he enjoined him to follow closely: "Keep the patient free from excitement, and every influence calculated to depress. Her attendants should be cheerful and hopeful. She should have a simple diet, and should be allowed plenty of pure soft water to drink. She should bathe frequently in pure soft water, and this treatment should be followed by gentle rubbing. Let light and air be freely admitted into her room. She must have quiet and undisturbed rest."

The father slowly read the prescription, wondered at the few simple directions it contained, and seemed doubtful that any good would result from such simple means.

Said the physician: "You have had sufficient confidence in my skill to place the life of your daughter in my hands. Withdraw not your confidence. I will visit your daughter daily, and direct you in the management of her case. Follow my directions with confidence, and I trust in a few weeks to present her to you in a much better condition of health, if not fully restored."

The father looked sad and doubtful, but submitted to the decision of the physician. He feared that his daughter must die if she had no medicine.

The second case was again presented before me. The patient had appeared better under the influence of nux vomica. She was sitting up, folding a shawl closely around her, and complaining of chilliness. The air in the room was impure. It was heated, and had lost its vitality. Almost every crevice where pure air could enter was guarded, to protect the patient from a sense of painful chilliness, which was especially felt in the back of the neck and down the spinal column. If the door was left ajar, she seemed nervous and distressed, and entreated that it should be closed, for she was cold. She could not bear the least draft of air from the door or windows. A gentleman of intelligence stood looking pityingly upon her, and said, to those present, "This is the second result of nux vomica. It is especially felt upon the nerves, and it affects the whole nervous system. There will be, for a time, increased forced action upon the nerves. But as the strength of this drug is spent, there will be chilliness and prostration. Just to the degree that it excites and enlivens will be the deadening, numbing results following."

The third case was again presented before me. It was that of the young man to whom was administered calomel. He was a great sufferer. His lips were dark and swollen. His gums were inflamed. His tongue was thick and swollen, and the saliva was running from his mouth in large quantities. The intelligent gentleman before mentioned looked sadly upon the sufferer, and said: "This is the influence of mercurial preparations. This young man had sufficient nervous energy remaining to begin a warfare upon this intruder, this drug poison, to attempt to expel it from the system. Many have not sufficient life-force left to arouse to action; and nature is overpowered, ceases her efforts, and the victim dies."
I just have a feeling that perhaps you are the only group (organization) which is still rebuking sin in the manner the founder of the Christian faith—Christ Jesus did. Surely, you are leading the right way and you are greatly uplifting us here through Our Firm Foundation magazine. May you continue publishing those special messages of our time and may the soon coming Savior come even closer to us as we also draw closer to him daily. Undoubtedly, the end is near!!

HC, Zimbabwe

We thank the Lord everyday for “Our Firm Foundation” magazine. It is the best! I have read every issue so far. May God bless each one of you as you work for Him. Thank you.

RE, Tennessee

I have always appreciated your magazine. If it was not for your presentation of truth I would have been deceived by what has come into our church the last few years. I am sorry I let my subscription go by.

Thanks for keeping it coming.

DF, Washington

We borrow your magazine Our Firm Foundation as it is spiritual food for us. Would it be possible for you to send us a gift subscription? Our exchange rate is so awfully at the moment. We will try and send a donation as soon as we are able. I did send you a fax recently, but I am sending a letter also in case the fax did not go through.

RL, South Africa

I am very grateful for the free copies of your magazine Our Firm Foundation which I have been receiving since last year. I am a church elder with a limited income. Thank you for having kept my name on your mailing list to continue receiving this timely magazine. I still plead with you to continue assisting me in this way as time may last.

I am in a remote area where I walk 40 kilometers to reach the nearby town by foot. Meals are a problem here. The community is accustomed to taking blood and meat as their major staple food. Some of them do not know how to read or write. Hygiene is greatly lacking.

I am being assisted by one of the leaders to move from house to house visitation to present to them the sound doctrine. The few who know how to study, I am doing with them Bible study.

XYZ, Kenya, East Africa

Note from the Editors: The practice of eating blood with meat is not limited to remote places in Africa. It is also present in industrialized nations, although this practice is more refined and subtle. Please read the article “The Bible and Vegetarianism” beginning on page 12 of this issue of Our Firm Foundation.

Thank you so much for sending me Our Firm Foundation. I was so much blessed and enlightened by the first one I read. The problems I had about Christ’s righteousness were eventually erased. And the Medical Missionary Corner is so helpful. I discovered that I could stay healthy if I follow the health principles spelled out in the Corner. You are doing a great deal of good work, and may God bless you and keep on leading you until many souls have come to know of their Saviour.

KG, Zimbabwe

Responses From Outreach Literature

Greetings! A friend of mine gave me your paper Earth’s Final Warning and I was really impressed with what it had to say. I am in prison and would like to be able to receive this paper on a regular basis. I would also like to ask if I could receive your free Bible studies, and also Rome’s Challenge, and Heralds of Peace, if possible.

I am a new babe in Christ and wish to learn all I can. I would be very grateful for any help I can get on God’s Word and how to live as my Lord would have me live.

TM, Florida

I am and have been for many years (at least) a lackluster Christian, believing without thought or action. I cannot claim any one faith. I have quite a varied background, and your recent paper did two things, it opened my eyes to what I had become, and introduced me to something I had never heard of—a true Sabbath. I had never known that Sunday was not.

I am still not completely convinced that the Papacy is the leopard-like beast, but I have an open mind and I am interested in learning new things. [See Revelation 13:2-10.] I would like to purchase The Lord’s Day and A National Sunday Law. After reading that (with an open mind) I will draw my own conclusions.

I am remitting a check for $10.00 for the book, postage and donation. If your Heralds of Peace is different than Earth’s Final Warning I would request a copy of that also.

RS, Washington

Note From the Editor: “In presenting the truth to others, we should follow the example of Jesus. He did not present a great mass of truth, to be accepted all at once. He led the inquiring mind from truth to truth, from lesson to lesson, opening up the significance of the Scripture, as they were able to bear it. In every age the truth appropriate for the time, and essential to character and life, must be revealed in this manner. If anyone—however much he may know—takes the position that he has all the truth, that nothing more is essential for him, he makes a great mistake, and will meet with terrible loss. The command, “Go forward,” is ever to be obeyed. We are not to retrograde, not even to stand still, but to advance, step by step, following the Light of the world.” Review and Herald, October 14, 1890.

Enclosed is my check to help in the publication of the paper Earth’s Final Warning. May the Lord add His richest blessings to your work so people will be warned of the impending conflict coming soon to the world. May the Holy Spirit “open the eyes and hearts” of people as they read this paper. God bless you.

JW, USA
Camp Meeting 1997

July 16–20, 1997

Please plan to join us.

Speakers will include Rob McClintock, Jeff Pippenger, Vernon Sparks, Ron Spear, Colin & Russell Standish, Tom Waters

If you plan to attend the Eatonville camp meeting, and wish to stay on our grounds, you are more than welcome. Water and restrooms will be available at several locations on the grounds. There will be limited shower facilities, but hookups for water, sewer, and electricity are not available. Please plan on a real camp meeting. Although we cannot provide a full food service, we will have some fresh produce and other basic food items for sale. If you would like to help with special music, or playing the piano, please call us at our office and ask for Diana.

As usual, there will be no charge for staying on our campus, but we cannot provide either lodging or food. Please do not take it for granted that we will be able to provide special services for those who need them. Instead, please call and let us know what your needs are. We will do our best to accommodate all who desire to attend, but, unfortunately, there are limits to what our staff can undertake during the hustle and bustle of camp meeting.

If you do not plan to stay on our grounds, you should make reservations ahead of time at the hotel or motel of your choice. The following information may be of some assistance:

- Eagle's Nest Motel—10 miles south of Hope International. Call (800) 877-2533.

Please note:
Spanish meetings will also be conducted on the grounds, starting Thursday evening, July 24th through July 27th.