



# The Character of God

## eNewsletter

Vol. 3, No 1

January 2014

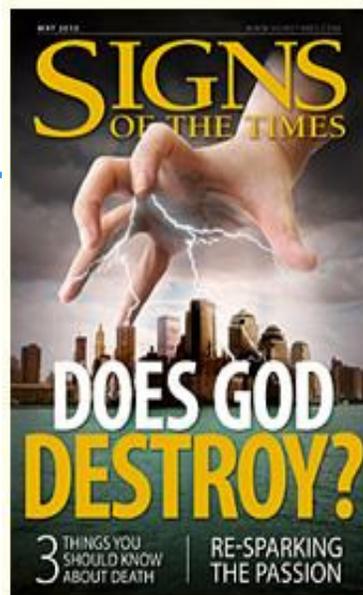
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PUBLICATIONS

# Righteous Evil: A Response to the Traditionalist

By Kevin Straub

Part 2  
(Conclusion)

God has promised light to those who seek Him with all their heart, so He will not give up the *honest* seeker to the third option. The souls that take the second option are automatically disqualified from the discussion by choice and as earth's history draws to a close, will find them-



selves increasingly sidelined in the work of giving the last message of mercy to the world. There is only one correct choice that qualifies as valid inquiry and to take this nobler approach, which is the God-ordained approach, there must be an honest and probing appeal to the scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy, employing a hermeneutic derived primarily from the life, teachings, death and resurrection of Christ.

So, in putting this quote of *Deuteronomy 32:39* on the table in this fashion, it is apparently implied that we

are to consider it a valid understanding that *God kills proactively because it is in His character to do just that.* There is no need to be shy about it,

## Headlines

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Mr. Traditionalist, because you are in good company! But now it is time to do some learning as well as some unlearning and God will help you do that. What I am bringing under the microscope here in these few thoughts is the *traditional Adventist theology* as published in the official church papers such as *Signs of the Times*; as found in books such as Steve Wohlberg's *The Character of God Controversy*; as held forth from top theologians such as Frank Holbrooke of the *Biblical Research Institute* and as preached by leading media ministries evangelists such as Doug Batchelor of *Amazing Facts*.

### Righteous Evil?

In the traditional view, it is to be understood that *God kills only when He can do so righteously*, when the circumstances call for it, according to Divine judgment. In the traditional view, God's statement, "**I kill**," as mentioned before, is presented in the sense that He does so *proactively*, by direct executive action. This begs some questions, such as that if this is true, then:

Why would we not read *Isaiah* 45:7, "**I create evil**," in the same way?

Is there anything in the contexts of these two passages that would indicate that there are two different principles operating?

Can the traditional theology clearly point us to them or provide us any Biblical keys that would show us how to make an accurate situation-specific application of dichotomous principles?

At the same time, while it is

maintained that God can only kill when He can do so righteously, we would have to apply the principle that *He can only create evil when He can do so righteously*. Phrased another way, *as the traditional view must admit that God kills in righteousness, so also must He create evil in righteousness*. I know that for those who are on their toes and following closely, this is really getting into a thorn patch, but I'm not done yet. It's about to get even more prickly!

Stay with me as we bring in the third text: Now that we have a principle established we can apply it to our reading of the passage that says He gave up innocent women to be sexually abused. This must be an

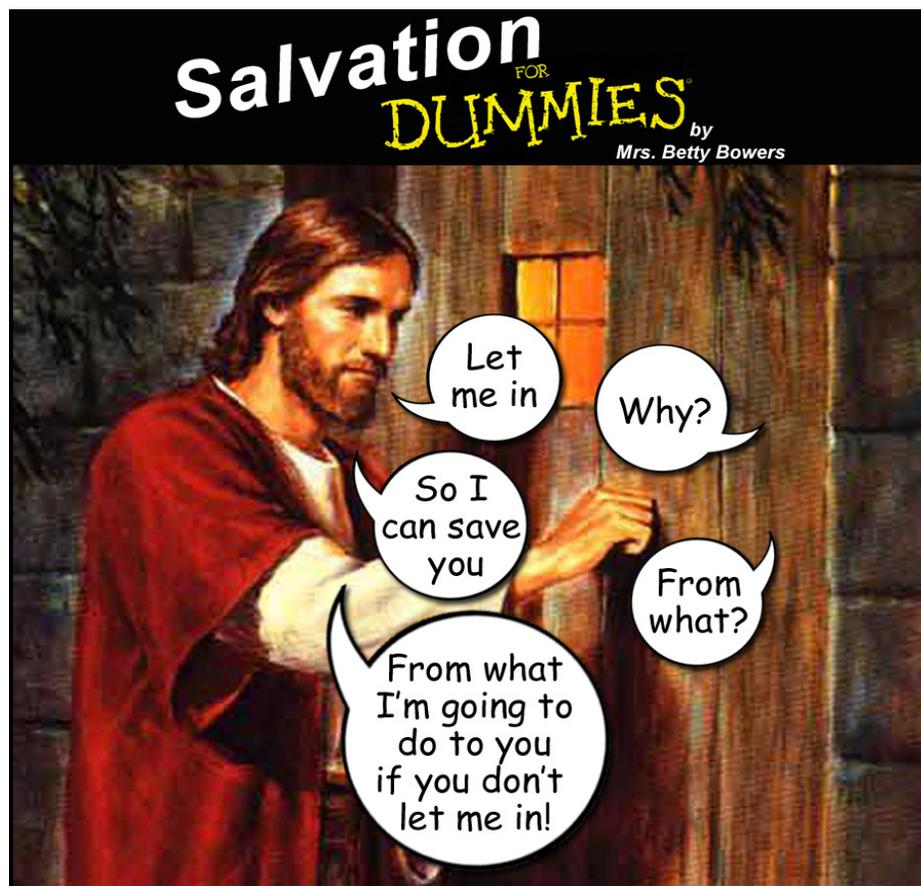
example of the righteous evil raised up and performed by God. God says through *Isaiah* that He "*creates evil*" and in *2 Samuel* 12:11 the prophet records that He "*raised up evil*." These both have to function in the same way. They have to be done in righteousness. I leave this to percolate for a moment.

### How Does He Do it?

Believers in God trust that the scriptures — ALL scriptures — are given so that we may understand Him better and grow to love, trust and serve Him with gladness of heart. I would presume He would have intended also for those wives to know and understand Him by the

### Why We Work

Here is a recent posting on Facebook.



same things — that He kills and creates evil — because He loves them just as much as He loves us. If it were possible, He would have wanted them to understand how it was that He was raising up the evil that was perpetrated on them.

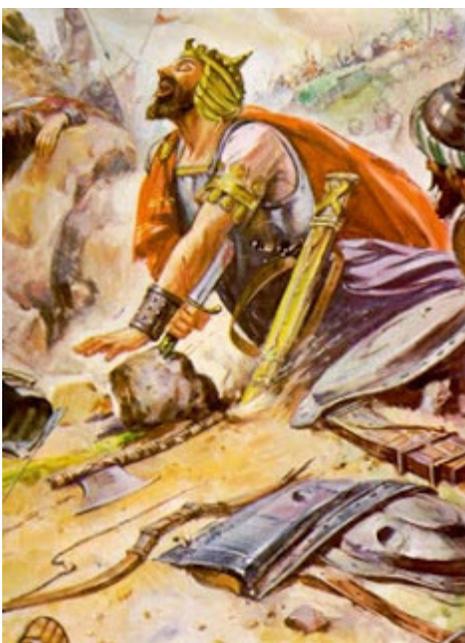
Is there something that is troubling or unsettling in all of this? Why? Can you not apply the same principle in one (“I kill”) as in the other (“I create evil”)? Why not? Where is the evidence that He may *kill* proactively but when the language changes to *creating evil*, it is no longer by executive action, but by giving over to external forces? Is there not some arbitrary assignment taking place, here? The traditionalist is obliged to answer these things, for he/she must also believe that the truth can afford to be examined closely and stand up to the litmus test of not only logic and reason, but it must also appeal to and agree with the Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy. Most of all, it must harmonize with Christ’s life, teachings, death and resurrection. “The church has always taught it,” is not acceptable. Don’t even *think* to go there!

### Elephant In the Room

The problem here is that: 1) according to the standard view set forth in its exegesis of *Deuteronomy* 32:39, *He kills proactively*, and 2) *we have no way of establishing in the text that He “creates evil” by another principle than that by which He kills. This principle of interpretation therefore would be a human imposition, a private interpretation.*

The traditionalist must deal with the “elephant in the room” on this. I do not believe that in the traditional paradigm there is any sensi-

ble, logical, way to sort these things out except by producing arguments not found in the scriptures nor are they found in any appeal to the life, teachings and cross of Christ. Rather, a valid exegetical approach will utilize scriptural principles as given *in clear statements* in inspiration and *in Christ*. Without a key or keys to apply the theory of dual principles operating in the destructive acts of God, we would be obliged to take the existing clearly delineated principles, such as I will show shortly, and apply them *across the board*, to *all* of scripture. There it will be found that there is *evil* evil in contrast to “*righteous evil*,” and we will see some of the precise Biblical keys whereby we may differentiate between the two, according to



Saul kills himself

the inspired principles. This is precisely what the true “character of God message” does.

(I trust that the reader understands by now that the phrase “righteous evil” is a play on the paradigm of Biblical language—the lan-

guage of wrath, wherein God is portrayed as doing that which He allows or “gives over” to by the hiding of His face.)

In the traditional paradigm, if there is the case on one hand where God’s justice is handed down in that He proactively destroys and kills and if there is the contrasting case on the other hand where justice is done in that He gives the wicked over to evil, to the results of their choice, by “hiding His face,” (Deut. 31:17, 18), then the teacher of the standard theology should be able to set up two columns, according to principles clearly delineated from scripture. He would place every destructive act of God under either one or the other heading. Such a teacher of the traditional view would be able to make these placements by clearly showing the Biblical principle whereby the student would be able to follow along and clearly identify every scenario as it is being read in the scriptures, according to contextual clues. Everyone would be able make proper classification, according to one or the other principle.

### God Slew Saul

For example, we could say, “Where the Bible says that ‘God slew Saul’ (1 Chron. 10:14, Hos. 13:11) and we find that he actually committed suicide (1 Sam. 31:4), we have the ‘giving over’ principle in use; where we find the walls of Jericho falling, we have the ‘proactive destruction’ principle (Josh. 6:5, 16; Heb. 11:30).” In these, we could then point to the identifying characteristics in each case that would place them in one or the other category, according to the Scriptural

keys of interpretation provided by the teacher of the standard view. (I would utilize these keys in this example if I knew what they were and I invite the Bible teacher to come back to me with them, so I can throw away this paper and publish something else.) I am asking for valid and true *exegesis*. Anything less than an *exegetical* approach, or an application of valid scriptural principle (which is obviously a principle shown by appeal to the scriptures themselves, going line upon line) would be an appeal to whatever we think is best. It would be none other than *reading into the text*, according to the externally imposed principles of human logic, human emotion, and the use of external keys to interpretation such as the dictionary of human language. The honest Bible student will agree that anything less than true exegesis is inadmissible, private interpretation, *eisegesis*. It simply adds up to worthless human opinion and neither side wants it.

### Understanding God

As mentioned above, there is also the approach that opts out of the discussion and sidelines oneself by saying, “We can’t understand it—it’s just one of those things that we’ll have to find out in the kingdom.” But the kingdom is within us. Jesus is teaching us. To say, “We can’t understand” the character of God, specifically how it relates to how He punishes and destroys, is to

deny Christ, the scriptures and the Holy Spirit. It is God’s purpose in and through Christ that we know Him and that we know Him aright—Who He is and as He is—even in all of His destructive acts.

So here is the crux: The problem with all of this is *not* that there is a “righteous killing” and a “righteous evil,” *but that it is said that He kills proactively*, at His own discretion and determination, by direct manipulation of the elements or by fiat. Unless the traditionalist can show otherwise, this would necessitate that, by the same token, He *creates evil proactively*. This makes God an



Chariot wheel from the Red Sea Crossing.  
(Courtesy of Ron Wyatt site.)

evildoer, which is unrighteousness, obviously, so we have to go back to where we took a wrong turn on this so we may get on the right path.

Walk with me, now. We are going to go back to that fork in the road and set this aright. We will find that there *is* a sense in which God *does* kill and He *does* create evil. The

Scriptures say these things, as we have read. In order that we do not make God out to be an evildoer, we have to look at *how* God can *both* kill and create evil *righteously*. This is where we find that God’s ways and thoughts are not anything like man’s ways and thoughts, (Isa. 55:8,9). We also find that God’s wrath is not anything like man’s wrath, (Jas. 1:20). Therefore, we would have to reexamine the premise upon which the two columns were created, as discussed above. It is found that one of these columns is not valid, as it would be *evil* evil and therefore not attributable to God. We are talking about the “*proactively* destroying-God” column.

We find that God’s acts of killing and destruction *all* come under “the hiding of His face” from the sinner, the “giving up,” “giving over,” or “sparing not” the sinner to the consequences of free choice. This column can be called “*righteous evil*,” in keeping with the Biblical parlance, as it would harmonize with the God who said “I kill,” “I create evil” and Who did many things as expressed in this language, such as

“raising up evil” in David’s house, (2 Sam. 12:11), “hardening Pharaoh’s heart,” (Ex. 4:21), “sending the flood,” (Gen. 6:17), “choosing delusions” for the wicked, (Isa. 66:4) or “sending strong delusions,” on those who do not love truth (2 Thes. 2:10, 11),

“sending evil spirits,” or “evil angels,” (Jgs. 9:23, Ps. 78:49), “taking off their chariot wheels,” (Ex. 14:25) and hundreds more of the same.

### Setting Matters Aright

Walk with me, now. We are going to go back to that fork in the road and set this aright. We will find that there *is* a sense in which God *does* kill and He *does* create evil. The Scriptures say these things, as we have read. In order that we do not make God out to be an evildoer, we have to look at *how* God can *both* kill and create evil *righteously*. This is where we find that God’s ways and thoughts are not anything like man’s

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be synonymous terms, referring to the same principle that defines God’s wrath, which is nothing like man’s wrath. Man cannot do *righteous* evil, only *evil* evil. This is because man is not the Creator God and Sustainer of Life. For one man to reject another man will not destroy him, unless that other man is a tyrant and would kill him. This is how we have viewed God, as if He were a man. For a man to reject God will destroy him, but not in the same way. It is not God that will kill the man, it is the nature of the rejection in that Life itself is being rejected. God says, “Come to Me, for why will you die?” (Eze. 18:31, 32; 33:11; Matt. 23:37,38) This principle keeps

us in harmony with the testimony of Jesus, Who said, “I did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them,” and of John, who tells us that God is light and in Him is *no darkness at all*. It removes all the contradictions that come from a surface reading or a private interpretation of the scriptures and/or the Spirit of Prophecy. It lets us be-



The Bible language which portrays God as *doing that which He allows to play out to destructive ends* is one and the same as what I call “the language of wrath” and which I am here calling “righteous evil.” In other words, “Biblical language,” “the language of wrath” and “righteous evil” would all

hold our God, Who is unchanging in all His dealings with men; Who operates always and absolutely upon pure and righteous principles—principles that depict Him in His true glory as a Being Who is of one principle, in Whom is no

variableness or shadow of turning; as a Being Who is nothing other than a Giver and Sustainer of Life; a Protector; and a Giver of Himself, the Light/Life of men, (John 1:4).



*Only by having a working principle in place that harmonizes all of the “language of wrath” with the “no darkness” principle can we know Him aright..*

**God does not stand toward the sinner as an executioner of the sentence against transgression;** but He leaves the rejecters of His mercy to themselves, to reap that which they have sown.... **The destruction of Jerusalem is a fearful and solemn warning** to all who are trifling with the offers of divine grace and resisting the pleadings of divine mercy. Never was there given a more decisive testimony to God's hatred of sin and **to the certain punishment that will fall upon the guilty** (*The Great Controversy*, p. 36, par.1, emphasis added).

Note that the destruction of Jerusalem goes under the “hiding of His face” column in that He gave up Jerusalem to the destruction that befell them under the Roman sword. This is the only mechanism that describes the “certain punishment that will fall upon the guilty.” There is no “lightning in His fists.”

So, to put this together properly, let us reason together by looking at three things that God says in the scriptures, with regard to Himself and the death of the wicked:

1. God says “I kill” (*Deut.* 32:39).
2. God says, “I create evil” (*Isa.* 45:7).
3. God says, “Evil kills the wicked” (*Ps.* 34:21).

Do you see where this goes? If we are to harmonize these statements, we must understand that God kills in the very same way as He creates evil. God kills and He creates evil when He hands sinners over to the consequences of their own choice. It is actually the evil that destroys, even though the Bible language portrays God as bringing it on.

Now, for a specific example of how to work with the Bible language, the “language of wrath,” let us do an exercise so we may start to practice reading through new eyes. Let us take the case of Jeremiah, chapter 9:

Speak, Thus saith the LORD, Even **the carcasses of men shall fall** as dung upon the open field, and as the handful

after the harvestman, and none shall gather [them].

Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise [man] glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty [man] glory in his might, let not the rich [man] glory in his riches:

**But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I [am] the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these [things] I delight,** saith the LORD.

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that **I will punish all** [them which are] circumcised with the uncircumcised (*Jer.* 9:22-25, emphasis added).

Cross-reference the above with the following

Say unto them, [As] I live, saith the Lord GOD, **I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked;** but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye



from your evil ways; for **why will ye die**, O house of Israel?" (Eze. 33:11, emphasis added).

What do you see in these texts? Here's what I see: notice that in *Jeremiah 9* we have death, judgment and punishment in juxtaposition and God invites us to understand and know Him. This would also mean that *He wants us to know how it is that He delights in all of these things*. How does He delight in the carcasses of men fallen in judgment while taking no pleasure in the death of the wicked? It is an apparent contradiction.

### Harmonizing Texts

Here's how we harmonize the two: The judgment which results in the punishment of death is in keeping with principles of righteousness and loving-kindness. It is a judgment in which the Lord *delights*. Yet, in *Ezekiel 33:11* we have the clear statement that *God has no pleasure, no delight, in the death of the wicked*. Their will to die is all their own. (If God willed that they should die, it would come from Him, "at His pleasure," wherein we would take literally what the Bible says in Prov. 1:26—that God would laugh and mock at the demise of the wicked, or in Deut. 28:63 where God will rejoice over the destruction of those who would not obey Him.) His *punishment*, His *judgment* upon them, and their resultant death is found only in the prin-

ciple of His letting them go to the results of their choice to follow other gods which are no-gods and to follow the inclinations of their own hearts. This is what He delights in. This seems to be a strange thought. How is it so? We must continue to unpack this.

### Righteousness

God delights in righteousness because there is freedom and life in it. It is righteous that His government is founded and stands grounded upon principles of freedom of choice and non-coercion and that He will ever have a universe entirely rid of rebellion, populated by sons and daugh-

their choice.

The end result of His governing principles will be victory and eternal security. For *the joy that was set before Him* He endured the cross (Heb. 12:2). He will see the travail of His soul and be satisfied; by Jesus' knowledge and revelation of God's character many will understand God's wrath. It pleased God to serve justice on His Son, who "had done no violence," counting Him among sinners, bruising Him through the hiding of His face from Him and giving Him over to the penalty of sin (Isa. 53:9-12; 2 Cor. 5:21; Ma. 27:46).

Let us fix this principle in our minds regarding the wrath of God. There is a Biblical key which we can and should consistently apply in all instances of disease, destruction, or death that are attributed in any way to God as His own acts:



Then my **anger shall be kindled** against them in that day, and I will **forsake them**, and I will **hide my face from them**, and **they shall be devoured**, and many **evils and troubles shall befall them**; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, **because our God [is] not among us?**

And I will surely **hide my face** in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, **in that**

they are turned unto other gods (Deut. 31:17,18, emphasis added).

This key can be seen again, via the mechanism of Hebrew poetry, the *chiasm*. Notice how God “smites,” in Isaiah 57:17:

A For the iniquity of his coveteousness

B was I wroth

C and smote him

C' I hid me

B' and was wroth

A' and he went on forwardly in the way of his heart.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, I hope it is well understood why I have to challenge any person who would come back with a quick retort such as we have discussed in this study. That is, any rhetorical retort which posits the standard paradigm of a killing God, while cloaking itself as a query, e.g., “God says, ‘I kill’...So *who* sent the flood...?” To such an advocate, I have to ask, “Are you willing to examine some properly developed and supported answers from our view?” It will take a commitment of time and effort, on your part, to delve into articles, discussions and such. You might think you have made a wonderful challenge and while I am prepared to accept it, I have to ask, “Would *you*, my traditionally-satisfied friend, answer the questions I would ask *you*? Would you read studies, even books? These will

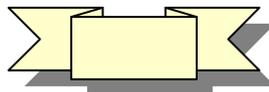


answer the questions you ask, but if they are asked with the attitude that this ‘new’ view couldn’t possibly be right and you would only want to hear what we have to say so that you may rebut, cavil, snort, and defend the status quo, then it would not be fair that you ask me to spend my time explaining why I am settled and sure in the new view, for you would not be prepared to engage in a genuine undertaking. In this case you would merely have written yourself off as a less-than-seriously-engaged student in this study. You would reveal that you have settled for maintaining the status quo, avoidance, and perceived safety of ‘option two.’”

“A church endangers itself when it refuses to operate at more than one level of thinking/maturity. It’s natural for someone at a lower level not to be able to understand concepts of someone at any level above them. That is, cognitive dissonance is experienced when you are exposed to or confronted with concepts at a higher level than where you are now. You are then faced with a choice to either be open-minded and figure out why your current understanding or doctrine is insufficient to answer the questions being asked by the ‘new doctrines’ OR to deny, obstruct, obfuscate, twist, or attack the higher-level concepts as heresy.” —Dean A. Scott, MFA

I am looking for those who are truly willing to investigate, i.e., “option one” people only. I believe the truth will bear a candid investigation.

Your call.



## Recommended Links

•You will want to watch a video created by our brethren in Romania.

<http://www.gsm1888.ro/Video/films.php?video=23375258>

•**Bill Nye, the Science Guy**, will face Ken Ham, founder and president of the Creation Museum for a “cordial but lively” debate on February 4, 2014, at the Museum’s 900-seat Legacy Hall. Tickets have sold out, but they plan to make it possible to observe the debate live on the Internet. Their topic will be “Is creation a viable model of origins in today’s modern scientific era?” For more information go to: <http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/2014/01/16/free-live-stream-debate> [Copy and paste this internet address into your URL address field.]

•Those who haven’t had opportunity to take in the following excellent presentations will want to do so.:

### Herb Montgomery

<http://www.renewedheartministries.com/AudioPresentationSeries.aspx?series=41>

### Greg Boyd

<http://whchurch.org/sermons-media/sermon/new-creation>

### Dr. Jean Sheldon

<http://gnag.org/media/colloquy.htm>

<http://www.godscharacter.com/index.php/cosmic-conflict-lab>

•The book *Servant God: The Cosmic Conflict Over God’s Trustworthiness* is now available at <http://www.GodsCharacter.com>.

# The Project

By Marilyn Campbell

## The video, “A New Look At the Character of God,”

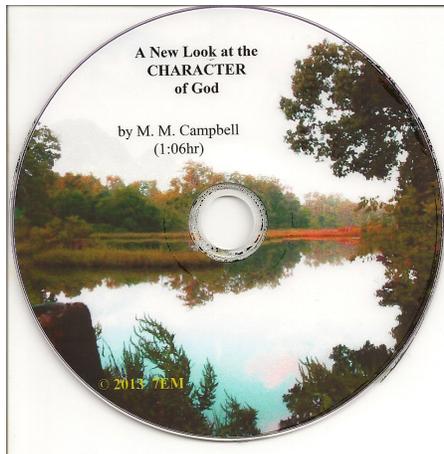
is now at <http://youtu.be/hMaItpis72c>. I tried my best to keep the same URL but failed.

When I first loaded the video on YouTube, I had not had the benefit of critiques from the field (or from anyone). None had seen it to critique it prior to that time. Nor could I take it out to get comments, because I created it on a desktop PC without benefit of making DVDs. (In fact, I still can't make them.) So . . . I made the video purely on my own.

The comments began arriving after I had uploaded it. Thus I thought it best to re-do the whole video and upload it the second time, which I did this month. I “tightened it up,” made the narration “sync” better with the Bible texts, shortened the “gaps,” substituted better pictures in a few cases, took out two questions, and made the ending smoother.

## Corrections I Couldn't Make

I considered every suggestion seriously, but found that, for various reasons, there were two suggestions where I couldn't figure out how to implement them. The first, I could see the advisability of correcting it, but I couldn't figure out



how to do it. It had to do with the comment, “Yeah. Right” that came in after the information on the contradiction between the character of God the Father and that of Jesus. It needed to be brief, “punchy,” accurate, and I couldn't come up with a better way to say it. So, sorry!

The second had to do with my use of various images, especially to depict Jesus in the narrative. The objection had to do with this quotation from Ellen White:

“Would not the mind have clearer, more perfect ideas of angels, of Christ, of all spiritual things, if no pictures were made to represent heavenly things? Many of the pictures made are grossly false as far as truth is concerned. Do not pictures so far removed from the truth give voice to falsehoods? We want to be true in all our representations of Jesus Christ” (CWE 171).

I pondered this for some time. Those who know me know that I take Ellen White very seriously, and I wondered what to do, since the video needs pictures; otherwise, I might as well have saved the trouble of making it. Then I remembered Ellen White's principle of “time and circumstances.” Here is a statement from her son regarding that principle:

“As my children were growing up, we undertook to follow the two-meal system, but finding we could not time the meals as they ought to be timed, we adopted the plan of giving a light lunch at night. On this program they have grown up healthy and hearty. Their grandmother, sister E. G. White, knew of the plan we were following with our children and did not reprove us for it. I remember distinctly what Sister White used to say when the counsels in her writings were being enforced in an inappropriate way. She said ‘time and circumstances must always be taken into account.’”—DF535, W. C. White to R. W. Barnhurst, May 12, 1930. {2BIO 497.7}

## Time and Circumstances

At the time of Ellen White's ministry, books were the way knowledge was disseminated. Everyone read; if you had great thoughts to share, you could share them in the written word.

That is not the case today. While the written word is still the avenue of choice to convey information, teaching the character of God message, in many cases, doesn't fit the lightning-fast needs of today. Getting someone to sit down with a book—even a fast-paced book—is in many cases an exercise in futility. People today prefer to get their information through visual media; they have no time to pursue a doctrine which they believe to be false from the start. They need a quick way to get into it—then they are motivated to give it their full attention. That is the purpose of the video.

## Again, Sr. White

After reading the first quotation in *Counsels to Writers and Editors* (p. 171), I found this statement in the same volume:

"I would not altogether condemn the use of pictures, but let fewer be used, and only such as are good illustrations of the subject. . . . If you choose to have a few pictures and good ones, I do not object" (CWE p. 172).



Here again  
I think we are



seeing the "time and circumstances" argument offered. Even her objection that our publication should not resemble a "comic almanac" (CWE, p. 171) should be tempered with the "time and circumstances" principle. Today truth is disseminated any way it can be. The Chick publications are a case in point. Many have traced their first contact with Christianity through these comic book-like publications. And since I am most certainly not suggesting that the pictures be an object of worship, I think—and hope—that the Lord will understand my motivation.

## Label

I have included with this email a copy of the video's first frame. As you can see in the image on the preceding page, a reader made a beautiful cover for his DVDs and sent me a copy. It is just an idea of what can be done to enhance the videos that you create and make them more appealing.

## In the Future

I expect to see in the future other, perhaps better, presentations to the world through visual media. Let us not discourage those who choose to work in these ways to promote the message of God's character of love. If Sister White were alive today, I think she would approve.

## In Other News

The message is going and growing in Africa, South America, the Caribbean. Elder Demetrius Leach, his son, Christopher Leach, the Straubs,

just returned from a mission trip to assist the brethren in Africa; Elder Murray and Elder Owen Barnett are working the Caribbean area. In the Peru Mission principally lay people are causing the message to stretch out its arms to the entire South American region. (See article herein.)

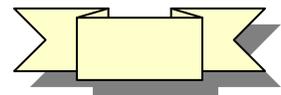
We have a strong work in the Walla Walla area, principally under the sponsorship of students at Walla Walla college. Seattle, Washington, is another area where the message is going out strongly.

Other areas have a robust work as well. We invite you to send a report of the work in your area in to this newsletter. We want to publish it and to rejoice with you.

## Financial

As you may imagine, much more could be done with money to support these enterprises. Perhaps it is time for those who know about these things to put their heads together and come up with a financial plan to encourage these projects, especially the printing of literature. I can only report this through the pages of this newsletter, since I am not a financial person.

Brethren, let us consider this.



# The Peru Mission

By Sandy Workman

## To the Little Flock Worldwide

Although we are now way up in the snowy northern hemisphere, our hearts are all wrapped up in the work in Peru and we have continued intimate contact through Skype studies and even over the phone, if need be. We are in weekly communication with Señora Teresa (Mama T) and she has continued to give monthly messages at an SDA church near her home in Lima, apart from weekly messages at several other SDA churches where she had the opportunity to share “The Watches” in late November. She says the message proved to really awaken the people and the response was huge.

But something occurred just about four weeks ago that is worthy of sharing.

The assistant directors, which my husband and I worked with in

the jungle, from Tennessee, ended their year term there and were headed home. They phoned us with some news that really concerned us. The little flock there was *really* floundering. There were fierce attacks from the enemy, and since the assistant directors were heading back home, it seemed that things could only get worse. We here, at Living



Sandy and Isaac Workman and children, Caleb and Abigail

Waters, began to pray fervently for God to send reinforcement some-

how. As the days went by and more bad news came from Peru, my husband and I prayed harder and in our minds began to form the idea that it was time for Mama T to go and comfort and encourage the group there, which through massive trials had almost all been scattered. Nehemiah came to our mind vividly. However, we decided that God would have to impress her heart as well; therefore, we did not mention our idea to her but continued to pray.

It was only a few days later that Mama T phoned us to say that her home in the Amazon was being taken away by the bank for abandonment, because she had been in Lima for almost a year, and she had to go and attend to business.

## Answered Prayer

We could hardly believe our ears! Then she said, “However, I have been praying about all of this and it has come to me that God is using this to simply get me there, that there is something way more significant than just my house.”

Well, you can imagine how we all rejoiced to see God working so mightily! We knew it was the Lord’s hand working and we sent the necessary money to fly her there. As soon as that was done, what do you know but the enemy attacked *with fury!!!*

## Persecution

A man showed up on the doorstep of Mama T’s apartment and threatened her! She phoned us scared out of her mind. At the airport as she purchased her ticket, a pickpocket got away with two

hundred soles! Ok, I won't go into the list, but a downpour of trials began to rain down on her, and she called us worried about what would happen next and asking for serious prayer. It was simply confirmation to us that the trip was from God and the enemy was *livid*.

### Bessy

We told her that upon arriving in the Amazon, to go straight to visit Bessy, a twenty-three year old and her husband that Isaac and I had given Bible studies to almost on a nightly basis our last year there. Bessy was incredible--another Mama T in the making! Very vocal, talent of speech for sure and knows how to explain concepts *very well*, and had fallen in love with the truth from the first time she heard us speak at a church. She was a leach; we could not get her off us. She was starving spiritually and just took up the message like it was her breath, her life, which she could not do without. We had not been able to be in contact with her since leaving the Amazon and I was desiring greatly to know how she was and to get her in contact with Mama T.

Mama T went straight to her home upon arriving in the jungle, and Bessy shouted and sang for joy. Mama T relays that it was the most amazing welcome she had ever received in all her life. Bessy cried and wanted to immediately sit down and study the Bible and hear all the new messages Mama T had received in the past seven months. Mama T was in shock. She relays that the entire month she was there Bessy did not

leave her side. Every day they would visit at least four or five families and give a Bible study at each home. Mama T found almost all the girls that Isaac and I had studied with for two years, but sad to say, almost all had been bought with gifts and promises by God's enemies and were terribly changed. Seventeen year old Gaby, however, they found two weeks later, living in a terrible home far into the dangerous part of the jungle city, but she was so happy to see Mama T and got together with them for the remaining part of Mama T's trip.



Mama T with two children raised by the orphanage.

Isaac and I prayed that it would come into the heart of Gaby or Mama T to take Gaby to Lima with her, but nothing happened and so we continue to pray for the Lord to

work in Gaby's situation.

### More Persecution

But the trials were *enormous!*

On her first Sabbath she was attacked at an SDA church where Isaac and I use to speak (Bessy's church) by people she had known all her life. They called her "the disciple of the Workman's," a "goddess of lies" (publically). Oh it goes on. She says she has never cried so much in all her life. Bessy and her husband stuck by her side. But it got worse. They sent an SDA spy on her trail to see where she went, what she did on her visits, calling Bessy and her husband traitors. It was just one trial after another.

Another group of Adventists, when they saw Mama T had arrived, interrogated one of the girls that had studied with us and that had been the most promising out of all of them and threatened the girl terribly if she had any contact with us or Mama T. They rigged her computer and saw she had emailed me one day and they threatened her again. Mama T said that the girl finally gave in to their threats and said she would have no more contact with us.

Then a close friend, a church elder who had been studying with Isaac and me, got so scared of losing his position that one day he left Mama T high and dry in the city so as not to be seen with her by certain Adventists that were close by. She said it was just about all she could take and that she felt that she would just drop from all the difficulties. But then she added: "Strangely enough it has been the most

beautiful time in all of my Christian experience.” *Praise the Lord!* The trials made her pray like never before in her life and she said she felt honored to suffer for Christ’s sake.

### Missionaries

She and Bessy visited *many* families on a daily basis, *walking everywhere*, since vehicles are only a commodity

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for the rich minority, giving a Bible study in each home and praying with the people. She said they were able to get at least four or five homes in a day. Bessy’s two little ones, ages five and six, just tagged right along happily. Mama T preached four Sabbaths in one of our favorite little churches in the jungle. Just made me cry. She said that as soon as they found out she was there, they flocked to the church, and one of our girls, Ermelinda, joined them each Sabbath and was startled to see the attendance!

Mama T gave messages on the Harvest Principle and said that it proved to awaken the people. They

had never ever heard of the harvest principle.

Mama T bought a land-line phone with the money we sent her, so that Bessy could be in contact with us here in Alaska. And so I have now had *many* calls from Bessy and started studies with her. She says “Sandy, I just want to preach, I’m just about to explode I want to so bad!” I promised her that God would not stand by while one of His followers has such vital truths for the people, that before she knew it He would open the way. She is one happy lady. I wish you all could meet her.

The latest is that she is now visiting, during the week, the families which she and Mama T studied with during the last four weeks. Mama T is back in Lima and also having studies over the phone with Bessy during the nights she has free.

### Four Weeks in the Jungle

Well, the list goes on. Much was accomplished by that four week, God-led trip, and we see that more of these little trips are *essential, vital*. Araceli Rangel-Heston and I would also like to make a trip as God opens the way, so we are praying and ask for your prayers as well. The thought is that we, along with my mother, could possibly make the trip to Peru (Lima and Iquitos) and then take a speed boat down the Amazon (It’s cheaper than flying.) to Leticia, Colombia and into the interior where there are those who have been studying the literature we have sent during the past years. Just some thoughts to pray about.

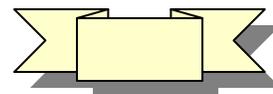
### Sacrifice

Here at Living Waters we have sent

the money necessary, just this week, for Mama T to purchase a laptop and therefore to be in better contact with her. *Praise the Lord!* But we are a small group so we extend the opportunity, to anyone out there, who is so led, to help out with the Peru Mission. Books are greatly needed in Spanish. In our last business meeting we looked at this aspect of the work and are now praying for books, Bibles, literature to be sent there.

### Literature

Literature is *crucial!* The people there read anything and everything they are given because literature is a luxury with which very few are blessed. We are lacking in the financial area. Please keep Peru in your prayers, as well as Alaska. Much is transpiring here on a *daily* basis.



### Earth to be Enlightened

God “imparted to Moses, in the form of a prophecy, a knowledge of His purpose concerning the final triumph of Israel. ‘As truly as I live,’ He declared, ‘all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.’ [Numbers,] Verses 20, 21. God’s glory, His character, His merciful kindness and tender love—that which Moses had pleaded in behalf of Israel—were to be revealed to all mankind. And this promise of Jehovah was made doubly sure; it was confirmed by an oath. As surely as God lives and reigns, His glory should be declared “among the heathen, His wonders among all people” (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 313).

# The Wake-up Dream

By Floyd Phillips

**Soon after I awoke this morning from the intensely vivid dream** that imprinted so strongly on my psyche, my thoughts began to assemble into more coherence as God began communing with me about the potential meaning of this catastrophic dream.

I'm not sure who was with me or who was driving, but in my dream we were traveling along a highway somewhere in the Midwestern United States, simply having conversation about whatever, when suddenly I observed what appeared to be a huge explosion off on the distant horizon. If I recall correctly, it seemed to be around dusk with the colors of the sunset painting the clouds with those iridescent colors that God is so good at displaying.

But the massive column of smoke and fire that began to emerge from that placid picture clearly was nothing from nature. I watched with fascination for a few seconds until I realized I could see the outline of what appeared to be a space-shuttle rocket



rising into the atmosphere, producing a massive column of smoke and fire underneath, creating a spectacular fireworks show enhanced by the dark shadows created from the smoke surrounding the flames.

## Change of Mind

As I pointed this out excitedly to the other passengers in the car, we all watched with admiration this wonder of technology. But it seemed rather strange to me that it was even possible to see so clearly something that had to be happening nearly 1500 miles away in Florida. Yet as I pondered this question while the rocket disappeared into the sky, suddenly I caught sight of another gigantic burst of fire and flying embers that looked far more sinister and ominous, again far off on the horizon.

As I watched this second ball of fire quickly ascending high into the atmosphere I realized that this second explosion was no rocket producing a controlled burn but was rather some sort of horrendous evidence produced by a massive and very destructive bomb dropped somewhere. Then to my amazement as I turned and looked out the other window in the opposite direction I saw another massive explosion of fire going up like a giant mushroom cloud and then I saw another, again in the opposite direction from the second one.

I am not sure how many of these explosions I observed all happening within in a few minutes of each other, but clearly something extremely dramatic and destructive was taking place right before our eyes that would inescapably alter the future of our lives forever.

Strangely enough (and maybe because of the potential for false perspective made more plausible while dreaming) I didn't feel at all threatened while watching these

spectacular displays of power. My initial conclusion about these stupendous explosions was that it must have been American forces unleashing mega-power-sized weapons of destruction on those viewed as our enemies, maybe in Syria or Iran. For whatever reason I concluded that this must be what we were seeing,



so I had no feelings of apprehension concerning our own safety or even our future initially. Since this all must be happening so far away, it likely did not involve any of our own country. I felt rather complacent—that is until reason and logic finally began to seep into my brain.

Maybe it was the intensity and vividness of the brilliant colors or the unavoidable impact that such an event could not help but have on a person's outlook, or maybe it was because the dream was so intense that it made it impossible to remain asleep any longer; I am not sure, but what I know is that I had to begin questioning my first assumptions about the location of these blasts based on simple laws of physics and line of sight.

I finally began realizing how impossible it would be to see so clearly explosions, even if they were atomic explosions, if they had occurred that far away around the curvature of the planet. Given that new fact, it began to sink in that just maybe

what we were witnessing was possibly not an attack on our enemies but more likely an attack on possible major population centers in our own country. If this was true—and by this time my mind was waking up enough to have to admit it—then life as we knew it would certainly be altered, and I was being forced to decide immediately how I was going to react to all of this taking place right before my stunned gaze.

### Irrelevant Assumptions

About this time I became fully awake with no chance of going back to sleep anytime soon, even if I wanted to. As I lay

there awake, pondering why this dream had even culminated in such a bizarre way and asking God to explain it or make whatever sense out of it that He might have in mind, the thought began materializing that maybe this was an opportunity to more realistically consider how I might, in fact, respond to a real crisis of such massive proportions. By jolting my emotions so strongly by this unexpected situation in a vivid dream, I had a few minutes of intense left-over emotional intensity from that dream to ponder how I might actually react if faced with something of this magnitude in real life.

As I began pondering this question I began to realize that many assumptions I have had all my life would, in such a scenario, become irrelevant. Somehow I knew intuitively that if I were to find myself in similar circumstances that would challenge everything I had ever believed, what was truly important

in life would suddenly surface rather succinctly during such a shock of reality. This would force my real subconscious priorities to surface and instantly replace all the things that my mind had long assumed that I valued as most important.

As I lay there seeking to listen to whatever God might want to share with me in this strange and dramatic dream, I began to sense just how irrelevant some of my beliefs might seem given such a situation. Would my highest priority be to be sure to keep the right day as the Sabbath of the Lord? Given this kind of massively threatening situation it seems absurd to imagine such a priority. And although the likely ensuing imposition of martial law, news blackouts and the assertion of extreme militarism would likely follow immediately on the heels of such an attack on our nation, somehow focusing in on making sure I attended church on the right day simply seemed almost silly and certainly irrelevant.

Why am I even reviewing this dream and its effects on me right now? Because I want to discredit beliefs that I have been taught most of my life? Not at all, though I do believe that it is past time we begin to allow such sobering questions to challenge everything we assume is important. What this dream has forced me to face head-on is the fact that much of what we have convinced ourselves to think will be



pivotal issues when the final crisis bursts on this planet may very likely materialize in a radically different way than how we

have imagined in our end-time scenarios. When the unexpected happens that will irrevocably shatter our current perceptions of reality and our lives are instantly catapulted into an unknown, intense new reality that shocks us to reevaluate everything we believe is important, it is then that we discover what we may and may not be willing to die for. Such situations expose what our hearts actually believe, and that is often shockingly different from what we long assumed that we valued for so many years.

### Only a Dream

I am aware that simply reading this will have little to no affect to sober most people as it has me this morning. Oh, it might provide an interesting read, but until the emotions are riveted in the adrenaline pumping effects of a life-challenging event like what I fleetingly felt in this dream, it seems it will be impossible to actually access those parts of our brain where our real beliefs remain tucked away from our conscious awareness.

Of course I am glad that it was only a dream, at least as far as I know at this point. I haven't switched on a radio or logged onto the internet to see if this dream is actually true. But even as the dream faded; I sensed that if such a series of events really did take place, likely the powers that be would instantly pull the plug on all communication outlets and implement an imposed

regimen of government propaganda designed to manipulate the reactions of everyone to fit into their predetermined plan for total control over every person's actions and thinking. That is just the nature of humanity subjected to the kingdoms of this world.

But as I allowed my mind to follow the lead of the Spirit in pondering just what might be a relevant response in such a scenario, even in light of the potential imposition of



martial law and the reactions of influential forces that would vie for power under such circumstances, I still believe that what has already been prophesied in Scripture will accurately come true. It is just that our reactions to such sudden events may well not transpire the way we have so long assumed in our simplistic scenarios of end-time events. And that is where I want to benefit from this traumatic dream as much as possible.

### My History

I was raised to believe that the final crisis on earth will hinge around one main issue—what day people choose to worship on. Everything else will be subordinate to this one issue and

all the forces of evil and the kingdoms of this world will unite to compel, even threaten with capital punishment, any who dare to disobey their unified command. Again, I am not discounting the basic, core truths that lie at the heart of these prophecies. However I am becoming increasingly suspicious of entrenched traditions that have become so calcified in our religious culture that we are afraid to revisit them. What is becoming obvious to

me as of late is how much our emphasis on external performance in religion has eclipsed the kind of life orientation that Jesus brought to view when He was here on earth.

I have learned over a number of years now that much of what I have been taught

in religion is saturated with a high percentage of tradition that passes off as commandments of God. This is increasingly concerning to me, and as a result I have felt compelled to reexamine every assumption I ever had, discovering in the process that nearly all have been based on rather shaky if not downright false foundations. And while the general outline of my core beliefs has proven to be valid, the way they have been interpreted in nearly every prophecy and teaching of the Bible has led many of us not to be more like Christ but to become more like the pious people who crucified Christ. This should be disturbing to anyone desiring to think more clearly and develop the kind

of internal resources that will be vitally needed when the real crisis strikes. Over recent years I have become more willing to have my fundamental beliefs challenged, but in a positive way. I have come to see that following Jesus means something very different from being religious, and that religion may well be one of the greatest dangers that I face. As I have challenged more and more of what I believe, I have discovered to my amazement that nearly every word and term and phrase in religion has been subtly perverted, hijacked in most instances, resulting in a parallel religion that sounds plausible and even biblical but lacks real life-changing power. The Bible speaks of this as having a form of godliness but devoid of the power that should be there.

Unfortunately by the time I have even written this much, the clarifying effects of that dream a few hours ago has already largely faded. Now I am running on memories of what was so clear to me shortly after awakening. Yet all is not lost if I can retain at least some of the memory of the urgency I felt regarding my need to let God do whatever it takes to reorient my own thinking and priorities. I am keenly aware of my need to be prepared to respond rightly when it is discovered that it is too late to prepare any longer.

### The Sealing Process

What began coming to the surface as I meditated on what should be most important to me in that kind of situation was something I have noticed coming from more than one direction lately. This is regarding the seal of God, as highlighted in the prophetic book of Revelation

as one of the pivotal issues that will differentiate between those who are united with Jesus when He comes again and those who will be terrified of His gentle, Lamb-like loving face. I dare not ignore the importance of



participating in this sealing process, whatever that means. Revelation makes clear that there will be but two distinct classes of people very soon: those who have the seal of God securely in their foreheads and everyone else who will be compelled or deceived into accepting the mark of the beast. This is indisputable in prophecy and I do not question it.

What I am challenged to seriously reexamine is the spin that has long been used on this prophecy. What I am concerned about is how we have so branded these prophecies and used them as sound bites and logos and advertising gimmicks in order to swell the membership ranks of a denomination while possibly overlooking many of the far more important issues that Jesus focused on, things like attitudes and practices, about loving our enemies unconditionally,

forgiving offenses immediately and seeking to be filled with a humble servant spirit that so marked the life of the One we claim to represent.

Oh, there is no shortage of discussions, sermons and expositions on these topics. I am not speaking of a complete lack of awareness here so much as I am concerned with a lack of willingness to allow these core truths to rise in priority in our lives above

all the other doctrines that we have allowed to eclipse them. When the emphasis of most of our evangelistic activity primarily revolves around convincing people that the seventh day is the right Sabbath or that people sleep when they die, while conveniently ignoring our need to respond in Christ-like loving reactions to those who disagree with us, I find a disturbing parallel in the words of Jesus when He described just such a group of people who complain in the end that they got caught on the wrong side of the walls of the New Jerusalem by mistake.

“On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?' Then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; go

away from me, you evildoers” (Matthew 7:22-23, NRSV).

### Strange Indifference

This has long been a source of conviction for me as I realize how much of my profession of religion relates to things similar to what Jesus described in these words. I am sure that in our day He would include other things such as keeping the Sabbath on the right day or baptizing members in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit or following a healthy lifestyle. Yet all of the things that seem so vitally important to us and that we feel compelled to convince others to do or believe seem to be viewed with strange indifference here by Jesus. All of the things we tend to emphasize appear to be largely insignificant as the criteria for who will be prepared to enter into the joy of heaven and who will be discovered as unfit to live in His presence.

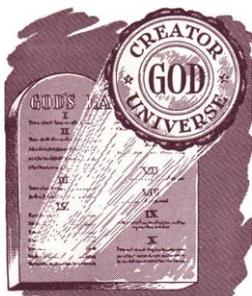
There is a crystal clear statement presented by Jesus that we often quote but fail to practice effectively.

"By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).

Somehow it is easier to talk about love or write books and present eloquent sermons on love, but it seems so elusive to actually experience and pass on the kind of love that at-

tracted so many unsavory people to want to hang out with Jesus.

At times I have pondered what reaction might be produced if we were to actually begin living and expressing the kind of love that drew such misfits into Jesus' presence. What would be the emotional reaction if suddenly our churches and homes began to fill with the kind of shoddy, even despicable characters that seemed to see Jesus as a magnet and a great guy to invite to their parties. It doesn't take much imagination to realize that even I might feel a bit uncomfortable pushed so far out of my comfort zone with such people worshiping in such close proximity to where I am. Yet if I understand Jesus and everything He stood for correctly, it is clear that it is people like me that are the ones with the serious perception problem rather than Jesus, for we are the ones in desperate need of a real conversion if we ever want to enter into the kind of fellowship in the kind of kingdom that we claim to promote.



The great seal of God is found in the heart of His law and includes His name, authority, and dominion.



### How the Seal Fits In

So how does the seal of God fit into the priority of love being the focus of a true disciple? In the after-effects of the dream I had this morning it became much more clear to me. The seal of God is not so much about a day as I was always taught growing

up by my church; rather the true seal of God is an attitude of genuine, heart-based love that marks the lives of every loyal believer, seen more clearly in the early Christian fellowship for three-hundred years after the Holy Spirit was poured out on them.

I don't see the emphasis of those early evangelists on convincing the world about the correct day, or even the proper way, to worship God. I have come to see that everyone worships *compulsively*, whether we are aware of it or not. Many times, if not most of the time, we don't perceive what or how we are worshiping, yet we worship spontaneously nevertheless. I have come to realize that worship is simply what occurs within our heart and brain, as we seek sources to make us feel more alive or to give us protection or provision. Using this definition of worship, it becomes easier to see how often we actually worship and how pitiful are our objects of worship.

### In the Beginning . . .

If we go back to the beginning to discover our context in this war with evil, we find that the two trees of choice in the first garden display the keys to perceiving properly the core issues we all face in these last days. When a crisis exposes the real beliefs of our heart in startling contrast to what we have long thought or convinced ourselves we believe, we may well be shocked. And what will emerge as most important in that day is how much the transforming love of God has shaped our characters and disposition more than any other doctrine we now hold so dear.

In researching the Word to discover what it actually says about a seal, I came to suspect that the seal of God is not any outward sign or activity that can be measured or enforced. Much of what we use for measuring, whether or not we are Christian, we received directly from the principles we inherited from the forbidden tree infused into the gene pool of all humanity that continues to blind us to the real issues we face. No, the true seal of God is not performing the right activities on the correct day of the week but is rather an *attitude*, a disposition that has been transformed to again reflect the image of God in the lives of those who have allowed Him free access to their hearts.

Think about this more seriously for a moment. When final events close in upon us and we find ourselves in a crisis of epic proportions, what will be our heart's priority?

Will it be a rigid determination to observe a certain day as the right day of worship? Not hardly, at least if the heart has no compelling reasons to do so. Head beliefs don't stand a chance to survive the intense tests that will evaporate all our good intentions, much to the shock of many who are relying on them. Will our main concern be about having confidence in knowing that I have the right answers to key questions about doctrine? Are you kidding? Maybe these things work for us now, but when a crisis hits and we go into survival mode, all bets are off, except what our hearts have

been already trained to value.

### Preparing for the Final Crisis

So, what is the truly effective way to prepare for the coming crisis? There is one simple way and we ignore it at the risk of our eternal destiny.

“They will know you are my disciples. . . “ (John 13:35).



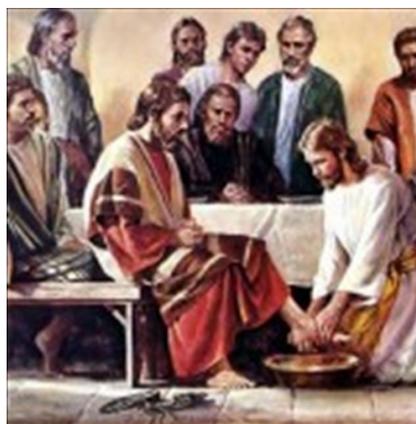
Am I suggesting that we scrap our belief about connection between the seal of God and the keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath? Not at all! But what I am starting to see clearly is that if we maintain a higher priority

for the external observance of a particular day of worship while continuing to sidestep the conviction of God's Spirit, seeking to make us aware of our desperate need for knowing God personally and becoming available channels of His love as our top priority, no amount of careful, meticulous Sabbath observance will have any benefit that we now imagine it might procure for us.

We have too long chased a decoy dangled before us of thinking that the Sabbath kept on the correct day is the seal of God and that keeping the counterfeit day of worship constitutes the mark of the beast. Our settled confidence in this narrow interpretation has led us to be blinded with a spiritual arrogance

not unlike the Jews who were so sure they had all the truth that they had no room for repentance and refused to revise any of their doctrines when the very God of truth attempted to demonstrate real love among them.

I have come to realize that many who believe they know all the facts about the seal of God and how to have it by keeping the right day as the Sabbath actually are filled already with the spirit of the mark of the beast. For the mark of anything is the hallmark or the main characteristic of that thing; and the very nature of the beast who first shows up in the tree of good and evil as a conniving, enticing serpent is a reliance on force and fear as his primary means by which to control others. And this spirit of seeking to control others through whatever means necessary is the very antipathy of the spirit of freedom and love that marked the character of the One we claim to be following. Force and compulsion is the very essence of the beast, for it is belief in this principle that causes all who share this spirit to receive his mark.

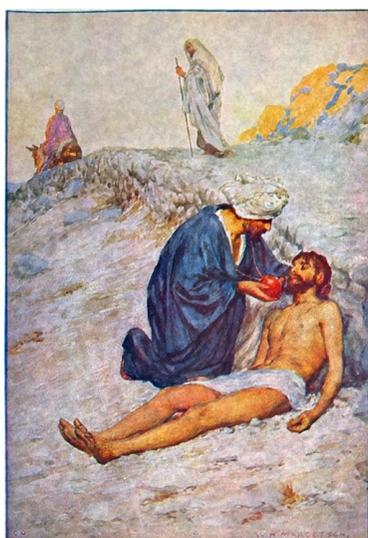


Because we have allowed the spirit of the beast to distort our views of how God runs His universe, we have long ago lost sight of the real gospel as revealed in the life and teachings of Jesus. The gospel we now purport to preach is almost always a neutered, watered-down version that involves belief in a God who knows both good and evil and

relies on rewards and punishments to control His universe. As long as we cling to this fundamental lie about God's character, we will be incapable of making sense out of everything else He is seeking to show us. It is this core issue of what God is really like and the methods He uses to run His moral universe around which everything else pivots. Until we get that clear in our thinking we are wasting our time arguing about all the other issues of religion and doctrine.

### Love Conquers All

A few days ago I felt a strong pang of conviction as the Spirit forcefully impressed on me my own lack of real love even though I thrill with excitement in discovering new truths from His Word and learning to listen to the voice of His Spirit. As



someone was reading the following text, I suddenly saw more clearly how unbalanced I still am and how much in need I am of the love of God to transform every part of my being and thinking if I am to settle onto the path that leads to life.

“If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:2).

It suddenly struck me with new force how little love I really have in

my heart and how little I feel for others around me. If I am honest, and I have to be if I want to be a serious God-chaser, I have to admit that my capacity to love seems to be handicapped. Oh, some might say I am somewhat loving, but inside I suspect that the real kind of love is largely still a theory that I feel drawn to study and weave into all the other things I am learning while I am still in need of living fully in it.

I can really get excited about prophecy, and I am very pumped right now as I am plunging into a fresh, intense, personal study of

Revelation like I have never even wanted to before. Insights and new paradigms are now emerging that are stimulating beyond anything I have ever experienced before. The ability to unravel mystery after mystery in the Bible--mysteries that have baffled me most of my life has been heart-warming for me over recent years. So many things that simply made no sense whatsoever now are coming together with such clarity and force that I feel blessed beyond measure.

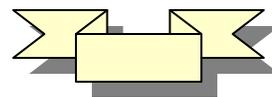
And in recent years God has been guiding me through circumstances that have challenged me to trust Him more and more as my financial situation becomes unpredictable. I am learning to rely on Him totally instead of a steady job or a fixed income for my needs. This experience has been stimulating and rewarding as in recent months we have watched God faithfully providing for us. As a result our faith continues to strengthen.

But as I face the compelling mes-

sage of this verse I realize that I still do not have the kind of intimate love relationship with God that He has been seeking to bring me for years. I am not saying I have not wanted to or that I have not tried or that I am openly fighting His love. Oh no! Quite the opposite. I have been desperately seeking to move closer to knowing this God of love who continues to amaze me with how different He really is compared to the monster-god I was afraid He was like.

There is one more aspect of the sealing process I have not touched on yet. The oil in many of Jesus' parables represented the Holy Spirit and the oil was often applied symbolically to the forehead—the same place where the seal of God is applied. In my research I also found that oil in Scripture refers to joy which is to be our strength. All of this fits perfectly together without dissonance, for the Holy Spirit, joy (bonding emotionally with God and His children around us), love and the Sabbath are all inextricably intertwined.

In conclusion may I say that I choose to be open and available to let God love me and help me get my priorities realigned so that when the real crisis explodes over this earth I will not be found with an empty lamp and no backup oil to refuel it.



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# Justice and Love

(Abridged)

By Alistair Begg

I AGREE COMPLETELY with Begg's thesis here. The complete sermon is found at <http://www.truthforlife.org/resources/sermon/justice-and-love/> Next time I will tell you why I chose to publish this excerpt.

If you talk with the average person in the street he would probably say to you that the Bible is the record of how man is trying to find

God. Or the Bible provides the story of what man is supposed to do to make himself acceptable to God, to put himself in a right standing with God. And of course that is to describe the Bible in the absolute wrong terms. Because what we find in the Bible is the story of God seeking for man. What we have is the record of what God has done to put men and women in a right standing with Himself. The Bible says that we, as men and women, have turned our backs on God, that we are therefore alienated from

God, and that we have nothing at all that we can say to defend ourselves.



## Romans 3

If you have your Bible open, you will see that phrase in verse 19, which was our beginning verse in chapter 3, “so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.” Every mouth silenced and the whole world accountable. By our sins we have infinitely wronged God. And even if we were to live a thousand lifetimes, and

every lifetime doing better than we had done in the previous lifetimes, we would never ever be able to satisfy the demands of God's justice. And Paul, in this great theological treatise, which is the book of Romans, works this out with masterful skill. In chapter 1 . . . he points out that men and women have exchanged God's glory, they have turned away from all that God has made known of Himself in order that they might worship created things rather than the creator.

When he comes now into Chapter 3, he makes it clear that we have not only exchanged God's glory, but we have in verse 23, fallen short of God's glory. And this describes our predicament before God. Therefore, verse 20, no one will be declared righteous in His sight by observing the law because through the law we become conscious of our sin. Now if Romans had finished at verse 20, chapter 3, it would be a fairly dreadful piece of work, wouldn't it? But wonderfully it goes on in verse 21 with the opening phrase, “But now a righteousness from God.” And it really is at this point that Paul begins to lay out the details of the gospel, to explain how it is and why it is that men and women who are sinners could ever be made right with a holy God.

## Reconciliation

How it is that God could pardon sinners and admit them into heaven without spoiling heaven. How it is that God could exercise His justice in the punishing of sin and yet not mete out His justice on those who are the sinners. The “good news” is

the good news of what God has done to reconcile us to Himself. If your eyes there on verse 24 you see it in just a phrase. Despite the fact that there is no difference, for everyone has sinned and falls short of the glory of God, and each are justified—notice the phraseology “justified freely by His grace.” Any attempt on our behalf to put ourselves right with God through our obedience to the law ends inevitably in frustration and in disappointment and in shame.

### Hymn Writers

And sometimes it takes the hymn writer to help us put that in succinct terms—in terms that are memorable for us. So in the hymn “Rock of Ages” we have this exact truth expressed in a stanza:

“Not the labors of my hands  
Could fulfill your law’s demands.  
Could my zeal—my trying, my endeavor—  
Could my zeal no respite know,  
Could my tears forever flow,  
All for sin could not atone.  
You must save and you alone.”

And it is this wonder which is predicted and described in anticipation in our Old Testament reading in Isaiah 53, which is worked out in theological terms here by Paul in Romans, chapter 3, that introduces us to this wonderful, good news. But now a righteousness from God—from God, not a righteousness from us. Not a righteousness by us. But a righteousness from God. God is the one who takes the

initiative in bridging the gap between sinful man and God in His holiness. And I want you to listen very carefully to this, because there is a possibility that although many of us pay lip service to this, we have never really brought our hearts and lives and intellects under the immensity of this truth. Let me put it to you as succinctly and straightforwardly as I can.

This righteousness that is referenced here in verse 21, a righteousness from God, which is apart from law has been made known to which the law and the prophets testify. In other words Paul says this isn’t some



newfangled thing that has just been dreamt up. If you go back and read the law, if you go back and read the prophets, you will find that it is all pointing forward to what God is going to do in this amazing provision. And this divine righteousness—verse 22—is from God, comes through faith in Jesus Christ, to all who believe.

In other words, the divine righteousness is the status that God confers upon believers without their personal obedience because He reckons or imputes to the sinner the obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ. That

### Some Relevant Texts

“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son” (1 John 5:11).

“He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1 John 5:12).

“He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24).

“Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24).

“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Romans 3:28).

“Therefore as by the offence of one [the first Adam] judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one [Jesus] the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life” (Romans 5:18).

“For by one offering [the cross] He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified” (Hebrews 10:14).

“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled we shall be saved by His life” [in us] (Romans 5:10).

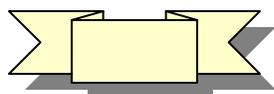
For as by one man’s disobedience [Adam I] many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one [Jesus] shall many be made righteous” (Romans 5:19).

God makes—puts a man or woman in a right standing with Himself by crediting the righteousness of Christ to our account. So that we are again in the words of a hymn writer, “a debtor to mercy alone.” That the ground of our being put right with God, the ground of our justification, as Luther said, “Lies utterly outside of us.” We are not put right with God as a result of anything done by us; we are not put right with God as a result of anything done in us. We are put right with God as a result of something done *for us*.

So that when we come around this [communion] table we do not look into ourselves and say, How am I doing this Good Friday; how are my prayers doing today? How has my evangelism been going? How has my obedience and devotion been going? And so on. Do that if you choose but I guarantee you it will depress you and cause you to run from this table.

### Radical

Now what we say is, On what possible basis could I ever come to this table? Because of our righteousness that is not my own which God, although I don't deserve it and cannot earn it, has reckoned to my account. Now if you think that is radical, let me make it even more radical for you. In Christ a believer is completely and once and for all justified and is as accepted by God today as they will ever be.



# The Gospel of God

## Part 4 (Conclusion)

By Terry Campbell

**“Fear God,” the angel cries out, “Give glory to Him. For the hour of His judgment has come.”**

**In Revelation 14:6-7, at this most critical moment of Christ's war with Satan, an angel has come, bearing God's gospel message. This is the message that God wants the world to hear. Consequently, this is the message that Satan does not want the world to understand. If Satan can dilute this message, garble it in translation, or give it meanings that God never intended, then the real gospel is lost, and the world remains in darkness.**

He has tried this tactic before. “So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to

be carried away by the flood.” Revelation 12:15. A flood of people, of interpretations, of misinformation and out-right lies has washed away or fogged the lens of the particular and exact original meanings and context of these powerful words of God.

In previous articles we have seen that to fear God is not simply a feeling of reverence or awe or fear, but is instead the definition of faith, using the words God has given, even



in the absence of evidence, to conquer trials and temptations and live your life by walking in the Spirit. Similarly, we found that while we have no glory to give to God, we

can be the agent of glory for the Godhead, intertwined with the Divine as Their useful minister in completing the Father's will in the world. And most recently, in the hour of His judgment, we discovered the great promise of our generation—we can stand pure and sinless before God today.

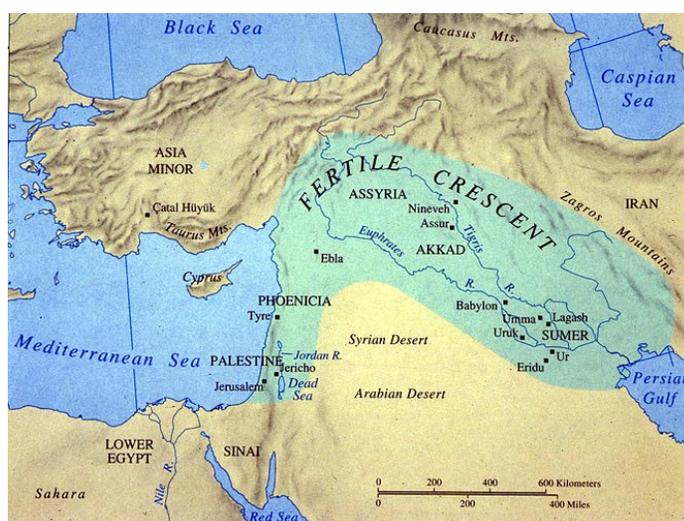
### The Last Part

So now we turn to the final message the angel brings. “[A]nd worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.” That person is, of course, our Creator God, Jesus Christ, who, according to John 1:3 is the Creator of all things “and without Him nothing was made that was made.” Often, a great deal of effort is taken to relate this text to the fourth commandment, to accentuate that the great message of the first angel is to point out that God wants people to become Seventh day Adventists.

It is true that in the fourth commandment, as written in Exodus 20:11, bears a connection between the creation and the Sabbath. “For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.” And certainly an identifying mark of God's people is obedience. “If you love me keep my commandments” (John 14:15). But our goal is not to defend a day of worship. Our goal is to define what it means to worship.

### Worship Is . . .

It is the same goal mentioned in 2 Kings, chapter 17. Here, the nation of Israel has been swept away by the Assyrian nation, marched off to foreign lands, never to return. In their place come other people that Assyria has gathered from around their nation and brought to Israel to repopulate the towns and cities. But there is a problem. . . . “And it was so, at the beginning of their dwelling there, *that* they did not fear the LORD; therefore the LORD sent lions among them,



which killed *some* of them. So they spoke to the king of Assyria, saying, “The nations whom you have removed and placed in the cities of Samaria do not know the rituals of the God of the land; therefore He has sent lions among them, and indeed, they are killing them because they do not know the rituals of the God of the land.” Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, “Send there one of the priests whom you brought from there; let him go and dwell there, and let him teach them the rituals of the God of the land.” Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them

how they should fear the LORD” (2 Kings 17:25-28).

### Ritual

Here, at the close of history, how many are there in the world who “know the rituals of the God of the land”? Is worship simply the exercise of driving to a place on a particular day, standing, sitting, kneeling, sitting, standing and leaving in a sort of ritual calisthenics? Is that the worship to which the angel refers? Or could we use a priest to show us the correct way to worship our Creator? For these Samaritan people however, the story ends poorly. “They feared the LORD, yet served their own gods—according to the rituals of the nations from among whom they were carried away” (2 Kings 17:33).

Is our worship pleasing to God or have we brought into God's temple concepts of worship “according to the rituals of the nations?” What is worship in the Bible anyway?

The essential meaning of the Hebrew word “shachah” or worship conveys the idea of subservience or even prostration. The Strong's Concordance definition says “to depress, i.e. prostrate (espec. Reflex in homage to royalty or God):-bow (self) down, crouch, fall down (flat) humbly beseech, do (make) obeisance, do reverence, make to stoop, worship.” And the verses in which this word is used make that connection in crystal clear contexts.

“And I bowed my head and worshiped the LORD, and blessed the LORD God of my master Abraham, who had led

Me by the way of truth to take the daughter of my master's brother for his son" (Genesis 24:48).

"Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped" (Job 1:20).

"And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with *his* face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem



bowed before the LORD, worshipping the LORD" (2 Chronicles 20:18).

"Then a herald cried aloud: 'To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, *that* at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, *and* psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up; and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace'" (Daniel 3:4-6).

You might conclude from these passages that God enjoyed seeing people's backs, and approved of a style of worship where people groveled beneath Him. But how reasonable is it to think that God and Nebuchadnezzar, the pagan king, shared equivalent ideas of what represented worship. And if it was customary in the time and place for people to indicate homage and reverence to earthly royalty by prostrating and bowing, how reasonable would it be to trans-

fer that custom to how one approached God. Is that deference merely a "ritual of nations"?

It is interesting to compare the occurrences (and more) mentioned

above with the relationship and attitude where God's physical presence is encountered.

When Abraham encountered God, he treated Him as one would any traveler, offering him rest and food. But when the Lord revealed Himself, Abraham's manner never changed. And when Abraham argued for the people of Sodom, he did it face to face. "Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the LORD" (Genesis 18:22).

Jacob, after discovering that he had been wrestling with God through the night, continued to cling to Him, demanding, "I will not let You go unless You bless me!" (Genesis 32:26).

God asked Moses to remove his shoes but it was Moses' own idea to hide his face. "Then He said, 'Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand *is* holy ground.' Moreover He said, 'I *am* the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God" (Exodus 3:5, 6).

And God specifically told Ezekiel to stand in His presence before the throne in heaven. "So when I saw *it*, I fell on my face, and I heard a voice of One speaking. And He said to me, 'Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak to you'" (Ezekiel 1:28-2:1).

### **Humiliation and Subjugation**

Although it does occur at times (Joshua, Manoah), humiliation and subjugation are never a requirement of God to those He visits. In fact, Jesus speaks very specifically about our relationship with Him when He says, "No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you" (John 15:15). So, considering that the angel tells us that God requires our worship, and worship has nothing to do with kneeling and saying how inferior we are compared to God, what does God say that it is?

The beginning of an answer might be found in Ezekiel. The prophet, in vision, observes a tragic event. "So He brought me into the inner court of the LORD's house; and there, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the

porch and the altar, *were* about twenty-five men with their backs toward the temple of the LORD and their faces toward the east, and they were worshipping the sun toward the east” (Ezekiel 8:16).

People of God, in God’s house, saying they worshipped God but in reality, worshipping the sun. This sounds a great deal like the condition of God’s people at the end of time. They say they worship God. They may think of themselves as godly. Their leaders may even demonstrate with great miracles that their worship is accepted by God. They are deceived, and how they do love to receive that lie.

Naturally, the idea of actually worshipping the sun from the court of the temple would be unheard of. The vision symbolized some action that was being done—an action that God related to false worship. “For they have filled the land with violence; then they have returned to provoke Me to anger” (Ezekiel 8:17).

Micah fills in some additional detail. “Woe to those who devise iniquity, And work out evil on their beds! At morning light they practice it, because it is in the power of their hand. They covet fields and take *them* by violence, Also houses, and seize *them*. So they oppress a man and his house, a man and his inheritance” (Micah 2:1, 2).

### Isaiah’s Answer

But Isaiah lays it all open for everyone to see. “Yet they seek Me daily, And delight to know My ways, As a nation that did righteousness, And

did not forsake the ordinance of their God. They ask of Me the ordinances of justice; They take delight in approaching God. ‘Why have we fasted,’ *they say*, ‘and You have not seen? *Why* have we afflicted our souls, and You take no notice?’ In fact, in the day of your fast you find



pleasure, And exploit all your laborers. Indeed you fast for strife and debate, And to strike with the fist of wickedness. You will not fast as *you do* this day, To make your voice heard on high. Is it a fast that I have chosen, A day for a man to afflict his soul? *Is it* to bow down his head like a bulrush, And to spread out sackcloth and ashes? Would you call this a fast, And an acceptable day to the LORD?” (Isaiah 58:1-5).

The powerful leaders who oppressed their fellow countrymen, but then went to the temple, fasted and prayed, expecting the blessing of

God—these were the men worshipping the sun. This was the abomination which angered the Lord. So, if false worship is described as the hypocrisy of proclaiming to be God’s people while you destroy those around you as a fix for your greed habit, would it then be reasonable to suggest that true Godly worship is somehow associated with compassion for others?

Let us read on and see the description of real worship as defined by God. “*Is* this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? *Is it* not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh? Then your light shall break forth like the

morning, your healing shall spring forth speedily, and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry, and He will say, ‘Here I *am*’” (Isaiah 58:6-9).

It makes sense that a God who focuses His life, love and happiness on the needs of others would designate those activities as the manner in which He wishes to be worshipped. And if a choice needs to be made about whether God or people need our attention, the answer is

clear. “Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift” (Matthew 5:23, 24).

Jesus recognized that and argued several times with the church leaders about it. “But if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless” (Matthew 12:7).

### God’s Great Desire

God desires us to be merciful. This is greater to him than every prayer, every offering, every song or every church visit. “With what shall I come before the LORD, *And* bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, With calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, Ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn *for* my transgression, The fruit of my body *for* the sin of my soul? He has shown you, O man, what *is* good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:6-8).

So in that context, what is the purpose of gathering together? How much mercy is present during a sermon? How many heavy burdens are lifted at potlucks? Paul pulls all of these ideas together in Romans chapter 12. First, he declares the individual responsibility in matters of worship. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable ser-

vice” (Romans 12:1).

In this passage, *service* is a Greek word which could just as easily be translated as worship. We worship God by giving our entire selves over to God’s use. But when more people come together to give themselves to God, the gifts given to each allow that much more of God’s mercy to wash through a community. “*Be* kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality” (Romans 12:10-13). In answering the call of the angel we give our selves to the worship of God, and we find ourselves in service to mankind.

The first angel’s message connects sinners to the power of God’s word to change lives. It connects the transformed life to the world of the miraculous and gives the believer participation in the works of God. It prepares the follower for presentation before the throne, pure and holy, ready for a life with God. And finally, the message connects the follower of God to the service of God.

### Sequence

Do we get this out of sequence? Do we flail about, trying to do good things when we have no knowledge of the power of God ourselves? Can we even speak of loosening the bonds of some poor soul when they see in us the exact same burden?

James did not think so. “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy” (James 3:17).

In every one of these examples, participation in God’s service came after the heart had been transformed. In Revelation, the first angel waits to talk about worship until after the judgment call. In Romans, service for God begins only after a complete transformation. James describes some very good reasons why this is so. “But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking *exist*, confusion and every evil thing *are* there” (James



3:14-16).

As we have seen previously, Peter also describes this gospel message and it too is set down sequentially and in the same order as that of the Revelation 14 angel. “[A]s His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious

promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust. But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love” (2 Peter 1:4-7).

*Fear God!* – We have been given the transforming tools of faith in the form of exceedingly great and precious promises.

*Give Glory To God!* – We become partakers of the divine nature and receive knowledge of God.

*The Hour Of His Judgment Is Come!* – We receive godliness and purity as we cast all of our life upon Jesus.

*Worship Him!* – We now see the world as God does and reach out in brotherly kindness and love.

But the tools of faith, “mighty in God for pulling down strongholds” we leave unused, except to win arguments with other denominations. We try to give our meager disgusting temporary glory to God, instead of recognizing the miracle that could be our transformation. We let ourselves think that God will love us covered in the filth of sin, when purity and holiness are ready to be lavished upon us. And we attempt to obey when what God desires is service.

We have been given all that we need to transform our lives and our world. The Father, Son and Spirit are all waiting for us to join Them

in giving glory. What sin do you love so much that you could not let Jesus take it away and present you pure and holy? The world is filled with hurting suffering people that need a church filled with servants, with worshippers, of God. Yes, that entry in the gospel message applies to Sabbath keeping, but in a much wider way than we have interpreted it. It is a loud voice to the entire world,

involving far more than a denomination. It applies to the whole world and will come from a people who have learned what worship really means. We need not wait for the final showdown of Revelation 13. The promises of God will change our life today.

