“What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.” Luke 15:4-6.

This story has always impressed me. Not so much the going after the one that was lost, or even the leaving of the ninety and nine to go after the one. It was the fact of calling his friends and neighbors together to rejoice after he had found it.

No doubt if we were to have a lamb, a cow, a horse or any other animal that was lost, we would certainly be happy if it was found. But have you ever known anyone who has many, many animals that, having lost one and found it again, called all of his friends and neighbors together to rejoice about it? I doubt it.

Remember, they were not just called; they were called together! They are to come and rejoice together with him. Can you imagine getting a call like that? Your good friend calls you up and tells you that he has found one of his hundreds of cows or sheep or goats or whatever, and he tells you to come over so that he and all the rest of his friends and his neighbors can celebrate together over it. What would you think about that call?

The Lord has already told us that He does not think like we do. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.” Isaiah 55:8. He has a completely different way of looking at things than we do. Nothing is unimportant to Him. Even leftover pieces of fish and bread are important!

“And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.” John 6:11-12.

There is nothing in this world that escapes the attention of our heavenly Father, not even the birds. “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.” Matthew 10:29. “He who upholds the unnumbered worlds throughout immensity, at the same time cares for the wants of the little brown sparrow that sings its humble song without fear.” Steps to Christ, 85.

No, we cannot imagine that the God who has created “unnumbered worlds” would have that much concern for a lost lamb, much less a common sparrow. Yet “Jesus declared to His disciples that not a sparrow falls to the ground without the notice of the heavenly Father, and that if God can keep in mind the wants of all the little birds of the air, He will much more care for those who may become the subjects of His kingdom and through faith in Him may be the heirs of immortality.” Testimonies, Vol. 5, 749.

In our finite minds we just cannot conceive of concerning ourselves that much over just one of something when we have so many of them. The closest that we may be able to come to understanding the concept is with our children. No matter how many we have, each one is distinctly important and valuable to us. I say “the closest we can come,” because very few of us have more than ten or twelve children. Imagine billions and billions of them. And this is just on earth! Remember that there are worlds unnumbered!

Another thing that boggles my mind is the fact that the God of all the universes has a specific place where He resides. The place is called the “City of God” in heaven. Of all the “unnumbered” worlds that have ever been created, throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity, only one has ever rebelled and turned its back of its Creator. Then, not only are we forgiven, and God’s Son dies in our place to redeem us, but all of heaven is preparing to pack up and move to this insignificant speck of a world. This tiny world will then be the center of the universe!

Can you imagine it!? God packs up the heavenly U-Haul and moves the entire operation of heaven here!!! It is beyond all comprehension! There are not even words to describe that kind of love, mercy and compassion. You better believe that His thoughts are not our thoughts and His ways not ours. No wonder the heavenly beings can’t quit praising His name! And we won’t either, when we begin to see what our heavenly Father and His wonderful Son, our Saviour, is really like. I can’t wait! I know you can’t either.
Table of Contents

Our Mission - It is the mission of Hope International and the editors of Our Firm Foundation to clearly present Christ and His truth. The days remaining for this world are few, and we must work 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. —Editor

Executive Director: Joe Olson
executivedirector@hopeint.org

Editor: Heidi Heiks
editorial@hopeint.org

Bookstore Manager: Kaye Olson
shipping@hopeint.org

Hope For Health Center: Heather Olson, R.N., C.H.
hopeforhealth@hopeint.org

Layout & Design: Sherrie West
sherrie@hopeint.org

Our Firm Foundation is published monthly by:
Hope International
P.O. Box 220
Knoxville, Illinois 61448 USA

Phone: 309.343.1844
Monday-Thursday 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Central Time
Friday 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., Central Time

Fax: 309.343.3721

Email: office@hopeint.org

Web: www.hopeint.org

About Hope International - We are a lay ministry founded, supported, and operated by Seventh-day Adventists to assist God’s Church in the proclamation of the Everlasting Gospel in every way that is consistent with the principles of God as revealed in Inspiration.

Invitation to Writers - We are accepting article-length manuscripts for possible publication in Our Firm Foundation. We prefer that submissions be submitted in Word .doc format as a computer file. Include a digital picture and a short bio. Please address all correspondence to Editor, Our Firm Foundation, P.O. Box 220, Knoxville, IL 61448, or by email to editorial@hopeint.org.

Subscription Information: See page 30 • Shipping & Sales Tax: See page 30

Content credited in this publication is the property of its respective owner(s) and is licensed or used with permission. Other items are the property of Hope International.

Cover Photo: Shutterstock.com  All Photos unless otherwise noted: Shutterstock.com
"Our first work is with the heart. A profession of faith and the possession of truth in the soul are two different things."

How can we be like Christ? In Matthew 5:48, Jesus tells us, “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect,” and 1 John 3:9 tells us that, “Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for his seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.” We know that Christ cannot come to claim us until His Spirit is perfected in us, for nothing unholy or impure will be allowed to enter heaven. But I still sin, and I certainly don’t reflect the character of Christ at all!

Broken Promises
I try all the time to do what is right, but I fall quite frequently and wonder if I will ever be ready for Jesus to come. Do any of you ever feel this way? Have you promised to follow Him and obey His Word, only to fail over and over again?

Have you promised to be patient with your spouse, family and friends, and failed? Promised to cut down on snacking between meals, and failed? Promised and promised, just to find that you keep breaking those promises? Have circumstances seemed to ruin your best-laid plans to have a successful day, have all your good resolutions become like water and, like me, you don’t understand why?

It’s said that “man cannot transform himself by the exercise of his will. He possesses no power by which this change can be effected. . . . There are many who try to reform by correcting this or that bad habit, and they hope in this way to become Christians, but they are beginning in the wrong place. . . . Our first work is with the heart. A profession of faith and the possession of truth in the soul are two different things. The mere knowledge of truth is not enough. We may possess this, but the tenor of our thoughts may not be changed. The heart must be converted and sanctified.” Christ’s Object Lessons, 96-97.

We Can’t Change Ourselves
Can you make a tree produce better fruit just by picking off the rotten fruit and dead leaves? No, you can’t. You need to get to the reason the tree is diseased. Following Jesus is similar. Jeremiah 13:23 tells us, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Then may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil.” Yet we cannot do anything of ourselves to become better Christians.

We cannot make ourselves better Christians by correcting our outward flaws ourselves. We need to get rid of the reason for our bad habits. We know that all evil comes from the devil, so we need to get him out and Christ into our hearts. The rotten fruit and dead leaves of sin in our lives will fall off by themselves.

Now, although I say they will fall off by themselves, this is not exactly true. It is true that we can change nothing of ourselves, but when you have Christ in you, you can work with Christ to change. And I think Christ expects us to pray for His help. To explain this I would like to say that if you need help to quit smoking and you ask Christ to help, you don’t hang around a tobacco or smoke shop in your spare time. If you need to quit gossiping, you don’t call all your old gossip buddies and hope they won’t talk about anyone.

It’s as if you are looking for a job. With God’s help you write resumes; with God’s help you write letters to prospective employers. You put the letters in the mailbox; you drive to the places for interviews. Although you prayed to God to help find a job, I don’t think He expects you to just sit at home and wait for a knock on the door. He gives us the ability to help Him help us.

The Process of Conversion
We want to be better people, to be “converted,” but what does being “converted” mean? Most people think they are converted when they decide to accept Jesus as their Savior, and we certainly must make this decision. But there is more to having a converted heart. When Jesus tells us that we must be born again, He means we need a converted heart as well as a converted mind, a converted lifestyle, a converted being.

It would be as if you were in the government witness program. The government would give you a new identity, and you would need to find new friends and a new way of life. In our Christian life, we cannot do this on our own. Jeremiah 17:9-10 tells us, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I, the Lord search the heart, I test the mind…” The desires of our hearts are naturally worldly and downward. We cannot change them and make them clean. So what are we supposed to do?
We’re told in Romans 10:17: “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.” The Scriptures are the best place to go for the transformation of character. Didn’t Jesus pray in John 17:17, “Sanctify them by Your truth: Your word is truth”? If we do as we should and study the Scriptures, the Word would work on our hearts and we would be so filled with Christ and His love for us that we wouldn’t have time for the evil, worldly things we find ourselves always falling back into. The Holy Spirit would convict us of our sins and mold us into God’s image.

A Change of Heart

How great it would be to have Jesus in close companionship, to have our hearts’ affections going out after Him rather than to the cares of this world, which last but a moment and then are gone! It is heart-work, heart-change, real heart-change that we must have, and it comes by seeing Jesus and giving in to the love we see reflecting from Him.

To have this close of a relationship with Jesus does cost us something. We must all have a complete change of heart. It is a relationship of complete dependence, which can only be obtained by people who have surrendered completely to God. Someone who wants this close relationship must choose Christ first, last and totally in everything. We need to feel the atoning blood of Jesus. We must have a change of heart. But this change of heart is not easy. There will be a constant struggle with worldly and personal obstacles.

Laodicean Unforgiveness

Realizing what the Bible says about the Laodicean church is essential to our having a close walk with our Lord Jesus Christ. I hear now and again how we are the Laodicean church. I don’t know if those who say this are referring to the Seventh-day Adventist movement or to the Christian church as a whole. It is my understanding that the seven churches in Revelation are seven periods in the history of the Christian church, with the Laodicean church being the last.

Sometimes when I listen to ministers and lay people in our church talk, it sounds as if they are proud of being the Laodicean church. In my understanding of the Bible, while the church is lukewarm, this is not something to be proud of. “So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth.” Rev. 3:16.

It sounds to me that the church mentioned would find its way out of the mouth of Christ faster than it went in. “Because you say, ‘I am rich and in need of nothing’ – and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.” Rev 3:17.

“The Word destroys the natural, earthly nature, and imparts a new life in Christ Jesus.”

The Scriptues are the power of God unto salvation if we come to their study with a humble spirit, desiring God unto salvation if we come to their study. Just as in the parable of the leaven, when yeast is put into one part of the dough and then spreads to the whole lump, so does the Word of God as we read and study it. In Christ’s Object Lessons, page 98, we’re told, “The leaven of truth works secretly, silenly, steadily, to transform the soul. The natural inclinations are softened and subdued. New thoughts, new feelings, new motives, are implanted. A new standard of character is set up—the life of Christ.”

The more we open the Bible and read about Jesus, the more our eyes are opened. We would have a closer walk with Christ, and we would see exactly what sin is.
I don’t know about you, but I can look and listen, and I can put two and two together. All around—at work, at family gatherings, even at church—I hear people claim to have a close walk with Christ, but I hear “wretched” complaints about former and current church members, former and current family members, complaints about friends. There are complaints about how someone treated them in the past, complaints about how people are treating them now. Apparently we haven’t forgiven as Christ says to forgive. Since Christ will forgive all of us for whatever we may have done in our past and present, are we above Christ, that we hold resentments against others?

Are we above Christ, that we hold resentments against others?

Some times we think we are rich because we have the truth of the Bible. We need to realize there is much in the Bible that we have yet to learn. Sometimes we think we are rich because if everyone were “just like us,” the church would be ready for Christ to come and get it. We think we are rich; there is nothing wrong with us. But we don’t realize how pathetic in the eyes of God we really are. If we hold grudges, or even think we are better than anyone, we are most certainly NOT living up to the standards Christ expects from us. And, if we hold ill feelings or anything in our hearts, there is no room for Christ there, and He will NOT come in.

I know in my own life, it is much easier to see the faults of others— or what I think are their faults. Sometimes I get to thinking, “If only they could be like me.” But then I think of Christ compared to myself, and I thank God that they aren’t as bad as I am.

Sometimes I think it is hard for us to forgive others because it would mean that we would have to accept the fact that there are other circumstances or people who would also need to share in the forgiving process. Sometimes we might actually need to forgive ourselves. But this must be done in order for there to be the close communication with Christ we need for Him to dwell in us. A close walk with Christ is not possible if we hold on to unnecessary baggage. It tends to get in between Christ and us. “You cannot serve two masters.”

If God Has Forgiven . . .

Don’t we realize that claiming to forgive and actually forgiving are two different things? Don’t we realize that the cutting remarks we make and the actions we do reflect on us as well as on Christ, if we claim to belong to Him?

I know there are some things I have done in my past that, if certain people heard me, they would wonder why I am allowed to write articles which might help others. I have asked God to forgive me. I’m told that since I was baptized, I am a new person; my past sins are cast into the sea. You don’t know about my past, so it doesn’t bother you. It should be no different with our church members, family or friends.

If you know anything about the past of a family member, a friend, or even a church member, if they have asked Christ to forgive them, who are we to say they haven’t been forgiven? If a friend or family member or even a stranger has sinned against us, who are we not to forgive them? And if Christ has forgiven them and we don’t allow ourselves to forgive them, we are hurting only ourselves. This unforgiving will keep us out of heaven.

If a church has too many of these types of issues within itself, it will more than likely not be a growing church. It would be the worst form of the Laodicean church. Do you think God would want new Christians to join a church where this unrest and ill feeling toward one another exists?

To be continued . . .

Peter enjoys gardening, writing, and reading books and articles on religious topics. He and his wife live in southeastern Wisconsin.
Sunday Exalted then Enforced
As the papacy became firmly established, the work of Sunday exaltation was continued. For a time the people engaged in agricultural labor when not attending church, and the seventh day was still regarded as the Sabbath. But steadily a change was effected. Those in holy office were forbidden to pass judgment in any civil controversy on the Sunday. Soon after, all persons, of whatever rank, were commanded to refrain from common labor on pain of a fine for freemen and stripes in the case of servants. Later it was decreed that rich men should be punished with the loss of half of their estates; and finally, that if still obstinate they should be made slaves. The lower classes were to suffer perpetual banishment.

Divine Disapproval Claimed
Miracles also were called into requisition. Among other wonders it was reported that as a husbandman who was about to plow his field on Sunday cleaned his plow with an iron, the iron stuck fast in his hand, and for two years he carried it about with him, “to his exceeding great pain and shame.” -- Francis West, *Historical and Practical Discourse on the Lord’s Day*, page 174.

Later the pope gave directions that the parish priest should admonish the violators of Sunday and wish them to go to church and say their prayers, lest they bring some great calamity on themselves and neighbors. An ecclesiastical council brought forward the argument, since so widely employed, even by Protestants, that because persons had been struck by lightning while laboring on Sunday, it must be the Sabbath. “It is apparent,” said the prelates, “how high the displeasure of God was upon their neglect of this day.” An appeal was then made that priests and ministers, kings and princes, and all faithful people “use their utmost endeavors and care that the day be restored to its honor, and, for the credit of Christianity, more devoutly observed for the time to come.” -- Thomas Morer, *Discourse in Six Dialogues on...*
Civil Backs Ecclesiastical

The decrees of councils proving insufficient, the secular authorities were besought to issue an edict that would strike terror to the hearts of the people and force them to refrain from labor on the Sunday. At a synod held in Rome, all previous decisions were reaffirmed with greater force and solemnity. They were also incorporated into the ecclesiastical law and enforced by the civil authorities throughout nearly all Christendom. (See Heylyn, History of the Sabbath, pt. 2, ch. 5, sec. 7.)

Forgeries and Other Lies

Still the absence of Scriptural authority for Sundaykeeping occasioned no little embarrassment. The people questioned the right of their teachers to set aside the positive declaration of Jehovah, “The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God,” in order to honor the day of the sun. To supply the lack of Bible testimony, other expedients were necessary. A zealous advocate of Sunday, who about the close of the twelfth century visited the churches of England, was resisted by faithful witnesses for the truth; and so fruitless were his efforts that he departed from the country for a season and cast about him for some means to enforce his teachings. When he returned, the lack was supplied, and in his after labors he met with greater success. He brought with him a roll purporting to be from God Himself, which contained the needed command for Sunday observance, with awful threats to terrify the disobedient. This precious document—as base a counterfeit as the institution it supported—was said to have fallen from heaven and to have been found in Jerusalem, upon the altar of St. Simeon, in Golgotha. But, in fact, the pontifical palace at Rome was the source whence it proceeded. Frauds and forgeries to advance the power and prosperity of the church have in all ages been esteemed lawful by the papal hierarchy.

Rome is aiming to re-establish her power, to recover her lost supremacy.

The roll forbade labor from the ninth hour, three o’clock, on Saturday afternoon, till sunrise on Monday; and its authority was declared to be confirmed by many miracles. It was reported that persons laboring beyond the appointed hour were stricken with paralysis. A miller who attempted to grind his corn, saw, instead of flour, a torrent of blood come forth, and the mill wheel stood still, notwithstanding the strong rush of water. A woman who placed dough in the oven found it raw when taken out, though the oven was very hot. Another who had dough prepared for baking at the ninth hour, but determined to set it aside till Monday, found, the next day, that it had been made into loaves and baked by divine power. A man who baked bread after the ninth hour on Saturday found, when he broke it the next morning, that blood started therefrom. By such absurd and superstitious fabrications did the advocates of Sunday endeavor to establish its sacredness. (See Roger de Hoveden, Annals, vol. 2, pp. 526-530.)

In Scotland, as in England, a greater regard for Sunday was secured by uniting with it a portion of the ancient Sabbath. But the time required to be kept holy varied. An edict from the king of Scotland declared that “Saturday from twelve at noon ought to be accounted holy,” and that no man, from that time till Monday morning, should engage in worldly business.—Morier, pages 290, 291.

Papists Admit to Changed Day

But notwithstanding all the efforts to establish Sunday sacredness, papists themselves publicly confessed the divine authority of the Sabbath and the human origin of the institution by which it had been supplanted. In the sixteenth century a papal council plainly declared: “Let all Christians remember that the seventh day was consecrated by God, and hath been received and observed, not only by the Jews, but by all others who pretend to worship God; though we Christians have changed their Sabbath into the Lord’s Day.”—Ibid., pages 281, 282. Those who were tampering with the divine law were not ignorant of the character of their work. They were deliberately setting themselves above God.

Woe to Dissenters; African Churches

A striking illustration of Rome’s policy toward those who disagree with her was given in the long and bloody persecution of the Waldenses, some of whom were observers of the Sabbath. Others suffered in a similar manner for their fidelity to the fourth commandment. The history of the churches of Ethiopia and Abyssinia is especially significant. Amid the gloom of the Dark Ages, the Christians of Central Africa were lost sight of and forgotten by the world, and for many centuries they enjoyed freedom in the exercise of their faith. But at last Rome learned of their existence, and the emperor of Abyssinia was soon beguiled into an acknowledgment of the pope as the vicar of Christ. Other concessions followed.

Those who were tampering with the divine law were not ignorant of the character of their work.

An edict was issued forbidding the observance of the Sabbath under the severest penalties. (See Michael Geddes, Church History of Ethiopia, pages 311, 312.) But papal tyranny soon became a yoke so galling that the Abyssinians determined to break it from their necks. After a terrible struggle the Romanists were banished from their dominions, and the ancient faith was restored. The churches rejoiced in their freedom, and they never forgot the lesson they had learned concerning the deception, the fanaticism, and the despotic power of
Rome. Within their solitary realm they were content to remain, unknown to the rest of Christendom.

The churches of Africa held the Sabbath as it was held by the papal church before her complete apostasy. While they kept the seventh day in obedience to the commandment of God, they abstained from labor on the Sunday in conformity to the custom of the church. Upon obtaining supreme power, Rome had trampled upon the Sabbath of God to exalt her own; but the churches of Africa, hidden for nearly a thousand years, did not share in this apostasy. When brought under the sway of Rome, they were forced to set aside the true and exalt the false sabbath; but no sooner had they regained their independence than they returned to obedience to the fourth commandment. (See Appendix.)

Hatred of True Sabbath to Resurface

These records of the past clearly reveal the enmity of Rome toward the true Sabbath and its defenders, and the means which she employs to honor the institution of her creating. The word of God teaches that these scenes are to be repeated as Roman Catholics and Protestants shall unite for the exaltation of the Sunday.

Worship Papacy by Honoring Sunday

The prophecy of Revelation 13 declares that the power represented by the beast with lamblike horns shall cause “the earth and them which dwell therein” to worship the papacy --there symbolized by the beast “like unto a leopard.” The beast with two horns is also to say “to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast;” and, furthermore, it is to command all, “both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond,” to receive the mark of the beast. Revelation 13:11-16. It has been shown that the United States is the power represented by the beast with lamblike horns, and that this prophecy will be fulfilled when the United States shall enforce Sunday observance, which Rome claims as the special acknowledgment of her supremacy. But in this homage to the papacy the United States will not be alone. The influence of Rome in the countries that once acknowledged her dominion is still far from being destroyed. And prophecy foretells a restoration of her power. “I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.” Verse 3.
Rome vs. Governments
The Roman Catholic Church, with all its ramifications throughout the world, forms one vast organization under the control, and designed to serve the interests, of the papal see. Its millions of communicants, in every country on the globe, are instructed to hold themselves as bound in allegiance to the pope. Whatever their nationality or their government, they are to regard the authority of the church as above all other. Though they may take the oath pledging their loyalty to the state, yet back of this lies the vow of obedience to Rome, absolving them from every pledge inimical to her interests.

History testifies of her artful and persistent efforts to insinuate herself into the affairs of nations; and having gained a foothold, to further her own aims, even at the ruin of princes and people. In the year 1204, Pope Innocent III extracted from Peter II, king of Arragon, the following extraordinary oath: “I, Peter, king of Arragonians, profess and promise to be ever faithful and obedient to my lord, Pope Innocent, to his Catholic successors, and the Roman Church, and faithfully to preserve my kingdom in his obedience, defending the Catholic faith, and persecuting heretical pravity.” --John Dowling, The History of Romanism, b. 5, ch. 6, sec. 55.

We shall soon see and shall feel what the purpose of the Roman element is.

This is in harmony with the claims regarding the power of the Roman pontiff “that it is lawful for him to depose emperors” and “that he can absolve subjects from their allegiance to unrighteous rulers.”--Mosheim, b. 3, cent. 11, pt. 2, ch. 2, sec. 9, note 17. (See also Appendix note for page 447.)

Rome’s Power Regained
And let it be remembered, it is the boast of Rome that she never changes. The principles of Gregory VII and Innocent III are still the principles of the Roman Catholic Church. And had she but the power, she would put them in practice with as much vigor now as in past centuries. Protestants little know what they are doing when they propose to accept the aid of Rome in the work of Sunday exaltation. While they are bent upon the accomplishment of their purpose, Rome is aiming to reestablish her power, to recover her lost supremacy. Let the principle once be established in the United States that the church may employ or control the power of the state; that religious observances may be enforced by secular laws; in short, that the authority of church and state is to dominate the conscience, and the triumph of Rome in this country is assured.

Secret Growth—Then the Strike
God’s word has given warning of the impending danger; let this be unheeded, and the Protestant world will learn what the purposes of Rome really are, only when it is too late to escape the snare. She is silently growing into power. Her doctrines are exerting their influence in legislative halls, in the churches, and in the hearts of men. She is piling up her lofty and massive structures in the secret recesses of which her former persecutions will be repeated. Stealthily and unsuspectedly she is strengthening her forces to further her own ends when the time shall come for her to strike. All that she desires is vantage ground, and this is already being given her. We shall soon see and shall feel what the purpose of the Roman element is. Whoever shall believe and obey the word of God will thereby incur reproach and persecution.

Great Controversy, 575-581.

Ellen G. White, 1827-1915, received the spiritual gift of prophecy, and the fruits of her life and work accord with the biblical tests of a true messenger of God. To this day, her counsels are an incalculable blessing to God’s people around the world.
An unhealthy excitement is being fueled amongst professed followers of God over temporal prosperity. Everywhere is seen the mushrooming of “prosperity preachers,” business or entrepreneurship seminars, and literature on how to prosper materially. Frequently from the pulpits Christians are taught that God’s ultimate will for them is material prosperity and that poverty, misfortune or suffering want is a curse. If one is having financial problems, it is taken a sign of not being true to God. Initially I thought our denomination was immune to such perversions of the truth, but, sad to say, even the traditional stewardship seminars among Adventists are taking this mode, wherein members are encouraged to give so that they get and to strive for material prosperity—all because this is God’s purpose for them.

**Prosperity, not Soul Preparation**

This implies that those Christians who are not materially prosperous are under a curse, and that the more prosperous one is the more approved and righteous before God. Therefore, material prosperity becomes a yardstick to measure one’s spirituality and faith in God. Bible texts are misquoted and misapplied to sustain such thinking. Calls for Christians to be business-minded ignites in them a zeal to compete with the world in acquiring material wealth—consequently making it the object of their existence. In this “prosperity gospel,” members are motivated on principles of temporal success, i.e., how they can acquire more materially, instead of how they can best develop Christ-like characters and advance His kingdom. Little or nothing is mentioned about preparing for the imminent return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Below are some of the shocking statements on prosperity from renowned charismatics. These sentiments in a subtle way are creeping into our ranks:

**“I Want It Now!”**

“Prosperity is a major requirement in the establishment of God’s will,” and “God’s will for His people today is abundance.” *God’s Will is Prosperity*, article downloaded from the KCM website http://www.kcm.org/studycenter/finances/pdf/gods_will_prosperity.pdf.

“I’m sick and tired of hearing about streets of gold [in heaven]. I don’t need gold in heaven, I’ve got to have it now. . . . But if I hear the thing one more time of how it will be and how it was, I’m gonna kick somebody.” Benny Hinn on Praise the Lord Show, Trinity Broadcasting Network, Dec. 9, 1990, quoted in Hank Hanegraaff’s *Counterfeit Revival*, page 120.

The implications of such thinking are profound. Many Christians, instead of seeking the beauty of Christ’s righteousness, focus their energies and efforts on material prosperity. Like the ancient Jews, they equate material prosperity to God’s approval, blessing and righteousness. Like the world around them, many have come to believe that life is meaningful only when one has “things,” and this has been turned to be the message of the hour! As we investigate the truth of such issues, let us consider what God’s will for us really is:

**God’s Will: It Is Written...**

“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification. . . .” 1 Thessalonians 4:3.

“Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from
this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.” Galatians 1:4.

It is clear that God’s priority is our deliverance from the power of Satan, to live lives of obedience to His commands through His grace. Ultimately, His will for us is not that we make money and become materially prosperous, but rather that we be true saints here on earth. Therefore, our greatest object and ambition in life should be to conform to His will, rather than compete with the world in acquiring material wealth.

Our greatest object and ambition in life should be to conform to His will, rather than compete with the world in acquiring material wealth.

In conjunction with the above, it should also be categorically stated that the idea that true faith will bring the believer loads of money has no scriptural basis, either. In fact, our Saviour Jesus, while He never condemned material possessions outright,

- Preached that those who serve God must despise money (Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13-15) because their hearts will be wherever their treasure is (Matthew 6:21);
- Did warn us not to store up earthly treasure (Matthew 6:19);
- Said giving is better than receiving (Acts 20:35);
- Taught that wealth is deceitful and can choke out our faith (Matthew 13:5, 22; Luke 8:14);
- Warned us to be on guard against self-indulgence and greed in all its forms (Matthew 23:25; Mark 7:21-23; Luke 12:15);
- Made it clear our object in life should not be to have an abundance of material possessions but rather seek His kingdom and righteousness (Matthew 6:32,33);
- Said it is almost impossible for a rich person to enter heaven (Matthew 19:21-24);
- Commands all his followers to lay down their lives in self-denial (Matthew 16:24) and told a wealthy would-be disciple to sell all his possessions (Matthew 19:21-24);
- Said there will always be the poor in the world, and these may either be Christians or non-Christians (Matthew 26:11);
- Pointed out He did not even have a bed to sleep on (Matthew 8:20).

True Riches

Therefore, never did our Saviour promise material possessions or inspire men to yearn for them. Always He sought to lead men to seek true riches. Furthermore, the apostles did not put emphasis on financial or material prosperity. See 2 Corinthians 6:10; 1 Timothy 6:10-11; Hebrews 13:5, Colossian 3:5, 1 Timothy 3:2-3, Colossians 3:2.

To think that God’s will for us is that we become materially prosperous is to lose the essence of the gospel, which is complete deliverance from sin. God has not promised us material prosperity, but He has assured us that He will supply our needs. Scripture is full of promises alluding to the fact that He will do that. (See Philippians 4:19, Matthew 6:33, Hebrews 13:5, Isaiah 41:17, Psalm 23:1, Psalm 37:25.) Therefore, instead of making the search for mammon the object of life, let us rather seek the development of Christian character and advancement of His cause. If He blesses us with material wealth, let us always
bear in mind that the wealth is not for self-glorification and indulgence, but service.

God has not promised us material prosperity, but He has assured us He will supply our needs.

WEALTH GIVEN IN TRUST

“Money is a trust from God. It is not ours to expend for the gratification of pride or ambition. In the hands of God’s children it is food for the hungry, and clothing for the naked. It is a defense to the oppressed, a means of health to the sick, a means of preaching the gospel to the poor. You could bring happiness to many hearts by using wisely the means that is now spent for show. Consider the life of Christ. Study His character, and be partakers with Him in His self-denial.”

Ministry of Healing, 287.

“Of all the gifts that heaven can bestow upon men, fellowship with Christ in His sufferings is the most weighty trust and the highest honor.”

Our Lord in Luke 4:18 clearly set forth His mission on earth, which was not make men materially prosperous, but rather to “... preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.”

Nowhere did He promise His followers worldly wealth, but rather eternal life when they accept Him into their lives. In light of this, let the following warning be borne in mind:

PROSPERITY DANGEROUS—AND POSSIBLY MISLEADING

“In the midst of prosperity lurks danger. Throughout the ages, riches and honor have ever been attended with peril to humility and spirituality. It is not the empty cup that we have difficulty in carrying; it is the cup full to the brim that must be carefully balanced. Affliction and adversity may cause sorrow, but it is prosperity that is most dangerous to spiritual life. Unless the human subject is in constant submission to the will of God, unless he is sanctified by the truth, prosperity will surely arouse the natural inclination to presumption.”

Prophets and Kings, 59.

The other error that is being echoed by these prosperity preachers is that a true follower of God should NEVER suffer misfortune or illness. Notice the words of Benny Hinn:

“Sickness does not belong to you. It has no part in the Body of Christ. Sickness does not belong to any of us. The Bible declares if the Word of God is in your life, there will be health, there will be healing--divine health and divine healing. There will be no sickness for the saint of God. If Moses could live such a healthy life, so can you.” Benny Hinn, Rise and Be Healed! (1991), page 14, quoted in Hank Hanegraaff’s Christianity in Crisis, 242.

CHRISTIANS HAVE TRIALS, TOO

In fact, nowhere does the Bible teach that Christians will never be sick or face misfortune. The Bible actually contains many examples of true followers of God facing trials and afflictions. A classic example would be the apostle Paul. In 2 Corinthians 11:24-28 he writes:

“Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beated with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeystings 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, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.”

Now if Paul was indeed a true Christian whose life was dedicated to God’s service, why would he go through all that suffering? Why would he talk about sufferings with joy if they are indeed not part of the Christian’s ordeal? See also 2 Corinthians 4:8-10, 16-18; James 1:2; 1 Peter 4:12,13; Philippians 3:8-10; Job 23:10; 1 Peter 5:10; Philippians 1:29; Hebrews 12:6-11.

Even the young evangelist Timothy suffered “frequent illnesses” (1 Timothy 5:23), but instead of telling Timothy to “claim a healing” or “rebuke the devil,” Paul actually instructed him to add unfermented wine to his diet (it was used as a form of medicine). In Miletus, Paul also left a man named Trophimus sick (2 Timothy 4:20). Therefore, though misfortune may befall a true Christian, God’s grace is sufficient to see him or her through. To say that true Christians should never face trials, want or misfortune would therefore render false the numerous texts which point to trials as part of the Christian’s experience. If our Saviour went through the same ordeal, what about His beloved children? See Philippians 1:29, 1 Peter 2:21, Hebrews 5:8, Romans 8:18, James 1:2.

FELLOWSHIP IN CHRIST’S SUFFERING THE HIGHEST HONOR

“God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led if they could see the end from the beginning and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as coworkers with Him. Not Enoch who was translated to heaven, not Elijah who ascended in a chariot of fire, was greater or more honored than John the Baptist who perished alone in the dungeon. ‘Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake.’”

Philippians 1:29. And of all the gifts that heaven can bestow upon men, fellowship with Christ in His sufferings is the most weighty trust and the highest honor.”

Desire of Ages, 224-5.

May God help us to wake up and cast off the shackles with which the evil one attempts to bind us. The time we are living in is too solemn to be trifled with in pursuit of material wealth which we will not take with us to heaven and does not add value to our spirituality. We have been called not to be business people but to be saints. Stand up. Refuse to listen to error or allow prosperity preachers to administer their poison to you. We cannot and should not allow such error take the place of vital and relevant truths that God has given us to be embraced and proclaimed to the world. We are almost home and we cannot allow such a diversion. Beware of being diverted, deluded and diluted!
God prepared two men for special roles in prophetic history.
The stories of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus reveal the power of divine love that drew these men of wealth and influence. The record of these unselfish men shows how willingly they gave all to honor, follow and obey the One whom they came to know as the sacrificial Lamb of God.

Joseph of Arimathea

Joseph of Arimathea is mentioned only once in each of the gospels; each acknowledges Joseph as a disciple of Jesus and defines his important role of begging from Pilate the body of Jesus. Matthew adds that Joseph was wealthy, and Mark, that he was a respected counselor—a lawyer. Those two facts were central to Joseph’s role in Jesus’ life and death.

Joseph, like much of Jerusalem, was present during the crucifixion. Joseph knew the disciples had no money to bury Jesus. In truth, they hadn’t even anticipated His death, despite His plain warnings of it. Notably, the only apostle at the cross was John. Still expecting Jesus to establish an earthly kingdom, the disciples were completely unprepared spiritually, emotionally, and even practically for what occurred. This example of deceptiveness of wrong understanding and the unpreparedness for crises it brings, even despite forewarnings, is a forceful reminder for us in these last days.

And yet, “notwithstanding the disciples had been disappointed in their hopes concerning Jesus, they yet loved Him and desired to give His body an honored burial, but knew not how to obtain it.” Early Writings, 181. Only faithful men of influence and wealth could accomplish that. Joseph of Arimathea was that man, the one God had prepared for this crisis. It was at this point that Joseph of Arimathea enters Scripture chronology by name. He stepped forward in the hour of need, heedless of all the political and social consequences of his act. To Pilate he immediately headed.

Time Constraints and Possible Opposition

Jesus died around 3 pm; the Sabbath would begin around 6:30 pm at that time in Jerusalem, so there was some urgency to Joseph’s mission to Pilate. He had to go to Pilate, secure an audience with him, state his case and get permission for the body, return, remove the body from the cross, carry it to the tomb, wash it tenderly and wrap it with spices and linen—all before sunset.

Also, he had to make his request of Pilate before the other Jewish leaders would be certain to arrive to make their own request. It was against the law of Moses that bodies of impaled criminals remain displayed after sundown, and especially this sundown, because it was a high Sabbath of Passover. We know from John 19:31 that the other Jewish leaders also appeared before Pilate after Jesus’ death to request that the bodies not remain on the crosses. Had they preceded Joseph or been present to learn of Joseph’s plan, they might have persuaded Pilate against it. After all, it was they who had insisted Jesus be positioned between the two criminals, a public message that He was the worst of the dying criminals. They certainly would object to His being buried in an honorable manner. Therefore, Joseph understandably felt considerable urgency in his mission due to the imminent sunset and the hatred of the Jews toward his Master.

Joseph stepped forward in the hour of need, heedless of all the political and social consequences of his act.

Fortunately, there was only one moment of delay. Pilate had not believed Jesus had died so soon (Mark 15:44), but a cen- turion who was present was able to confirm the fact. Joseph’s haste was rewarded, as Pilate granted him Jesus’ body.

Scripture tells us Joseph asked boldly for Jesus’ body. One might wonder how he could be considered “bold” while he was acting “secretly” and “for fear of the Jews.” John 19:38. However, although Joseph went secretly to beseech Pilate “for fear of the Jews,” his was not fear for his own safety but wisdom born of knowing that the Jews’ hatred was so great they might have prevented Jesus having an honored resting place. Joseph’s burden was that Christ’s body would be carefully dealt with. Therefore, the plan to ask for His body and bury Him in his own tomb had to be kept quiet until it was accomplished.

Matthew and Luke said he “begged” for Jesus’ body; Mark said he “craved” it. Again we see his urgency; delay would be serious. Pilate may have been incredulous—possibly even resistant—when he heard such a request from a Jewish leader, whom he generally despised for their recent manipulation of him during Jesus’ hearing. He also had no way of knowing Joseph and Nicodemus had been excluded from the shameful meetings at which Jesus had been condemned. But perhaps Pilate knew Joseph as Luke describes him: a “good man, and a just.” Certainly Pilate had judged Jesus favorably: “I find in him no fault at all.” Perhaps he was cooperative on that account. Whatever the reasoning of Pilate, Joseph prevailed with him. The scheming yet fearful Jewish leaders had to content themselves with petitioning Pilate on Passover Sabbath for a three-day guard at the tomb (Mat 27:62).

Nicodemus

Unlike Joseph, Nicodemus is mentioned in only three different places, all in the gospel of John. Prior to the cross, when the soldiers returned to the Pharisees without having carried out their instructions to arrest Jesus, we read that those incensed leaders didn’t even ask them what Jesus had said that so affected them. John 7:45-53. They weren’t interested in anything but what would aid their goal to silence Jesus. In their two questions to the soldiers, “Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed on Him?” they placed the majority opinions of influential and evil men above the clear demands of the law.

Nicodemus dared not remain silent at this juncture, for although he was not yet fully convinced Jesus was the Messiah, the law prohibited the condemnation of an innocent man, and he knew Jesus to be innocent of their charges. “The Holy Spirit had been striving with Nicodemus during [his night-time conversation with Jesus], and Nicodemus received the lesson from Christ, and carried it with him. He searched the Scriptures in a new way, not for the discussion of a theory, but in order to receive life for the soul. For a time Nicodemus did not publicly acknowledge Christ, but he watched His life, and pondered His teachings. In the Sanhedrin council he re-
peatedly thwarted the schemes of the priests to destroy Him. . .” Conflict and Courage, 291-3.

Spirit of Prophecy tells us, “Again the priests and rulers proceeded to lay plans for arresting Jesus. It was urged that if He were longer left at liberty, He would draw the people away from the established leaders, and the only safe course was to silence Him without delay. In the full tide of their discussion, they were suddenly checked. Nicodemos questioned, ‘Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?’ [John 7:51] Silence fell on the assembly. The words of Nicodemos came home to their consciences. They could not condemn a man unheard. But it was not for this reason alone that the haughty rulers remained silent, gazing at him who had dared to speak in favor of justice. They were startled and chagrined that one of their own number had been so far impressed by the character of Jesus as to speak a word in His defense. Recovering from their astonishment, they addressed Nicodemos with cutting sarcasm, ‘Art thou also of Galilee? Search and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.’

“Yet the protest resulted in staying the proceedings of the council. The rulers were unable to carry out their purpose and condemn Jesus without a hearing. Defeated for the time, ‘every man went unto his own house. Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives.” Desire of Ages, 460, italics supplied.

“...By remaining in the Sanhedrin, Joseph and Nicodemos had hoped to protect Jesus by their insistence in those councils that the law be followed.”

The “priests and rulers” represent those ecclesiastical and civil leaders who will speak contrary to the principles of the United States’ Constitution and against Sabbath keepers in the time of trouble. When the image to the beast is formed, we will walk the path our Master walked before us. For a while honorable men, like Joseph and Nicodemos before them, will successfully insist on adherence to just laws and/or principles. That will be precious time for the proclamation of the Loud Cry. But eventually their influence will be circumvented to accomplish destructive ends. Reasons without foundation in justice or law will be put forth and accepted that one group should die for the sake and survival of the nations.

Secret Disciples

Ellen White wrote, “Neither Joseph nor Nicodemos had openly accepted the Saviour while He was living. They knew that such a step would exclude them from the Sanhedrin. You see, in desperation the Jews had finally passed an edict that any man who professed faith in Jesus should be cast out of the synagogue. The Jewish leaders couldn’t kick them out, because they hadn’t openly declared for Jesus. And by remaining in the Sanhedrin, Joseph and Nicodemos had hoped to protect Jesus by their insistence in those councils that the law be followed. For a time they had seemed to succeed; but the wily priests, seeing their favor to Christ, had thwarted their plans by simply not calling them to that hastily-called night-time meeting. In their absence Jesus had been condemned and delivered to be crucified. There were present at the council other influential men who believed on Jesus, but their influence prevailed nothing against that of the malignant Pharis-sees.” Ibid., 538. Their names are not honored in Scripture, and from this we know that Nicodemos and Joseph were Jesus’ two most capable and outspoken defenders in the Sanhedrin, for their names we know. The other believers in Jesus had not been excluded and their words were powerless to stop the tide of evil, nor did they step forward for Jesus’ burial.

Jesus’ Burial

But “now that Jesus was dead, they no longer concealed their attachment to Him. While the disciples feared to show themselves openly as His followers, Joseph and Nicodemos came boldly to their aid. . .” Conflict and Courage, 327.

In John 19 we see that Nicodemos worked with Joseph to prepare Jesus for burial. Time was of the essence, so while Joseph was begging Pilate, Nicodemos was gathering burial spices and linen cloth. Only John, of Jesus’ closest followers, was at the cross, and being without influence or money, he stayed with the body, along with some women. Although Matthew and Luke credit only Joseph for taking Jesus’ body from the cross and completing all the burial necessities, he would not have had time to do all that was necessary. Nor would he have been able to lower or transport Jesus’ limp body with care and honor by himself. Nor would the privilege of preparing Jesus for burial have been selfishly withheld from appropriate others present. Thus we read in John 19:39-42 of Nicodemos’ participation, and that “they” took the body from the cross, and “they” wound it in linen.

Up to this point, so hidden was their legal defense of Jesus that Spirit of Prophecy tells us that “the women of Galilee had remained with the disciple John to see what disposition would be made of the body of Jesus, which was very precious to them. . .” The women were astonished to see Joseph and Nicodemos, both honored and wealthy councilors, as anxious and interested as themselves for the proper disposal of the body of Jesus.” Spirit of Prophecy, Vol. 3, 174-5 (1878).
“In the normal course of events Jesus, as a traitor to Rome, would have been given a dishonorable burial in a field reserved for the basest of criminals.” 5BC 551. In the sure providence of God, though, the wealthy Joseph owned a new sepulchre among those of other wealthy men, which he readily relinquished for the Son of God, thus fulfilling the prophecy that he was laid to rest “with the rich in his death.” Isa 53:9.

“The disciples had been afraid to show themselves openly as Christ’s followers, but Nicodemus and Joseph had come boldly to their aid.”

Although Jesus was buried expeditiously without the customary recognition accorded the respected dead (“he made his grave with the wicked…” Isa 53:9), we’re assured “the most honored in all Jerusalem could not have been shown more respect in death.” Story of Redemption, 227. We’re told “the women who had been Christ’s humble followers while He lived, would not leave Him until they saw Him laid in the tomb and a stone of great weight placed before the door, lest his enemies should seek to obtain His body” (Early Writings,181), but they need not have worried. Invisible angels sent from heaven guarded that tomb, as well as Roman guards requested by the worried Jewish leaders.

Acts of the Apostles, page 104, reveals that “with Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus had borne the expense of the burial of Jesus. The disciples had been afraid to show themselves openly as Christ’s followers, but Nicodemus and Joseph had come boldly to their aid. The help of these rich and honored men was greatly needed in that hour of darkness. They had been able to do for their dead Master what it would have been impossible for the poor disciples to do; and their wealth and influence had protected them, in a great measure, from the malice of the priests and rulers.”

Joseph’s Story Ends

Thus ends the Biblical chronicle of wealthy counselor Joseph of Arimathea. Along with Nicodemus, God had prepared him to enable Jesus’ ministry to continue longer than the jealous Jewish leaders would have permitted-- indeed for the full 3½ years of prophecy-- and to solve the problem of a timely and honored burial for His Son. Joseph’s wisely-concealed discipleship while Jesus lived, and his stepping forward openly afterward to obtain Jesus’ body, regardless of consequences, reflect a discernment and a courage fueled by devotion that serve as examples to us.

Nicodemus’s Conversion Bore Fruit

Although we know no more about Joseph of Arimathea after the burial, we are told more about Nicodemus. John 3:21 says, “But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.” That is true of Nicodemus.

“On that Sabbath, when Christ lay in the grave, Nicodemus had opportunity for reflection. A clearer light now illuminat- ed his mind, and the words which Jesus had spoken to him were no longer mysterious. He felt that he had lost much by not connecting himself with the Saviour during His life. Now he recalled the events of Calvary. The prayer of Christ for His murderers and His answer to the petition of the dying thief spoke to the heart of the learned councilor. Again he looked upon the Saviour in His agony; again he heard that last cry, ‘It is finished,’ spoken like the words of a conqueror. Again he beheld the reeling earth, the darkened heavens, the rent veil, the shivered rocks, and his faith was forever established.

“The very event that destroyed the hopes of the disciples convinced Joseph and Nicodemus of the divinity of Jesus. Their fears were overcome by the courage of a firm and un- wavering faith.” Conflict and Courage, 327.

“After the Lord’s ascension, when the disciples were scattered by persecution, Nicodemus came boldly to the front. He employed his wealth in sustaining the infant church that the Jews had expected to be blotted out at the death of Christ. In the time of peril he who had been so cautious and question- ing was firm as a rock, encouraging the faith of the disciples, and furnishing means to carry forward the work of the gospel. He was scorned and persecuted by those who had paid him reverence in other days. He became poor in this world’s goods; yet he faltered not in the faith which had its beginning in that night conference with Jesus.” Ibid., 293.

With the examples of Jesus and Nicodemus before us, may we “endure our own crosses and despise any shame.” May we step forward in this portentous time, “choosing the right because it is right and leaving the consequences with God” (GC 460), telling fellow souls of the only safe harbor in the coming storm.

True Conversion

The story of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus is one of the working of the Holy Spirit for that time and for eternity. It is a story of true conversion. Ellen White wrote, “... While the work of the Spirit is silent and imperceptible, its effects are manifest. If the heart has been renewed by the Spirit of God, the life will bear witness to the fact. ...”

“Who has the heart? With whom are our thoughts? Of whom do we love to converse? Who has our warmest affections and our best energies? If we are Christ’s, our thoughts are with Him, and our sweetest thoughts are of Him. All we have and are is consecrated to Him. We long to bear His image, breathe His spirit, do His will, and please Him in all things.” Steps to Christ, 57-8.

“When, as erring, sinful beings, we come to Christ and become partakers of His pardoning grace, love springs up in the heart. Every burden is light, for the yoke that Christ imposes is easy. Duty becomes a delight, and sacrifice a pleasure. The path that before seemed shrouded in darkness, becomes bright with beams from the Sun of Righteousness.” Ibid., 59.

So it was for Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. So it may be for us.

Jean Handwerk is a former teacher who writes from Delaware.
The “glorious land” that Rome “enters” to overthrow is God’s church.

Dan. 11:41 “He shall enter also into the glorious land,776 and many countries shall be overthrown;643 but these shall escape out of his hand,4680, 3027 even Edom,123 and Moab,4124 and the chief of the children of Ammon.”5983

11:41 . . . into THE GLORIOUS LAND . . .

In our last issue we discovered the “glorious land” was a term designated for the church. With all the different terms used to designate God’s church, why did heaven use the term “glorious” to define His last day church in the book of Daniel? We suggested this was brisling with meaning. Turning to a chapter in Christ Object Lessons entitled “The Lord’s Vineyard,” His church; Ellen White clarifies the matter for us:

Representing the Character of God
“The parable of the vineyard applies not alone to the Jewish nation. It has a lesson for us. The church in this generation has been endowed by God with great privileges and blessings, and He expects corresponding returns. . . . The husbandman chooses a piece of land from the wilderness; he fences, clears, and tills it, and plants it with choice vines, expecting a rich harvest. This plot of ground, in its superiority to the uncultivated waste, he expects to do him honor by showing the results of his care and toil in its cultivation. So God had chosen a people from the world to be trained and educated by Christ. The prophet says, ‘The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant.’ Isa. 5:7. [This piece of land is the same as in Daniel 8:9, the “pleasant land”] Upon this people God had bestowed great privileges, blessing them richly from His abundant goodness. He looked for them to honor Him by yielding fruit. They were to reveal the principles of His kingdom. In the midst of a fallen, wicked world they were to represent the character of God. As the Lord’s vineyard they were to produce fruit altogether different from that of the heathen nations. . . .

“The great work of life is character building . . .”
“It was the privilege of the Jewish nation to represent the character of God as it had been revealed to Moses. In answer to the prayer of Moses, ‘Show me Thy glory,’ the Lord promised, ‘I will make all My goodness pass before thee. Ex. 33:18, 19. ‘And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.’ Ex. 34:6, 7. This was the fruit that God desired from His people. In the purity of their characters, in the holiness of their lives, in their mercy and loving-kindness and compassion, they were to show that ‘the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.’ Ps. 19:7.

Israel’s Duty and Privilege
“Through the Jewish nation it was God’s purpose to impart rich blessings to all peoples. Through Israel the way was to be prepared for the diffusion of His light to the whole world. The nations of the world, through following corrupt practices, had lost the knowledge of God. Yet in His mercy God did not blot them out of existence. He purposed to give them opportunity for becoming acquainted with Him through His church. He designed that the principles revealed through His people should be the means of restoring the moral image of God in man. . . . And as the tower in the vineyard, God placed in the midst of the land His holy temple. . . . God desired to make of His people Israel a praise and a glory. Every spiritual advantage was given them. God withheld from them nothing favorable to the formation of character that would make them representa-
tives of Himself. Their obedience to the law of God would make them marvels of prosperity before the nations of the world. . . The glory of God, His majesty and power, were to be revealed in all their prosperity. They were to be a kingdom of priests and princes. God furnished them with every facility for becoming the greatest nation on the earth. . . . the people were to reflect the attributes of His character.

Robbing Men and God

"Even the heathen would recognize the superiority of those who served and worshiped the living God. . . . The children of Israel were to occupy all the territory which God appointed them [His church]. Those nations that rejected the worship and service of the true God were to be dispossessed. But it was God’s purpose that by the revelation of His character through Israel men should be drawn unto Him. . . . He desires that the families below shall be a symbol of the great family above. . . . But Israel did not fulfill God’s purpose. . . . All their advantages were appropriated for their own glorification. . . . They robbed God of the service He required of them, and they robbed their fellow men of religious guidance and a holy example. . . . Like the inhabitants of the antediluvian world, they followed out every imagination of their evil hearts. Thus they made sacred things appear a farce, saying, “The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these” (Jer. 7:4), while at the same time they were misrepresenting God’s character, dishonoring His name, and polluting His sanctuary. . . . Thus the Gentile world was given occasion to misinterpret the character of God and the laws of His kingdom. . . .

idea that they were the favorites of heaven, and that they were always to be exalted as the church of God. . . . As a people the Jews had failed of fulfilling God’s purpose, and the vineyard was taken from them. The privileges they had abused, the work they had slighted, was entrusted to others. . . ."

Obedience to Right Principles Glorifies God

Ellen White now describes the church of today: “In the lives of God’s people the truths of His word are to reveal their glory and excellence. Through His people Christ is to manifest His character and the principles of His kingdom. . . . The Lord desires through His people to answer Satan’s charges by showing the results of obedience to right principles. These principles are to be manifest in the individual Christian, in the family, in the church, and in every institution established for God’s service. . . . Not all the beauty of art can bear comparison with the beauty of temper and character to be revealed in those who are Christ’s representatives. . . . We are to praise God by tangible service, by doing all in our power to advance the glory of His name. God imparts His gifts to us that we also may give, and thus make known His character to the world. . . . God claims the whole earth as His vineyard. Though now in the hands of the usurper, it belongs to God. . . .

“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Thess. 5:23.

“In Egypt their taste had become perverted. God designed to restore their appetite to a pure, healthy state, in order that they might enjoy the simple fruits that were given to Adam and Eve in Eden. He was about to establish them in a second Eden, a goodly land, where they might enjoy the fruits and grains that He would provide for them. He purposed to remove the feverish diet upon which they had subsisted in Egypt; for He wished them to be in perfect health and soundness
when they entered the **goodly land** to which He was leading them, so that the surrounding heathen nations might be constrained to glorify the God of Israel, the God who had done so wonderful a work for His people. Unless the people who acknowledged Him as the God of heaven were in perfect soundness of health, *His name could not be glorified.*" 1SDABC 1102.

---

**Character Development Essential Now**

In Ps. 96:3 we are commissioned to “Declare His glory [character] among the nations.” Daniel presents the character for those who would be endowed with the Holy Spirit when the church is to meet her enemies in the final onslaught with the forces of evil just before she is to enter the promised land. The condition is summarized here: “The great work of life is character building...” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 596.

Here, then, lies the most important aspect of Daniel 11 and why Satan would introduce a counterfeit of so great a magnitude. In Daniel 1 we have the history of the Jews being taken captive, but we were not specifically told why in that chapter. That reason is addressed in Inspiration: “By their spirit and works the children of Israel *misrepresented the righteousness of God’s character,* and the Lord allowed the Babylonians to take them captive. He left his people to their ways; and in the calamities that befell them the innocent suffered with the guilty.” *Youth Instructor*, May 14, 1903.

It was all because of a misrepresentation of God’s character to the surrounding nations. And to us the message is made plain: “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” 1 Cor. 10:11. And we all know that “the conditions and promises are the same in the Old Testament as they are in the New. The favor of God is promised only to those who obey Him.” *Signs of the Times*, January 6, 1888.

Let us take heed, brothers and sisters, for we have an admonition that no one can misunderstand. John complements Daniel in Revelation 14:1: “And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his *Father’s name written in their foreheads.*” A name denotes character, and having the Father’s name written in one’s forehead denotes having His glorious character exemplified in one’s life. In Revelation 14 we have the clearest instruction for those who will act a part in the proclamation of the last warning messages to the world, and the condition for those who will be able to stand when Michael Himself will stand up, Daniel 12:1. Many are now hidden, but nevertheless His glorious church will arise and their light will shine forth: “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.” “For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.” Isa. 60:1-2.

---

**The Glorious Role of the End-Time Church**

Ellen White describes this glorious ascent of the church in the following excerpts:

“Christ’s true followers are kind, tender, pitiful. They will realize the meaning of the work of the angel of Revelation 18, who is to lighten the whole earth with his glory, while he cries with a loud voice, ‘Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen.’ Many will heed this call. . . . When the earth is lighted with the glory of the angel of Revelation 18, the religious elements, good and evil, will awake from slumber, and the armies of the living God will take the field.” 19 *Manuscript Re-

lease*, 159-60.

“During the loud cry, the church, aided by the providential interpositions of her exalted Lord, will diffuse the knowledge of salvation so abundantly that light will be communicated to every city and town. The earth will be filled with the knowledge of salvation. So abundantly will the renewing Spirit of God have crowned with success the intensely active agencies, that the light of present truth will be seen flashing everywhere.” *Review and Herald*, Oct. 13, 1904.

“The message of Christ’s righteousness is to sound from one end of the earth to the other to prepare the way of the Lord. This is the glory of God, which closes the work of the third angel.” *Testimonies*, Vol. 6, 19.

“When the Lord was about to manifest to them his great power and goodness, to make his name glorious in the earth, and exalt his people as a nation favored and honored of Heaven, they became discouraged. They knew that whenever they had trusted in God he had mightily wrought for them. Yet their unbelief strengthened into rebellion; their own perverse wills obstructed the way, making walls before them higher than had been built by their enemies.

“The history of the children of Israel is written as a warning to us, ‘upon whom the ends of the world are come.’ We are standing, as it were, upon the very borders of the *heavenly Canaan*. We may, if we will, look over on the other side, and behold the attractions of the *goodly land*. If we have faith in the promises of God, we shall show in conversation and in deportment that we are not living for this world, but are making it our first business to prepare for that *holy land*.

“The dangers and difficulties before us are increasing as we near the *heavenly rest*.” Satan is filled with deadly hatred against all who are seeking to gain the *land* which was once his *home*. His envy has lost none of its bitterness since he was excluded from the brightness and *glory* of Heaven. Before his fall an enemy to Christ, seeking to rob him of his honor and *glory*, he is no less his enemy now. He has determined to take the world captive. He sees that his time is short, that a mightier than he will soon take away his power, and he will make one last mighty effort against *Christ and his church*.” *Review
men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinking cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.” 1 Cor 13:1-3.

It was this strong motivating principal of supreme love for God that prepared Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego not to bow to the king’s image, and enabled them to accept without hesitation the fiery trial resulting from their refusal. On a daily basis they had faithfully lived the principles of righteousness in truth, thus sealing their fate in that hour of temptation.

“Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” How did that heathen king know what the Son of God was like? The Hebrew captives filling positions of trust in Babylon had in life and character represented before him the truth. When asked for a reason of their faith, they had given it without hesitation. Plainly and simply they had presented the principles of righteousness, thus teaching those around them of the God whom they worshiped. They had told of Christ, the Redeemer to come; and in the form of the fourth in the midst of the fire the king recognized the Son of God.” Prophets and Kings, 509.

So it is that in the soon-coming crisis when the image to the beast is to be set up, the only ones who “shall escape out of his hand” will be those who, in life and character, have glorified their Redeemer in a life of loving, willing obedience.

The “Ornament” Given God’s Church

The last term mentioned in the margins of Daniel 11:16 and 41 was the “land of ornament.” What was the ornament that God wanted to extend to the borders of Palestine and beyond? “She [Wisdom] shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.” Prov. 4:9.

“I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.” Isa. 61:10.

And what did John say is the covering or “ornament” of salvation for the born-again Christian? “And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.” Revelation 19:8.

The ornament of salvation or glory that is to shine and sound from one end of the earth to the other in the soon coming crisis is none other than Christ and His righteousness, exhibited through the persons and characters of His witnesses, His Church.

Paul “encouraged the believers to look forward to the time when Christ, who ‘loved the church, and gave Himself for it,’ would ‘present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing’—a church ‘holy and without blemish.’ Ephesians 5:25, 27.” Acts of the Apostles, 470.

Having allowed the scriptures and Spirit of Prophecy to interpret themselves, it is transparently clear that when Rome invades into the “glorious land,” she is invading the realm of the Church. In our next issue we will show when, where and how Rome is to accomplish this apparent overthrow.

To be continued.
THE STORY OF JOSEPH: JOSEPH IN EGYPT

The Ishmaelites, who bought Joseph, took him to Egypt. There they sold him to Potiphar, who was a very rich man, and captain of the king’s guard.

The Lord blessed Joseph, and Potiphar soon saw that whatever he did prospered. So he made him steward of all that he had.

But God had a higher place for Joseph, and he must reach it through affliction. In all his troubles it was the Lord who was giving Joseph just the training he needed to fit him for the great work before him.

While living in the house of Potiphar, Joseph met the most learned men of Egypt, and from them gained knowledge that helped to fit him to rule in the land when he was called to do so.

Potiphar’s wife was a wicked woman, and told a falsehood about Joseph. Then Potiphar had Joseph cast into prison, where he remained for several years.

But even in prison “the Lord was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.”

The jailor soon saw that Joseph could be trusted, so he gave him charge of the prison and all the prisoners.

Now the king’s chief butler and chief baker had displeased him and he cast them into the prison where Joseph was. And they were both placed under his special care.

One morning, when Joseph came to see these men, he found them looking very sad. And he asked them, “Wherefore look ye so sadly to-day?”

And they answered him, “We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it.”

Joseph said, “Do not interpretations belong to God?” Then he asked them to tell their dreams to him.

Then the chief butler said that in his dream, a grape vine with three branches was before him. And the vine bore fruit, and he took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh’s cup for him to drink.

The Lord gave to Joseph the meaning of the dream; so he told the chief butler that the three branches in his dream were three days, and that in three days king Pharaoh would take him out of prison, and restore him to his position as chief butler.

Joseph told the butler the story of his own wrongs. He asked the butler to tell his story to the king, and to do all he could to get him out of prison.

But the butler was like many other people who forget those who have been their friends in trouble. When he came out of prison, he forgot all about Joseph.

When the chief baker saw that the dream of the chief butler was good, he was encouraged to tell his dream also.

He dreamed that he had three white baskets on his head, one above the other. In the top basket were all kinds of baked food for the king. And the birds came and ate the food from the top basket.

Joseph told him that the three baskets were three days, and that in three days Pharaoh would take him from prison, and hang him on a tree, and the birds would eat his flesh.

Both of these dreams came true according to the interpretation that Joseph had given.

Although the chief butler forgot about Joseph as soon as he was taken out of prison, the Lord did not forget him, for He had a great work for him to do.

Heather Olson, R.N., C.H.

Health Gem

Part 1

The Statin Scam Marches On

Byron J. Richards, CCN
December 11, 2007

Considering that tens of millions of Americans now take statins to lower cholesterol, the following headline was conspicuously absent from the major media this month: “Statins Found To Turn On Gene That Causes Muscle Damage.” It’s now a fact of science; a new study shows that taking statins destroys your muscle to a greater or lesser degree. And let’s not forget that the heart is a muscle.

Place this study juxtaposed to another rather interesting recent finding: the more fit you are the longer you will live – and the two just don’t add up. How can you destroy muscle and be more fit? You can’t. Sure, you can drug your cholesterol number lower, but will you be healthier, fit, and live longer?

In the new study researchers found that statins activate a gene signal in muscles called atrogen-1. When this gene activates, it targets key muscle proteins for destruction. The activation of this gene drives the process of muscle atrophy and muscle wasting. It is induced in cardiac muscle in failing hearts. Why on earth would any person want this gene activated by a drug?

The researchers tested statin-taking humans who were complaining of severe muscle pain. Muscle biopsy found that the atrogen-1 gene was activated, compared to people with severe muscle pain not on statins and controls. They went on to show through various experiments that statins activate the gene. This is extremely bad news for any person taking a statin.

Right now doctors ignore the majority of muscle aches and pains caused by statins, and in their mind only consider the problem serious when it is debilitating (rhabdomyolysis), which apparently happens less than 1% of the time.
However, at least 5% - 7% of statin users experience significant muscle problems. The number is greater than 10% if a person is taking the now commonly prescribed higher doses. And if a person is trying to be fit and exercise, the number jumps to 25%. These numbers are clearly on the low end as it has now been shown that doctors are ignoring their patients, not reporting the side effects of statins to the FDA, and telling them the side effects they are experiencing are not from the drug!

This new science shows that as soon as the atrogen-1 gene is activated by statins, it starts destroying muscle. This means that even mild aches or pains while taking a statin are a sign that muscle is being destroyed, an entirely new and sobering perspective on the side effects of statins. Statins directly work against being physically fit, as is evidenced by the difficulty statin users have exercising without troubling symptoms.

Cardiomyopathy (serious weakening of the heart muscle) is a known adverse and often not reported side effect of statin therapy, previously thought to be the result of a statin-induced coenzyme Q10 deficiency. It is likely that the combination of Q10 deficiency with atrogen-1 activation is behind this problem.

Statins – Perversion of Science for Profit

The statin industry is a 20-billion-a-year propaganda machine, producing more yearly revenues from one class of drug than all professional U.S. sports combined. Just like any hot-selling drug on the market, negative studies are discouraged, to say the least. They are either thrown in the trash can when they don’t work out or critical researchers are often blackmailed, meaning if they publish something negative they will never again get research money from the industry. These well known tactics discourage basic research on drug-related toxicity problems.

When statistics are honestly looked at in the case of using statins for many years to prevent a first heart attack, for every life that is saved (1% over 10 years’ use), statins cause an equal number of adverse deaths due to accidents, infection, suicide, and cancer (1% over 10 years’ use). This means that as a general public health measure, which is now the lion’s share of current statin use, they are an ineffectual waste of money. It has now been proven that middle-age men would be better off taking an aspirin a day for a tiny fraction of the cost (of course, there are many supplement options). Statin-taking for a number of years does not reduce mortality rate. None of these facts faze the statin industry, which keeps churning out posi-
“Current clinical evidence does not demonstrate that titrating lipid therapy to achieve low LDL cholesterol levels is beneficial or safe.”

tive spin and moving right along, regardless of the damage being done and the money wasted.

The fraud of statins inside one’s body centers on the regulation of an enzyme known as HMG CoA reductase. Statins work by reducing the function of this enzyme. The higher the dose, the more the enzyme is reduced and the less cholesterol is made. It is well known that individuals with naturally lower cholesterol (LDL at 130, total less than 200) in their 40s and 50s have fewer cardiovascular problems as they grow older. However, taking a statin to reduce cholesterol to these levels or even lower is not the same thing as natural healthy function.

In healthy individuals with lower cholesterol the HMG CoA reductase enzyme is active at a high level as part of health. It is part of a complex communication system within the body that regulates energy, immunity, fat metabolism, leptin, cellular thyroid hormone activity, liver-related synthesis, stress tolerance, adrenal function, sex hormone synthesis, and brain function. This system is core to survival! The high activity of this enzyme is a type of metabolic fitness, similar to the idea of muscle fitness. The enzyme is very active in a healthy state for a variety of important and vital needs.

Drugging this enzyme is similar to making a person get around in a wheelchair, whether he or she needs one or not. If you put a person’s metabolism in a statin-induced straitjacket, then maybe Humpty Dumpty won’t fall off the wall so easily. That may be a useful concept for someone in brittle cardiovascular health, but it has little to do with the average person concerned about general cardiovascular well being and maintaining a healthy level of fitness and vitality.

Doctors don’t use statins to try and reduce HMG CoA activity a little bit, with the idea of approximating some type of healthy function of the enzyme (the lowest and least toxic dose possible to provide improvement). Doctors actually could care less what healthy function of the enzyme actually is. Rather, the new “gold standard of medical care” is to batter the enzyme into a state of submission so that cholesterol levels are abnormally low. Any apparent benefits of a statin, many of which are falsely touted, is accomplished by poisoning some aspect of health. How long can such a charade be allowed to continue on millions of unsuspecting Americans? Why won’t the FDA demand drug companies include a correct risk profile as part of the labeling? As normal, the FDA continues to sleep on duty.

Double the Dose – Rake in the Billions

In 2004 the government-funded National Cholesterol Education Program selected a panel of nine “experts” to review statin drug use and make recommendations as to guidelines doctors should follow to reduce cardiovascular disease. They recommended that individuals at high cardiovascular disease risk attain LDL levels < 100 mg/dL and individuals at very high cardiovascular risk attain LDL levels < 70 mg/dL (levels that are abnormal, levels which are seldom ever this low in healthy people with no cardiovascular disease). Their advice was published in the marketing journal of the American Heart Association. This “scientific journal” failed to disclose that six of the nine authors had direct financial ties to the makers of statin drugs.

Today, in doctors’ offices around the country, these abnormal cholesterol levels are being pushed on anyone over the age of 40, requiring a double or triple dose of statins or combination with some other toxic drug (like fibrates) to achieve these completely unnatural and unhealthy levels of cholesterol. In hindsight we can see that these recommendations boosted yearly statin sales by seven billion dollars. A class-action lawsuit has already been filed against Pfizer for illegal Lipitor promotion. Many others are sure to follow as this fraud becomes better understood by those who are injured and those footing the bill.

Further highlighting this fraud is a study appearing in the October 3, 2006, issue of the Annals of Internal Medicine. Researchers reviewed all studies relating to cholesterol-lowering benefits of statin drugs, with a focus on the new abnormally low cholesterol levels promoted by the American Heart Association. Their conclusion: “Current clinical evidence does not demonstrate that titrating lipid therapy to achieve proposed low LDL cholesterol levels is beneficial or safe.” That is a rather shocking conclusion coming more than two years after the fact. The finding did not faze the statin marketing machine or the prescribing habits of any physician.

To be continued…

Byron J. Richards is a board-certified clinical nutritionist and author of Fight for Your Health and The Leptin Diet. He is the founder and director of Wellness Resources, Inc., at www.wellness-resources.com.

Copyright © 2007 Wellness Resources, Inc. All Rights Reserved.
**Arouse Fear to Get Votes**

“...Half a century of research has shown that fear is one of the most politically powerful emotions a candidate can tap.... Candidates who exploit voters’ fears and anxieties grab attention in a way that others appeals, such as those to experience, competence, vision or even anger... do not.... ‘The skillful use of fear is unmatched in leading to enthusiasm for one candidate and causing voters to turn away from another.’

But ‘...Politicians who speak only to the fear and anxiety part without transitioning to something more optimistic don’t win....’ Just as fear without hope is seldom a winning strategy, so failing to remind voters of their fears can leave even the most optimistic candidate on the short end of the ballot count....”


**End-time perspective:** “The Lord would have His people bury political questions. On these themes silence is eloquence. Christ calls upon His followers to come into unity on the pure gospel principles which are plainly revealed in the word of God. We cannot with safety vote for political parties; for we do not know whom we are voting for. We cannot with safety take part in any political schemes.” FE 475.

**Returning to Tradition**

“...There is a growing appetite for something more than ‘worship that is a glorified Bible class in some ways.’

“Something curious is happening in the wide world of faith, something that defies easy explanation or quantification.... It has to do more with how people practice their religion than with what they believe, though people caught up in this change often find that their beliefs are influenced, if not subtly altered, by the changes in their practice.

“Put simply, [it is] a return to tradition and orthodoxy, to past practices, observances, and customary ways of worshiping....”

This renewed interest in tradition is occurring not only in the “so-called emergent communities,” but also in Judaism and Orthodox denominations.


**End-time perspective:** “[Paul] showed that religion does not consist in rites and ceremonials, creeds and theories.... [He] taught that it is a practical, saving energy, a principle wholly from God, a personal experience of God’s renewing power upon the soul.” *Sketches from Life of Paul*, 276.

**Church Teachings to Determine Votes, Say Bishops**

“Roman Catholic voters and lawmakers must heed church teaching on issues ranging from racism to abortion or risk their eternal salvation, U.S. bishops said Wednesday.

“The bishops didn’t recommend specific policies or candidates in the 2008 election.... but they warned Catholics that their votes for politicians and laws affect more than just civic life,” saying their votes “may affect the individual’s salvation.” The bishops said abortion must always be opposed.

“They have offered similar guidance to Catholics before every presidential race since 1976.... Catholics make up one-quarter of the electorate nationwide, but do not vote as a bloc, and often do not follow the bishops’ political guidance.” However, only for reasons of “truly grave moral reasons, not to advance narrow interests or partisan preferences....” (Contrib. by Dennis Farley.) *Lewiston, ME, Sun Journal*, Nov. 15, 2007.

**End-time perspective:** “There is no more remarkable movement of the present day, and no one fraught with more vital consequences to men and nations, than the rapidly reviving influence of the papacy in national affairs. The papacy is fast moving into the place of the greatest influence of any earthly organization.” GC88, 686.

**Worst Ever”—Again**

“A December Midwest ice storm was the “worst ever in Oklahoma,” with effects felt in four neighboring states. [About one week earlier, flooding in the Northeast was termed either the “worst” or “second-worst” on record.] Sean Murphy, Asso. Press, Dec. 12, 2007.

**End-time perspective:** During a summer of severe weather, if there was an appearance of a thunderstorm, “some parents sent their children to our house, inviting one of the family to visit them... until the storm was over. The children innocently told the whole story: ‘for ma says lightning will not strike a house where the advent people are.’” *Spiritual Gifts, Vol. 2*, 82.

**Mandatory Flu Shots for Kids**

New Jersey has become the first state...
to require vaccinations for schoolchildren. Preschoolers must get flu and pneumonia shots; sixth graders, vaccines against meningitis and whooping cough (booster). Four more vaccines are recommended by government and medical organizations. NJ grants exemptions on religious or medical grounds. Linda Johnson, Asso. Press, Dec. 15, 2007.

End-time perspective: “So closely is health related to our happiness that we cannot have the latter without the former. A practical knowledge of the science of human life is necessary in order to glorify God in our bodies. It is therefore of the highest importance, that among the studies selected for childhood, physiology should occupy the first place. How few know anything about the structure and functions of their own bodies, and of nature’s laws!” Counsels of Health, 38.

MORE SHOCKING: I didn’t notice anyone reminding the pope of his own church’s history! …The truth of history is that no church has spread its faith by the sword more than the Catholics!

“The Vatican and Germany primarily comprise the so-called Holy Roman Empire…. I defy anybody to show me a religious empire that has shed more blood in man’s entire history. The seventh head of the holy Roman Empire is now on the scene in Europe. And the stronger it gets, the more aggressive the Vatican becomes…” Gerald Flurry, ed., Philadelphia Trumpet, October 2007, 1.

End-time perspective: “Some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples. And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.” Luke 19:39-40.

Cloned Meat/Dairy Coming Soon

“With the government set to allow food from cloned animals onto the market—and consumers not yet convinced it’s safe—meat and dairy producers are promoting an industry-led system to track cloned livestock….The FDA has said the cloned animals are scientifically identical to their natural counterparts. But that conclusion hasn’t convinced shoppers—or meat and dairy producers who fear that anxiety about cloned products could dampen sales.” Matthew Perrone, Asso. Press, Dec. 21, 2007.

End-time perspective: “We do not hesitate to say that meat is not essential to the maintenance of health and strength…. But few can be made to believe that it is the meat they have eaten which has poisoned their blood and caused their suffering. Many die of diseases wholly due to meat-eating, when the real cause is scarcely suspected by themselves or others.” Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene, 47.

Cancer Risk & Body Mass


End-time perspective: “…If the true Sabbath had been kept, there would never have been an infidel or an atheist.” CET 86.

Atheism More Prominent

 “…With a steady stream of best sellers…. vociferous atheists did bring non-belief into the public sphere. The number of people who felt comfortable enough to tell Gallup pollsters that they didn’t believe in God inched up to 6 percent this year from 2 percent in 2001…. “ Lisa Miller, Newsweek, Jan 7, 2008, 89.

End-time perspective: “…If the true Sabbath had been kept, there would never have been an infidel or an atheist.” CET 86.

Dear Readers: We have provided New Watch items in order to keep you posted on news related to last-day events. If you have a news item of interest and would like to share it with others, please send us a copy. See page 2 for our fax number, email address, or mailing address.
“We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.” E.G. White, Life Sketches, 196. Many today have neglected to study the history and people that made up the early days of the Advent movement. To help encourage interest in Adventist history, we have put together questions about people and events of our past. Our goal is to spark faith and further study into “the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.”


1. The delay in printing the first paper on the Sabbath was due to
   a. No writer yet capable of expounding the Sabbath doctrine.
   b. Lack of funds.
   c. Strike of print setters.
   d. Disagreement on doctrinal approaches.

2. To raise needed money, James White mowed ____ acres of grass with a hand scythe.
   a. 40
   b. 20
   c. 10
   d. 5

3. In July 1849, the first issue (number) of ____ was mailed to those who might read it.
   a. Advent Review
   b. Present Truth
   c. Medical Missionary
   d. Truth for These Times

4. James White would walk eight miles to and from the publisher, even though he was often
   a. Blinded by snow.
   b. Ill with dysentery.
   c. Lost on the way.
   d. Lame.

5. Very soon in response, means was sent for future issues, along with
   a. Good news of conversions to the Sabbath.
   c. Arguments against the Sabbath exposition.

6. In all, ___ numbers of Present Truth were printed.
   a. 11
   b. 22
   c. 33
   d. 44

7. By 1905, instead of only 3 persons preaching Sabbath truth, there were
   a. 130.
   b. 230.
   c. Over 400.
   d. Over 600.

8. By 1905, the Sabbath truth was being preached and printed in about ____ languages.
   a. 20
   b. 30
   c. 40
   d. 60

9. And by 1905, the number accepting Sabbath truth was almost
   a. 5,000.
   b. 10,000.
   c. 100,000.
   d. 200,000.

10. In 1895, while great advancements in civilization were noted, also noted was
    a. Unparalleled preparations for war.
    b. Increasingly destructive war weapons.
    c. The withholding of the release of the four winds.
    d. All of the above.

Heart MAXIMIZER

What does our special herbal blend in Heart Maximizer do?

- **Vitamin E**: Helps lower the risk of heart disease and prevents blood clot formation.
- **Calcium EDTA**: Helps reduce chance of a heart attack.
- **Gotu Kola**: Helps prevent congestive heart failure and high blood pressure.
- **Horse Chestnut**: Increases strength and tone of veins.
- **Butcher’s Broom**: Helps with heart and blood circulation.
- **Diosmin**: Helps strengthen the walls of blood vessels.
- **Bromelain**: Helps to disperse blood clots, for increased heart protection.
- **Quercetin**: Helps improve capillary strength.
- **Witch Hazel**: Protects and strengthens the heart and improves circulation.
- **Odorless Garlic**: Helps lower cholesterol, blood pressure, and reduces blood clotting.
- **Cayenne Pepper**: Helps protect against high cholesterol, heart attacks, strokes, and heart disease.
- **Citrus Flavonoids**: Helps reduce high blood pressure and cholesterol levels.
- **Niacin**: A great source of B-vitamin nutrition for cardiovascular maintenance.
- **Ginkgo Biloba Leaf**: Helps maintain the normal function and tone of blood vessels.
- **Grape Seed**: Helps to prevent the formation of plaque in the arteries.

Heart Attack Risk Factors:

- Hypertension
- Stress & depression
- Abdominal obesity
- Lack of exercise
- Smoking
- Unhealthy combination of “good” and “bad cholesterol
- Diabetes

90 Tablets Per Bottle.............................................. $19.99*

Every 33 seconds a person dies from cardiovascular disease in the United States. That means, in the 1-3 minutes it takes you to read this article, 2-6 people have died. That’s 2-6 fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, grandpas, or grandmas. The worst part is that they are dying from a disease that is largely preventable.

Heart failure is the number one killer of both men and women in the United States, where 500,000 die annually. Worldwide, it kills 7.2 million people every year.

To Order Call Today:
1.800.468.7884 or Visit us on the web at: www.hopeint.org

*Suggested dosage: Two capsules 2 times a day.*

*Prices listed above do not include shipping and handling or sales tax*

*These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. This product is not intended to prevent, diagnose, treat, or cure any disease.*
Please see below for sales tax information.

What does our special herbal blend in Cholesterol X do?
Nature has a way to restore the balance in your overall cholesterol. One look at the chart below will convince you that the natural ingredients in our CholesterolX can greatly help in achieving a healthy level of cholesterol.

### Suggested dosage: 2-3 tablets every day to help reduce cholesterol.

When looking at the cadavers of men in their 20s who died in car accidents or as casualties of war, nearly all had arterial cholesterol deposits. Heart disease starts much earlier than people realize. You’re never too young to start protecting yourself!

Order by Phone: 1-800-468-7884
Order Online: www.hopeint.org/xcartgold

Hope For Health

### Why take this chance?
Synthetic chemicals are often prescribed to help with cholesterol problems. But so often, the side effects of these drugs are more serious than the problem you are trying to resolve. So what’s the answer?

Did you know that there are over 50 MILLION Americans with high cholesterol and that ONE out of every TWO Americans are currently at high risk for cholesterol’s damaging effects? Chances are, YOU are one of them.

High cholesterol is a serious risk factor for heart disease, stroke, and Alzheimer’s.

### Plant Sterols: Helps normalize blood cholesterol levels and absorption from the intestines.

### Commiphora Molmol: Helps to lower lipoproteins, cholesterol levels, triglycerides and LDL cholesterol.

### Soy Bean Extract: Helps in reducing serum cholesterol levels.

### Oat Bran: Helps reduce LDL cholesterol by reducing cholesterol absorption in the intestines.

### Inositol: Helps in reducing LDL cholesterol and raising HDL.

### Psyllium Husk: Helps as a lipid-lowering agent, lowering cholesterol, and LDL cholesterol levels.

### Chromium (as polynicotinate): Helps to reduce LDL levels and increase HDL levels.

### Odorless Garlic Extract: Helps to keep the cholesterol levels in our blood in good balance.

### Vitamin B6: Helps to decrease the rate at which LDL is damaged through oxidation.

### Panthethine: Helps to increase HDL levels, therefore decreasing total cholesterol levels.

### Artichoke Extract: Helps to lower cholesterol in the human body.

### Soy Lecithin: Helps to reduce total cholesterol levels.

### Psyllium Husk: Helps reduce total cholesterol serum levels.

### Cholesterol Reducing Formula

Did you know that there are over 50 MILLION Americans with high cholesterol and that ONE out of every TWO Americans are currently at high risk for cholesterol’s damaging effects? Chances are, YOU are one of them.

High cholesterol is a serious risk factor for heart disease, stroke, and Alzheimer’s.

### Why take this chance?
Synthetic chemicals are often prescribed to help with cholesterol problems. But so often, the side effects of these drugs are more serious than the problem you are trying to resolve. So what’s the answer?

Did you know that there are over 50 MILLION Americans with high cholesterol and that ONE out of every TWO Americans are currently at high risk for cholesterol’s damaging effects? Chances are, YOU are one of them.

High cholesterol is a serious risk factor for heart disease, stroke, and Alzheimer’s.

### Why take this chance?
Synthetic chemicals are often prescribed to help with cholesterol problems. But so often, the side effects of these drugs are more serious than the problem you are trying to resolve. So what’s the answer?

Did you know that there are over 50 MILLION Americans with high cholesterol and that ONE out of every TWO Americans are currently at high risk for cholesterol’s damaging effects? Chances are, YOU are one of them.

High cholesterol is a serious risk factor for heart disease, stroke, and Alzheimer’s.

### Why take this chance?
Synthetic chemicals are often prescribed to help with cholesterol problems. But so often, the side effects of these drugs are more serious than the problem you are trying to resolve. So what’s the answer?

Did you know that there are over 50 MILLION Americans with high cholesterol and that ONE out of every TWO Americans are currently at high risk for cholesterol’s damaging effects? Chances are, YOU are one of them.

High cholesterol is a serious risk factor for heart disease, stroke, and Alzheimer’s.

### Why take this chance?
Synthetic chemicals are often prescribed to help with cholesterol problems. But so often, the side effects of these drugs are more serious than the problem you are trying to resolve. So what’s the answer?

Did you know that there are over 50 MILLION Americans with high cholesterol and that ONE out of every TWO Americans are currently at high risk for cholesterol’s damaging effects? Chances are, YOU are one of them.

High cholesterol is a serious risk factor for heart disease, stroke, and Alzheimer’s.

### Why take this chance?
Synthetic chemicals are often prescribed to help with cholesterol problems. But so often, the side effects of these drugs are more serious than the problem you are trying to resolve. So what’s the answer?

Did you know that there are over 50 MILLION Americans with high cholesterol and that ONE out of every TWO Americans are currently at high risk for cholesterol’s damaging effects? Chances are, YOU are one of them.

High cholesterol is a serious risk factor for heart disease, stroke, and Alzheimer’s.

### Why take this chance?
Synthetic chemicals are often prescribed to help with cholesterol problems. But so often, the side effects of these drugs are more serious than the problem you are trying to resolve. So what’s the answer?

Did you know that there are over 50 MILLION Americans with high cholesterol and that ONE out of every TWO Americans are currently at high risk for cholesterol’s damaging effects? Chances are, YOU are one of them.

High cholesterol is a serious risk factor for heart disease, stroke, and Alzheimer’s.
Wow! Good resources here. Enjoyed the visit! (From the Hope International website.)

I do not know how to show appreciation for the large quantities of Our Firm Foundation magazines and books I received from you. I have shared them with as many people as I can, and they have been a most tremendous spiritual help to many of us.

I have just one request which I am making. Can I be on your mailing list for monthly issues? I know the distance factor and I do not have funds to support your organization, but I have and will continue to pray for all the self-supporting workers worldwide adhering to and practicing truth and righteousness. I am a self-supporting worker here in Makurdi, as well, and I know the dangers hanging over the members of God’s remnant church.

We have never ceased to pray and will continue to do so, even for our dear members who do not desire to see the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. We do a lot of traveling for the purpose of evangelizing the villages with the true gospel and to herald the soon return of Jesus. I pray God provide for someone to put me on the mailing list of your magazine. We pray for you all. God bless.

D, Nigeria

I enjoy them and also I am sharing them with others. What a great blessing this program is. I am hoping to be able to donate again in the near future. It is so important to offer God’s word free to all. Thank you so much for your work in the Lord.

WB

We just recently got a DVD player so we have been enjoying the DVDs that you have sent. Hope International has some excellent speakers. We like to hear the word as it is.

ML, Florida

Brothers and sisters of the remnant church, I salute you all in the name of our loving GOD through His beloved son JESUS CHRIST.

I thank you a lot for the pamphlets you sent to me. I’m sharing them with friends who have already accepted the Sabbath and the truth thereof. I kindly request you to pray for us to know the truth and live by it, considering the current condition of the church in its Laodicean state. GOD watch between me and thee while we are absent one from another. Be blessed, brothers, as we strive to have the faith of Jesus.

PA, Africa

Regretfully I am writing to inform you of the death of my father. He had been a faithful subscriber to your literature for many, many years.

As a matter of fact, it was he who first gave to my brothers and me your wonderful, life-renewing literature. It was that gift that sustained my brother during his terminal illness, and I must say it was also the same gift that in turn gave comfort to my dad during his final hours. I read to him from the Bible and excerpts from your magazine.

PL, Texas

This whole year I have kept the magazines instead of giving them away. The subjects were so interesting that I want to go over them again, point by point, especially on the subject of the “daily”, together with the book I purchased from you, A Biblical Defense. I want to make my studies a priority at this time of my life. I love your ministry and have greatly profited from the DVDs you sent. I treasure each one of them.

US, Canada

Thank you for the DVDs. On Sabbath after church another sister and I gather and watch them. We get a lot of encouragement and enjoyment from them.

AM, FL

I have really enjoyed the DVDs sent and have shared them with family. I’ve also shared Our Firm Foundation with my mother-in-law. She enjoyed it so much she got her own subscription.

DH, CA
The information Heidi Heiks has made available in *508 538 1798 1843 Source Book (Preliminary)* is so important that we have decided to slash the price! We want to be sure everyone has an opportunity to obtain this essential evidence of the truth about Catholicism's role in the “great controversy,” and the decisive history of the events that mark the beginning and end of the prophetic periods of Daniel. This prophetic understanding is fundamental to Seventh-day Adventism and will enable us to speak with one voice. Hope International is dedicated to preparing you for these end times, so with great joy we are offering this new low price of $7.99 with **FREE SHIPPING!** (While supplies last.) Get several to give to your friends!

“Heidi Heiks has supplied us an excellent survey of the historical resources that relate to the prophetic dates for the start of the 1260/1290- day prophecies. He has delved into the primary sources in a way that few have done before him. It should be of assistance to all who study the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation from the standpoint of the historic interpretation.”

William H. Shea, Ph.D.
Former associate, Biblical Research Institute
Former professor, Andrews University

“I firmly believe that this book is one of the few books, outside of inspired ones, that have to be in every Seventh-day Adventist Christian library. It is an absolute ‘must read’ for all of us!”

Joe Olson, Executive Director
Hope International

Hardcover.................................................................BEHH-5085 $7.99