

# THREE ANGELS AND A MIGHTY FOURTH TO COME

by Robert J. Wieland

Those who  
finally reject  
God's grace  
will hear  
no scathing  
denunciation  
from either  
the Father  
or the Son.  
They will hear  
only silence  
from God,  
and the voice  
of their own  
accusing  
conscience.

The book of Revelation assures us of a solid reason for hope, revealing how Heaven's constant communication with humanity illuminates otherwise dark corridors of history. And it does more, opening up a cosmic view—the eternal significance of world history, past, current, and future. It is a profound docudrama that depicts in a few words world truth more profound yet recognizable than anything we could gain from a

shelf of uninspired books.

The climax of Revelation focuses on unprecedented troubles that will descend on the earth as we approach the end of time. Every worldly institution that we have thought secure will prove to be vanity. Great powers that we have naively assumed were benign will metamorphose into those destructive of liberty and true human happiness. "The cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found" (16:19, 20).

It isn't a pretty picture. But common sense sees that injustice, corruption, crime, greed, and sensuality are already steadily gaining the upper hand. The ruin of civil wars that we have seen on TV is an object lesson of what the whole world is ultimately headed for, according to Revelation. What proves that the book of Revelation is truly inspired by God is its *Good News*, not its bad news. It tells of redemption and salvation.

God's "wrath" is not a tit-for-tat retaliation against rebellious mankind. He is too big and too wise for that. The future time of trouble is simply the natural result within history of man insisting on his own self-centered way. Although God has given us freedom of choice, "all we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way" (Isa. 53:6). Man's final rebellion is symbolized in Revelation by the "battle of Armageddon" when the nations "will give their power and authority to the beast. These will make war with the Lamb" (Rev. 17:13, 14). Note: they hate Christ, and *they* start the war, not He.

## Preparing for Armageddon

That battle is the final scenario for a world rejecting God's grace. At last all pretense will be thrown off, and man's

**T**he last book of the Bible, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ," reveals the Savior in a unique way. He interacts in the affairs of world history throughout the centuries. He does not *manipulate* history, but He constantly *redeems* it.

It's a mistake to misread Revelation to make it say that the Lord sends disasters on the world. He does not hate mankind and torture them, but He warns us about what Satan is bringing, so we can prepare. The Bible would be tragically incomplete without this special "Revelation" of a divine hand continually averting humanity's otherwise suicidal destiny.

## Pictures That Get the Point Across

What God did to make Revelation easy to understand has been misunderstood as making it difficult. What we thought was a closed door turns out to be an open one. God "signified" its message by communicating it to John in the easiest way possible for us to understand—in coded cartoon symbols. They make sense to anyone who will take the trouble to look at the book twice. Only the careless and thoughtless miss out.

These vivid pictures or symbols—beasts, horns, candlesticks, seals, trumpets, angels, mountains—communicate rather than obscure truth. They are decoded by abundant usage elsewhere in Scripture. Thus, learning the "language" of Revelation is more simple than deciphering the operating instructions for most of the electronic gadgets we have become so familiar with today.

An "angel" is the code word signifying a special message that God communicates to the world ("angel" in Greek means messenger). The divine Author is happy to reward our sincere search for enlightenment, for Jesus said, "If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine" (John. 7:17).

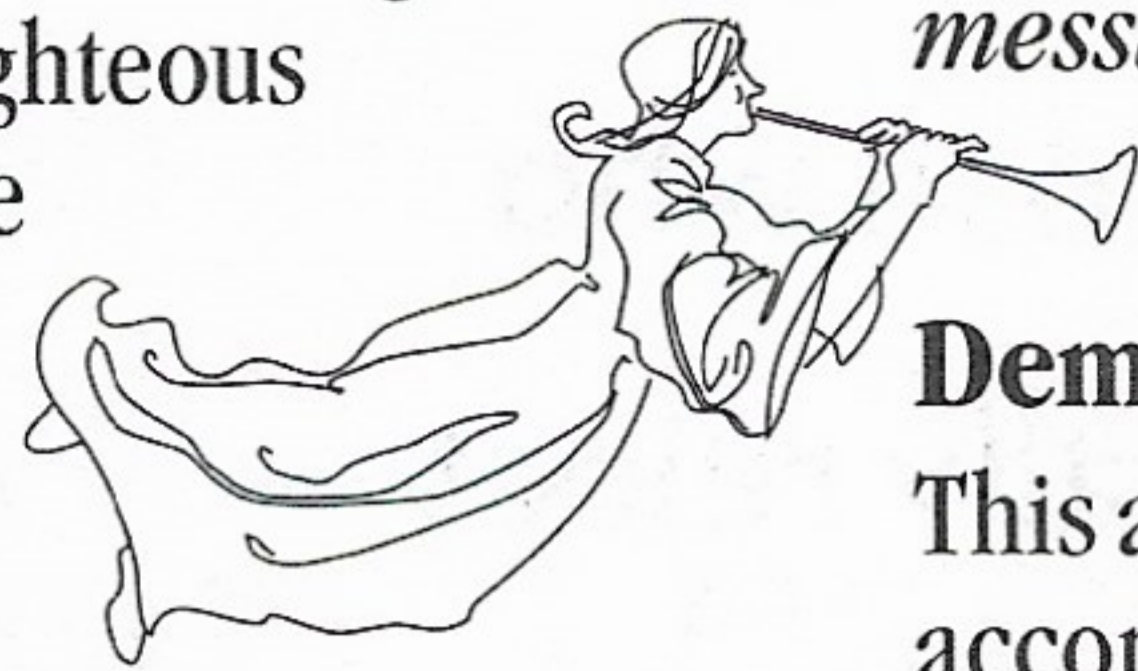
What proves  
that  
the book of  
Revelation  
is truly  
inspired  
by God  
is its  
*Good News*,  
not its bad  
news.

God's  
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“enmity against God” will be laid open (Rom. 8:7).

But how can mankind's puny war against God bother Him? There is one thing that will arouse His wrath: *the wicked try to take out their hatred against Him by oppressing His people.*

How would you react as a parent if you saw hoodlums beating your innocent child, trying to kill him? Every cell in your body would be shot through with adrenaline as righteous wrath drove you to the defense of your child. This gives us some insight into God's final “wrath”



against sin. It is not selfish on His part.

On the cross, Christ freely forgave those who murdered Him. And He has kept silent for millenniums while tyrants and persecutors have tortured and killed His followers by the millions, because some seed of hope blossomed that humanity might learn to do better. God must give the world every chance to learn and to repent. But humanity has misinterpreted His mysterious silence.

When the world attempts to crucify the Lord again in the person of His saints, Armageddon will be its final refusal of His grace, a deliberate attempt to reenact Calvary and His cross on a global scale. After this ultimate tragic choice, God's wrath will be a withdrawing of His mercy, leaving the world to itself at last as never before except in the flood of Noah's day.

Few realize how actively God's Spirit works to restrain evil in the world, counteracting men's murderous designs. Thank Him that at least part of the time the bombs are discovered before they explode, and that police can catch at least *some* of the criminals who lurk almost everywhere.

Revelation discloses what goes on behind the scenes: “I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth [the final tornado of unrestrained human hatred], that the wind should not blow on the earth” (7:1). Offer a prayer every time you get home safely, for those “four angels” holding the “winds” helped you. Thank God also that we haven't had a more serious nuclear disaster, and that scheming global terrorists have been foiled as often as they have.

God is not the author of this mayhem. Those “four angels” are increasingly straining themselves to hold back the hurricane of wild human passion. But God has commanded them to hang on tight until the gospel of His grace can accomplish its purpose in the world.

The focal point of Revelation is not the terrible time of trouble that is coming. God has better news for us than that. *There is a last-day proclamation of a message of grace.*

### A Message That Demonstrates God's Love

This astounding work of grace is accomplished by a message of Good News proclaimed by three special angels. Because it is called “the everlasting gospel,” we know it isn't a new invention, but it is given in a modern setting of our last-day needs. It is in language people today can understand, symbolized as a message given by the three angels flying like helicopters over the treetops: “I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water’” (14:6, 7).

The picture is clear: the angel symbolizes a worldwide proclamation of pure, unadulterated truth, a rediscovery of something long lost sight of. It recovers the solution to mankind's deepest psychological and spiritual needs—the conquest of inner insecurity. Thus it embodies deliverance from every evil that enslaves or distorts the human soul.

A second and a third angel follow, bringing the first angel's message to completion. The message of the three angels achieves a phenomenal worldwide impact. Every “nation, tribe, tongue, and people” hear it. What a courageous prediction to make some 2000 years ago!

### Why Is the Message So Striking?

It says, “worship Him who made heaven and earth” (vs. 7). Swimming upstream almost alone against the world current of evolutionary teaching, this creation-message makes its way against popular

opinion. The memorial of His creation that God appointed is the seventh-day Sabbath—the true Lord's day. Already, in response to this “angel's” message, millions of Christian seventh-day Sabbath-keepers are scattered in almost every nation in the world.

The call to “fear God and give glory to Him” is not a call to crawl on our stomachs like a cowering slave before a tyrannical master. To “fear God” means to reverence Him, to have a humble appreciation of His true character of love and righteousness. God does not want us to shake with terror before Him, but to shiver with the delightful thrill of appreciating His glorious character of love that led the Son of God to sacrifice Himself totally for us on His cross. The death He died for us was the equivalent of what Revelation calls “the second death,” the despair of being “forsaken” of God (Matt. 27:46; Gal. 3:13; Rev. 2:11; 20:14).

Nor is God a selfish potentate who revels in the shallow flattery of fawning admirers. To “give glory to Him” means to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in demonstrating His love to the world, to pass on the sweet message, “Be reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:20). God's greatest joy is seeing alienated, miserable, wrecked people find the sunshine of a healing reconciliation with Him. This is His glory—saving lost people. And we can “give Him glory” by cooperating with Him in that work of reconciliation.

God does not want anyone to serve Him in terror of being condemned in the judgment. The “hour of His judgment” cannot be the hour when *He* condemns the world, for “God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved” (John. 3:17). If anyone is condemned at last, it won't be the Father who condemns him, for Jesus said, “The Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son” (5:22). And furthermore, Jesus says that neither will *He* condemn those who reject Him. “If anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world” (12:47).

Thus it is evident that those who finally reject God's grace will hear no scathing denunciation from either the Father or the Son. Amid the silence from God, the voice of their own accusing conscience

will be deafening. "He who rejects Me, and does not receive my words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day" (vs. 48). And the one whom Christ will judge, He vindicates. "I will confess his name," He says, "before My Father" (Rev. 3:5).

So the angels' call to believe God's "everlasting gospel" in the context of "the hour of His judgment" is really a message assuring us of vindication. It tells us that "in Christ" God has accepted us, forgiven our sins, and adopted us.

These three angels proclaim an arresting message that focuses all the revealed truth that God has been communicating for thousands of years, demanding at last a complete response. No one can sit on the fence after hearing and understanding this last-day message. All choose either to believe and respond, or to disbelieve and reject. Everyone will line up on one side or the other for the final battle of Armageddon.

### Has the World Heard This Message?

Yes, at least partially. As the Dark Ages came to a close, a sudden awakening took place among earnest followers of Christ in many lands. It was like birds awakening at dawn—one moment there is nothing but the darkness, and a few moments later the forest explodes with music.

The 1260 years of the Dark Ages foretold in Daniel 7:25 and Revelation 12:6; 13:5 ended in 1798 and ushered in what Daniel calls "the time of the end" (Dan. 12:4). Bible students in many lands began to realize that the prophecies had suddenly been "unsealed." It was like a picture coming into sharp focus. They saw that the "time of the end" had already begun. "Christ is coming soon," they began to proclaim to all who would listen.

Many who loved Bible truth in England, Scotland, Germany, Spain, and even in Muslim lands, forsook the comforts of home to preach this first angel's message and urge people to prepare for Christ's coming. In America, William Miller, Josiah Litch, and many others took to the lecture circuits. The Holy Spirit worked quietly, solemnly, to produce reformation of life, and to implant in human hearts a

*Continued, p. 7*

## ■ RWANDA:

# What Gospel Starvation Can Do

One wonders how the seven last plagues could be much worse. A missionary is reported in *Time* magazine as saying, "There are no devils left in hell; they are all in Rwanda."

Yet Rwanda is one of the few countries in the world where the Seventh-day Adventist Church has a powerful numerical influence on the population: we are the largest Protestant church. How could such total bestiality and murderous madness erupt in a nation where we are the largest Protestant presence?

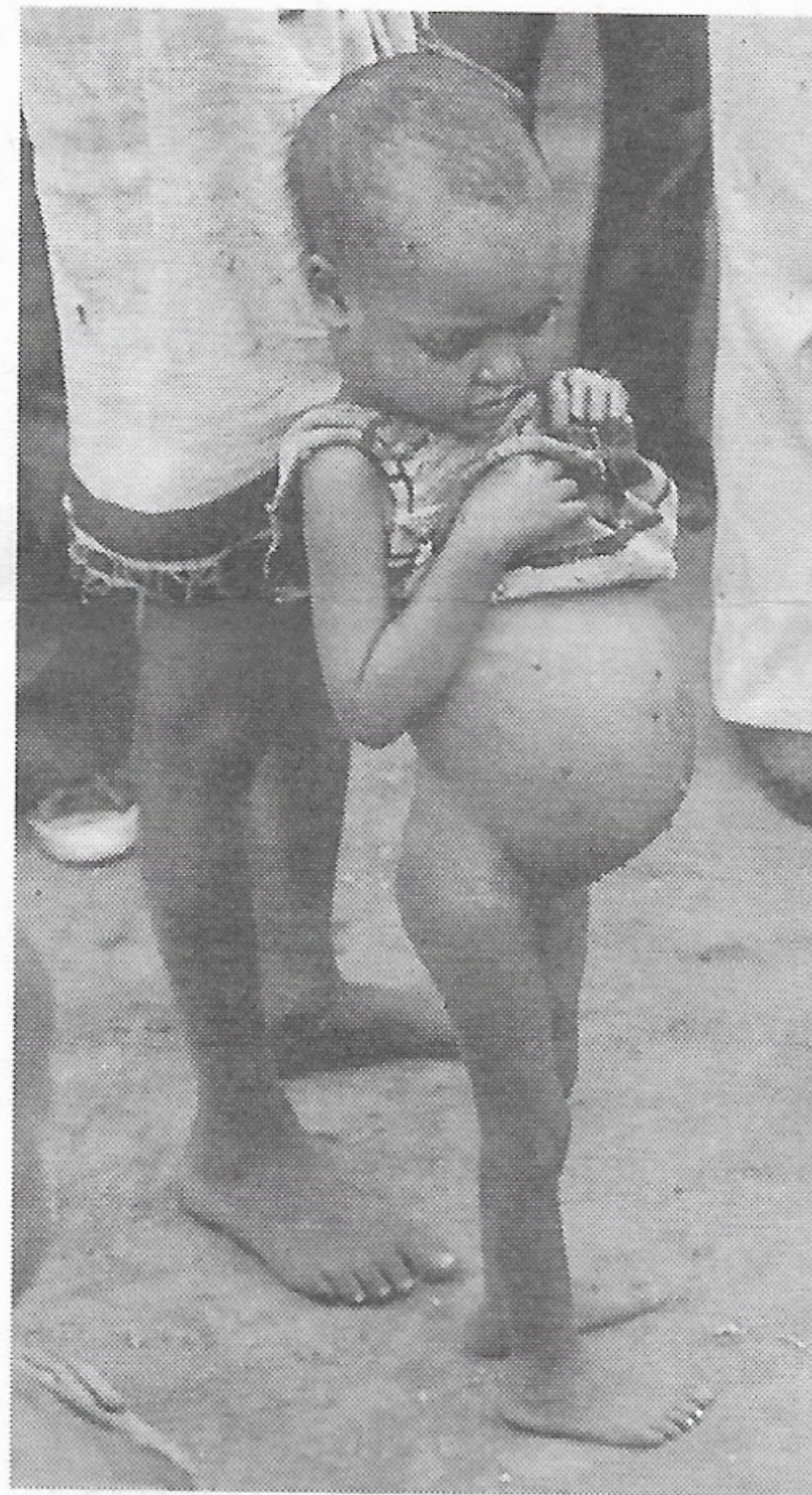
Before the massacres which have left some 500,000 dead, we had 300,000 plus adherents in 756 organized churches in that tiny nation smaller than Maryland. A sizable portion of the wretched victims who trudged across our TV screens are members of this church which we love. Sad reports indicate that some church members, even elders, were not immune to the murder mania that gripped the nation. They uncritically received the hate propaganda that flowed from the Hutu government and acted upon it. Although they professed devotion to the third angel's message they hadn't really come out of "Babylon," which is the point of the second angel's message.

The Lord planned that ancient Israel should have a profound spiritual impact on their world. But they rebelled against Him so that He was forced to abandon them to the Babylonian conquest and 70-year captivity. The four cruel world empires would never have arisen to trample down the earth had it not been for the moral vacuum left by the unfaithfulness of God's people, Israel.

In an insightful revelation, Ellen White declared that the cruel South African Boer War of 1899-1902 would not have taken place had it not been that our missionaries from Battle Creek had failed to proclaim there the true third angel's message in verity: "Had the work in [South] Africa been carried forward as it should have been, the present war would not have been as it now is" (MS.

178, 1899). "It grieves my heart to think of what might have been if the ones who enter the missionary field had been humble, devoted, consecrated workers. . . . Had these workers been sanctified, purified, and cleansed from all selfishness and self-superiority, had they had a genuine experience in the things of God, had their example and influence been right, [South] Africa would not be what it is today. . . . The same error was committed in Africa that was committed in Battle Creek. . ." (Letter 183, 1899).

According to Revelation 7:1-4, the four angels cannot hold the four winds from blowing their tornado-like ruin unless God's people faithfully proclaim the sealing message. It is difficult to imagine a more horrendous ruin than has overtaken Rwanda. Now *Time* suggests that only a miracle can save Nigeria from civil war which Jesse Jackson says



would make Rwanda's tragedy "look like 'child's play'"

May God forbid that this horror should ever again take place *anywhere in the world*, until the gospel commission can be finished. We are called to spend our time and money in preaching the gospel, not fishing murdered bodies out of rivers. May God grant that this "most precious [1888] message," the true sealing message, be allowed to be proclaimed, that it may no longer be opposed and suppressed and "in a great degree kept away from the world" (*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 91; *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 234-235). ✍

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# Where is the TRUTH?

## Questions that perplex Seventh-day Adventists.

### Can we “press together” in unity?

*Is it possible to sort out the truth in this cacophony of voices that we hear today? Jesus says yes: “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). Ellen White also voices an encouraging yes: “The house of Israel [the organized church] is to be imbued with the Holy Spirit, and baptized with the grace of salvation. Amid the confusing cries, ‘Lo, here is Christ! Lo, there is Christ!’ will be borne a special testimony, a special message of truth appropriate for this time, which message is to be received, believed, and acted upon.”*

—Review and Herald, October 13, 1904.

Christ cannot redeem what He has not taken or assumed

—in order to be our Substitute, He must take our nature.

#### ***Is it really important that we understand what kind of nature Christ took when He became a man? If so, why?***

Yes, because that is the only way we can distinguish between the true Christ and the counterfeit false christ: “By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist” (1 John 4:2, 3).

#### ***What does that Bible word “flesh” mean? Unfallen and sinless? Or fallen and sinful?***

The word is *sarx* (Greek), which means the same fallen, sinful flesh that all mortal mankind have by nature. “What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh [*sarx*], God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh [*sarx*], on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh [*sarx*]” (Rom. 8:3). That word “likeness” cannot mean unlike, for Paul uses the same phrase when he says that Christ was

“made in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:7, KJV). He was truly man, not a plastic resemblance. His perfect character of sinlessness was manifested in our sinful flesh or nature. He had a “self” as we have a self, but whereas we have been selfish, He denied self (John. 5:30; 6:38).

#### ***In His incarnation, was Christ a re-created man like the sinless Adam, or was He “made” to be a genetic descendant of the fallen Adam?***

“Jesus Christ our Lord. . . was born of the seed [*sperm*, Greek] of David according to the flesh” [*sarx*] (Rom. 1:3). “From [David’s] seed [*sperm*], according to the promise, God raised up for Israel a Savior—Jesus” (Acts 13:23). “He took on him the seed [*sperm*] of Abraham” (Heb. 2:16, KJV). Christ’s favorite expression concerning Himself was “son of man,” taken from the Hebrew *ben-’adam* as so often used in Ezekiel. “Jesus, who took upon Himself not the nature of angels, but of the human race after four thousand years of sin had left their stamp of

degeneracy, is prophetically designated ‘Son of *’enash*’ (collective for the whole human race)” (*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 580).

#### ***But didn’t Christ have a sinless nature?***

Yes. But He *took* our sinful nature: “As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise *took* part of the same, . . . *made* like unto his brethren” (Heb. 2:14, 17, KJV). All the temptations that overwhelm us through our “flesh and blood” He met and overcame. He knew the strength of all those enticements, “in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (4:15).

#### ***Is there a practical value to this that makes it worth the present controversy?***

Christ “condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (Rom. 8:3, 4). “In all things He had to be made like [not unlike] His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation [reconciliation, KJV] for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted” (Heb. 2:17, 18). We must remember that temptation is not sin unless it is yielded to; some apparently believe that if Christ suffered temptation then He must have sinned. Not so: “We do not have a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like [not unlike] as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (4:15, 16, KJV). The human race needs that “help.” “Practical value?” It makes all the difference between our *overcoming* temptation or *being overcome by it*. Denying and suppressing this glorious truth leaves sinners helplessly vulnerable to alluring solicitations to transgress God’s law. Christ must be a Savior from the enticing power of sin now, or He can never save us at last from the presence of sin.

#### ***Is this the same view that “independent ministries” teach?***

There is a difference. Many hold this view only because they see Christ pri-

marily as an Example for sinless living. But the 1888 message views Christ as primarily a Substitute and Savior whose righteousness is imputed because as the second Adam He took our sinful humanity into Himself. He incorporated within Himself the entire human race which He redeemed and thus legally justified. He cannot redeem what He has not taken or assumed. In order to be our Substitute, He must take our nature. But His righteousness is also imparted because having taken the "children's flesh and blood" He "is able to aid those who are tempted" through the prompting of their sinful flesh and hot blood. He gives them the exact "help in time of need" [succor, KJV] that they must have. The world is literally dying for want of knowing this "most pre-

cious" truth which the Lord gave us in the 1888 message.

**Granted that the Bible is clear, where does Ellen White stand on this issue?**

She does not contradict the Bible. Many clear statements permeate her 100,000 pages, too many to quote here. But they can be summed up in this priceless gem: "He took upon His sinless nature our sinful nature, that He might know how to succor those that are tempted" (*Medical Ministry*, p. 181).

**Can this truth clarify the widespread confusion over justification by faith?**

Did Christ's sacrifice legally justify the entire human race, or is it only an offer of justification? Is it only provisional or

contingent on the sinner first accepting it? A popular view says that Christ's sacrifice does no one any good unless he first accepts it, so that the justification provided by His sacrifice is not an actual gift given to all men, but is withheld from the sinner and only offered to him on condition of his taking the initiative to believe and obey. This view says that justification *follows* a change of heart. Thus it makes our salvation due to *our* initiative.

Scripture teaches that salvation is due to *God's* initiative, and therefore justification must *precede* a change of heart. Since the legal justification has been effected at the cross, it takes place before we believed. Our faith only appropriates what is already a fact. "The Lord has *Continued, p. 6*

# The "Amen" of Abraham

by Bill Brace ► Sometimes in human history an event occurs which later proves to have been a watershed: it alters everything that follows. A case might be made that the Civil War was such an event in American history. Within Scripture the life of Abraham—father of three great world religions—represents a watershed in the history of the idea of righteousness. He illustrates the spiritual conflict that characterizes the life of every human who will be saved at last.



and truth. This view of God separates true righteousness by faith from every false gospel.

The heart of Abraham responded to the great billow of *agape* he perceived in Him who thus revealed Himself, and his human heart surrendered. Thus Abraham became the great archetype of the household of faith in the human family. God gave Abraham seven promises (Gen. 12:2, 3):

- (1) "I will make you a great nation; (2) I will bless you and (3) make your name great; and (4) you shall be a blessing. (5) I will bless those who bless you, and (6) I will curse him who curses you; and (7) in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

The patriarch's response to God's promises represents a key element in the life of faith. Paul in Romans 4:3 quotes Genesis 15:6, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Departing from His kindred at God's command was the

outward working of the Spirit's influence on his inner mind.

**What Believing Means**

The word "believe" appears the first time in Scripture in Genesis 15:6. The same word appears 152 times in the New Testament—10 in the book of Revelation, 25 in the gospel of John. In Revelation 3:14 Jesus uses that word when He identifies Himself as "the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness." When in the gospels Jesus says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you" (KJV) or "Truly, truly I say unto you," He's using the Greek word for "believe" or "amen."

What does it mean? It means, What I'm about to say to you is trustworthy or firm. It is true. We also know that the word "amen" means "so be it" or "let it be." Therefore, when God took Abraham outside and said, Look at the sky; I want to promise you something, and Abraham "believed" God, he responded with praise and thanksgiving, counting the gift already his for God had promised. Amen, Lord, amen, he might have said. Thank you, thank you, Lord. When God makes a promise, the heart of faith says, amen.

God's promise constitutes His covenant. When God promised Abraham he would have a son, all Abraham did was to say, amen, "and it was accounted to him for righteousness." God wants us to simply say, amen—to believe His promises as articulated in the beautiful gospel. Thus was the gospel preached to Abraham (Gal. 3:8). ✨

When God makes a promise, the heart of faith says, Amen!

## Where Is The Truth?

Continued from page 5

[already] laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6). "He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world" (1 John. 2:2), having tasted "death for everyone" [the second death] (Heb. 2:9). "The judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification. . . . Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life" (Rom. 5:16, 18; the NEB renders this "a verdict of acquittal . . . for all men"). Our full punishment for sin was not "deferred" so that it still hangs over our heads, as some say, but it was totally inflicted on Christ.

He bought the entire human race with His blood and has elected "all men" to eternal salvation. (This does not mean that "all men" will receive it, for they have the power of choice and can reject what He has already given them.) He already "is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe" (1 Tim. 4:10). He has "brought all men" their *present physical life* when they would otherwise have received the second death, for every loaf of bread is stamped with the cross (*Desire of Ages*, p. 660). But since He "has abolished death [the second death] and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1:10), He is "especially" the Savior of those who believe, because He has given them something more—*eternal life*, or "immortality."

In taking our fallen, sinful nature and suffering all our temptations both from within and without, "yet without sin," Christ has redeemed fallen humanity in Himself. Thus He has "condemned sin in the flesh" for "everyone." This grand truth reveals that there is no excuse for anyone to continue in sin, because "where sin abounded, grace abounded much more" (Rom. 5:20). If the Lord has already "laid on Him" your "iniquity," why should you continue to carry it? And if He has already died your second death, why should you choose to die it again? You have been elected to eternal life; why refuse it?

When Ellen White says that "God requires the entire surrender of the heart, before justification can take place," she is not echoing the Roman Catholic view that good works must precede justification. She is speaking clearly of the *experience* of "justification by faith" (see *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 365-368; 394-397). In fact, no sinner can possibly "surrender" his selfish alienated heart until he first appreciates the justification which Christ has already effected for him at the cross!

### ***Does this relate to the idea of "easy to be saved and hard to be lost"?***

It reveals Christ as our Savior 100%; we are not our co-saviors. But we can appreciate His great salvation, what it cost Him to save us. When we identify with Him as He died on His cross, self is "crucified with Him," and a new life begins. All this becomes "easy" because "the love of Christ constrains us." To "constrain" is to motivate powerfully. Because of that love, *grace immediately becomes a stronger motivation than sin for the one who believes*. He "thus judges": "if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again" (2 Cor. 5:14, 15). In other words, to appreciate such love makes it impossible for us to go on living for self.

If "grace abounded much more" than sin, *then it must follow that it is easier to be saved than it is to be lost*, because Christ says His "yoke is easy and [His] burden is light," and He also insists that the sinner who resists and rejects that grace of Christ finds it "hard. . . to kick against the goads" (Matt. 11:30; Acts 26:14). The fact that many will be lost does not disprove what Jesus says! This controverted point is settled once for all when we ask the simple question, Which abounds more—sin or grace?

This Good News rings the death-knell of Laodicean lukewarmness. All the alluring temptations to sin that hell can invent are powerless against that stronger, much more abounding "constraint" of grace. The spiritual apathy that permeates such a large portion of the world church has become possible only because this truth has not been

clearly understood.

### ***Once again: sounds good, but does Ellen White agree?***

She does not contradict Scripture: Christ "took in His grasp the world . . . and . . . restored the whole race of men to favor with God" (*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 343). "He has snatched the race as a brand from the fire" (Op. cit., p. 392). "Christ made satisfaction for the guilt of the whole world" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 169). "With His own blood He has signed the emancipation papers of the race" (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 90). What Abraham Lincoln did for the slaves in 1863 Christ did for the entire human race, that is, legally set them free. (A slave could refuse to believe the good news and die in his slavery; we can also reject.)

All this, says Ellen White, makes the gospel to be glorious Good News: "Do not therefore conclude that the upward path is the hard and the downward road the easy way. All along the road that leads to death there are pains and penalties, there are sorrows and disappointments, there are warnings not to go on. God's love has made it hard for the heedless and headstrong to destroy themselves" (*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 139).

### ***Is this what Paul means when he says that he "glories in the cross of Christ"?***

Precisely. When a lukewarm saint surveys that wondrous cross on which the Prince of glory died, the world is crucified unto him and he is crucified unto the world (Gal. 6:14). Heaven's glorious grace now motivates him to devote all he has, time, life, money, influence, to proclaiming the Good News to others. Sacrifice and self-denial become a joy. This especially appeals to youth. For them, amusements, parties, games, and entertainments are a failure as motivation. Nothing turns them on like the presentation of Christ's cross (cf. Gal. 3:1).

### ***Can the Seventh-day Adventist Church ever come into unity in knowing and accepting this Good News message?***

If it is the true "remnant" church of Revelation 12:17 and 14:12, the answer has to be yes. If grace is stronger than sin, then truth has to be stronger than error, and the Holy Spirit must be

If Christ  
has already  
died your  
second death,  
why choose  
to die it again?  
You  
have been  
elected  
to eternal life;  
why  
refuse it?

stronger than the flesh, and light must be stronger than darkness. "Mind will be arrayed against mind, plans against plans, principles of heavenly origin against principles of Satan. Truth in its varied phases will be in conflict with error in its ever-varying, increasing forms, and which, if possible, will deceive the very elect" (*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 407). Note: the "elect" are not deceived. "Truth in its varied phases" will overcome "error in its. . . increasing forms." That's Good News!

### **Does "corporate repentance" relate to these issues?**

There is only one place where confused, disunited Seventh-day Adventists can possibly "press together"—at the foot of the cross of Christ. There is where pride and arrogance are crucified with Him. There is where all "holier-than-thou" feelings are dissipated forever. The soul is knit with the soul of Christ as He is crucified; we identify with Him, as if He were our closest relative.


The Lord has promised to give this experience to the leadership and membership of the remnant church. The realization that *we* crucified Him will melt our frozen hearts: "And I will pour on the house of David [leadership] and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem [church members] the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they have pierced; they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son. . . . In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness" (Zech. 12:10-13:1).

None of us living today were personally present at the cross 2000 years ago, but as members of the human race incorporate in Adam, *we were there*. We are no better than those who actually did the deed. This is our corporate guilt which the whole world shares (*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 38; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 745).

There is also corporate guilt which the remnant church shares. None of us were physically present in 1888 when the Holy Spirit was "insulted" and initial showers of the latter rain from heaven were despised and the loud cry "in a great degree" rejected. But we are no better than were those brethren. Their sin is corporately ours, for as Luther said, we are all made of the same lump of dough. Only by realizing the

full truth of our history can we prepare not to reject the latter rain when again Heaven may see fit to send the blessing. To reject it again may be unpardonable.

God's people are honest at heart. All they need to know is the full truth of how we stand before the universe and before the world, in the light of our past and current history (Rev. 3:14-21). Then the gift of repentance which Heaven so longs to give can be received. Cleansing from "sin and uncleanness" will be the blessed fruit.

It will simply be righteousness by faith—faith grown up, mature. 

### **THREE ANGELS**

*Continued from page 3*

heavenly love. Ever since, the three angels have continued their flight, sounding their call.

#### **Will the Message Succeed?**

Revelation gives us no sorrowful picture of the Lamb of God turning away from the final scenes of history in a staggering defeat. Multitudes will joyfully respond to the call to reverence the Creator and Redeemer. It's as though God can hardly contain His joy as He points to these people as the fruitage of His last appeal: "Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Rev. 14:12).

Those who respond are described in Revelation as a special group. "I looked, and behold, a Lamb [the once-crucified Jesus] standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads" (Rev. 14:1). Who are these? "These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. . . . And in their mouth was found no guile, for they are without fault before the throne of God" (vss. 4, 5).

Can any of us reasonably hope to have God say of him that he or she is "without fault"? Scripture says, yes. The grace of the Lamb will bring about this seemingly impossible goal. That is what Jesus died to accomplish, and He did not die in vain. That is the essence of the message of the three angels. The message is not sent to prepare people to die, but to prepare people for translation at His coming.

Satan insists that it is impossible to overcome as Christ overcame, and


many theologians and preachers unwittingly side with the enemy. The message of the three angels is that God will certainly have a people who bring glory to Him. Revelation's primary concern is the vindication of the Lamb who paid an infinite price to redeem us.

But His vindication also involves our own, for we are one with Him. Those who stand faithfully "with Him" in this final struggle will not do so in order to gain a reward for themselves. Salvation is indeed a bargain, but getting a good bargain will not be the motive for anyone who truly follows Christ in these last days. The little flower girl at a wedding is ever so sweet and lovable, but all she really cares about is getting some of the cake and ice cream at the reception. The bride, on the other hand, doesn't care about the refreshments. Her interest is in the bridegroom, and in him alone.

Is it possible for us self-seeking humans, who all our lives have been immersed in pursuing trivial self-interest, to find a larger perspective—a genuine heart sympathy with the Lamb of God? Appreciation of Him for His own sake will transcend both our fear of being lost and a merely selfish hope of reward in heaven. This is the mature faith toward which God is calling us.

#### **The 1888 Message—The Beginning of the Loud Cry!**

Ellen White recognized that the 1888 message of much more abounding grace was "the third angel's message in verity," and "the beginning" of the work of that mighty fourth angel of Revelation 18 (*Review and Herald*, Nov. 22, 1892). For most of our 150 years of history "we" have been prone to see in the three angels' message a fear-oriented, imperious demand to "shape up" or suffer damnation.

And true, there is an element of solemn warning. But the little lady who recognized in the 1888 message the "beginning" of the "loud cry" discerned that the *apparent* terrors of the third angel's message are transcended by its genial proclamation of grace. The warning against the mark of the beast is in reality the Good News that the Lord is trying His best to persuade us to receive the seal of God. Herein is the overriding concern of the 1888 message—let's stop resisting that on-going grace! *Let Christ do what He wants so much to do—save us "to the uttermost."* 

The essence of the message of the three angels is not to prepare people to die, but to prepare people for translation.