Historic Adventism — The Communion Service
The Experience of God’s People
The Perfect Exercise of Love

The Sealing of God’s People —
A LIFE OR DEATH MESSAGE
Historic Adventism (18)

The ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper are two monumental pillars, one without and one within the church. Upon these ordinances Christ has inscribed the name of the true God.

The Experience of God’s People

Zecchabiah’s vision of Joshua and the Angel applies with peculiar force to the experience of God’s people in the closing scenes of the great day of atonement.

The Perfect Exercise of Love

The spirit and attitude manifested to their brethren, tells their spirit and attitude toward God. . . . The evidence that we are accepted in the Beloved—that we have passed from death unto life—is that we “love the brethren”.

The Sealing of God’s People (1)

Our own course of action will determine whether or not we shall receive the seal of the living God.

Features

- Editorial
- Worldwide Pictorial News
- Poem
- Children’s Corner
HERE is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12). One of the characteristics which is shown in the lives of God’s people is patience. They are called “saints.”

In the Bible we have records of men of God who developed patience, even in the midst of great trials and difficulties. The case of Job is one example. The Scriptures mention the patience of Job, and his name has become almost synonymous with this important virtue. We read of him:

“Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy” (James 5:10, 11).

To those who would be living in the last days, just prior to the coming of Jesus, the following advice is given:

“For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise” (Hebrews 10:36).

“Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh” (James 5:7, 8).

How wonderful it would be if, the next day after the sowing, the farmer could harvest the grain which he expects to get. But he must wait patiently for the seed to spring up, grow, bring forth fruit, and when it is ripe he can reap the harvest. He has to wait many months until the time of the harvest. Likewise we would like to be in the kingdom tomorrow, but we must wait patiently until the day of the Lord’s coming.

In our daily life experience we ought to demonstrate that we are that people characterized by Revelation 14:12. We should exercise patience in the home, at work, in the church, and in society in general.

Many excuse themselves saying: “This is my character, my nature; I cannot help it. This is how I am.” But such natural inclinations as losing one’s temper, having a lack of self-control, fretfulness, irritability, and impatience should be brought into subjection to the mighty power of God who is able to change our characters. We must die daily, and bear with opposition, without becoming unduly provoked. Especially those who are God’s servants should prove that they have learned with Jesus to be patient.

“The servants of God who teach the truth should be men of judgment. They should be men who can bear opposition and not get excited; for those who oppose the truth will pick at those who teach it, and every objection that can be produced, will be brought in its worst form to bear against the truth. The servants of God who bear the message must be prepared to remove these objections, with calmness and meekness, by the light of truth. Frequently opposers talk to ministers of God in a provoking manner, to call out something from them of the same nature, that they can make as much of it as possible and declare to others that the teachers of the commandments have a bitter spirit and are harsh, as has been reported. I saw that we must be prepared for objections, and with patience, judgment, and meekness, let them have the weight they deserve, not throw them away or dispose of them by positive assertions, and then bear down upon the objector, and manifest a hard spirit toward him; but give the objections their weight, then bring forth the light and the power of the truth, and let it outweigh and remove the errors.”

Here are some timely counsels from the pen of inspiration about exercising and practicing patience:

“If we desire to see the King in His beauty, we must here behave worthily. We must outgrow our childishness. When provocation comes, let us be silent. There are times when silence is eloquence. We are to reveal the patience and kindness and forbearance that will make us worthy of being called sons and daughters of God.”

“The patience of the most patient will be severely tested. The husband or the wife may utter words that are liable to provoke a hasty reply, but let the one who is spoken to keep silent. In silence there is safety. Often silence is the severest rebuke that could be given to the one who has sinned with his lips.”

“Let the Christian bridle his tongue, firmly resolving not to speak harsh, impatient words. With the tongue bridled, he may be victorious in every trial of patience through which he is called to pass.”

References:

1 Early Writings, p. 102.
2 The Review and Herald, July 20, 1905.
3 The Adventist Home, p. 442.
4 The Review and Herald, October 31, 1907.
In Volume XLI No. 3 of the *Reformation Herald*, we began this two-part series on the importance and sacredness of the communion service and its practice in the history of Seventh-day Adventism. The Communion, also known as the Lord’s Supper, is the antitype of the Passover service of Old Testament times. Through the specific instructions given by God in Exodus chapter 12, we learned that none could partake of the Passover without having first been circumcised. We then saw how baptism—being the New Testament circumcision—is likewise required before one is eligible to partake of the Lord’s Supper.

Furthermore, by studying 1 Corinthians 5:7–13, we learned that in the early Christian church, those known to persist in open sin could not partake of it. There is a solemn work of self-examination for each individual to perform prior to the service and, according to 1 Corinthians 1:10 and 11:18–20, 29, all who participate must first be reconciled one to another. In 1850, through the Spirit of Prophecy, the early Seventh-day Adventists were instructed as to the importance of performing this service as separate from unbelievers as possible. A testimony written in 1900 refers to the communion service as an ordinance “within” the church, in contrast to baptism, which is “without” the church. This position was likewise affirmed by the 1870 editorial staff of *The Review and Herald*, which considered it inconsistent for a Sabbathkeeper to partake of the sacrament with those regarded as violating the commandments of God.

In the first article of this two-part series, we also began an analysis of a familiar passage in *The Desire of Ages*, p. 656—a passage which, regrettably, is too often read superficially. On that page, reference is made to 1 Corinthians 5:11, a text which clearly reveals that lawbreakers are not to be allowed to partake of the sacred emblems in the communion service. We will now continue with this analysis.

### Wheat and tares

“But beyond this [persistent open violation of the law of God] none are to pass judgment. God has not left it with men to say who shall present themselves on these occasions. For who can read the heart? Who can distinguish the tares from the wheat?”

Here we find another restriction. Where it is written, “But beyond this,” it is speaking of those only among the wheat and the tares. Where are wheat and tares found? “The field,” Christ said, “is the world.” But we must understand this as signifying the church of Christ in the world. The parable is a description of that which pertains to the kingdom of God, His work of salvation of men; and this work is accomplished through the church. True, the Holy Spirit has gone out into all the world; everywhere it is moving upon the hearts of men; but it is in the church that we are to grow and ripen for the garner of God.

Both the wheat and the tares join the church. “Not all that is sown in the field is good grain. The fact that men are in the church does not prove them Christians.

“The tares closely resembled the wheat while the blades were green; but when the field was white for the harvest, the worthless weeds bore no likeness to the wheat that bowed under the weight of its full, ripe heads. Sinners who make a pretension of piety mingle for a time with the true followers of Christ, and the semblance of Christianity is cal-

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**Historic Adventism (18)**

*The Communion Service (Concluded)*

Abridged and adapted from a study guide by

**PETER D. LAUSEVIC**

[Emphasis supplied throughout.]
culated to deceive many; but in the harvest of the world there will be no likeness between good and evil. Then those who have joined the church, but who have not joined Christ, will be manifest."

What is it meant by tares? “So it is from enmity to Christ that Satan scatters his evil seed among the good grain of the kingdom. The fruit of his sowing he attributes to the Son of God. By bringing into the church those who bear Christ’s name while they deny His character, the wicked one causes that God shall be dishonored, the work of salvation misrepresented, and souls imperiled.”

Should these tares (unconsecrated church members) be separated from the church and forbidden to take part in the Communion? “Christ’s servants are grieved as they see true and false believers mingled in the church. They long to do something to cleanse the church. Like the servants of the householder, they are ready to uproot the tares. But Christ says to them, ‘Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest.’”

Why not root out the tares? “There is in the Saviour’s words another lesson, a lesson of wonderful forbearance and tender love. As the tares have their roots closely interwined with those of the good grain, so false brethren in the church may be closely linked with true disciples. The real character of these pretended believers is not fully manifested. Were they to be separated from the church, others might be caused to stumble, who but for this would have remained steadfast.”

The reason for this is that the character of these tares is not fully manifested. How long is the church to bear with such souls? Till their characters are fully manifested and their sins become open transgressions. Then they are no longer tares, for they are fully distinguishable. And for how long will God’s true church have to bear with such elements? “The world has no right to doubt the truth of Christianity because there are unworthy members in the church, nor should Christians become disheartened because of these false brethren. How was it with the early church? Ananias and Sapphira joined themselves to the disciples. Simon Magus was baptized. Demas, who forsook Paul, had been counted a believer. Judas Iscariot was numbered with the apostles. The Redeemer does not want to lose one soul; His experience with Judas is recorded to show His long patience with perverse human nature; and He bids us bear with it as He has borne. He has said that false brethren will be found in the church till the close of time.”

Let us remember that in speaking of the tares, Jesus was not speaking of those persisting in open sin. “Christ has plainly taught that those
their last hope. Many who think themselves Christians will at last be found wanting. Many will be in heaven who their neighbors supposed would never enter there. Man judges from appearance, but God judges the heart. The tares and the wheat are to grow together until the harvest; and the harvest is the end of probationary time.” 11

A tare is not one that is persistently daring to continue in open sin, but is rather a spurious believer whose motives may actually be evil, yet are hidden from sight.

A Judas

“When believers [who are confirmed as bonafide believers and church members] assemble to celebrate the ordinances, there are present messengers unseen by human eyes. There may be a Judas in the company, and if so, messengers from the prince of darkness are there, for they attend all who refuse to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. Heavenly angels also are present. These unseen visitants are present on every such occasion. There may come into the company persons who are not in heart servants of truth and holiness, but who may wish to take part in the service. They should not be forbidden. There are witnesses present who were present when Jesus washed the feet of the disciples and of Judas. More than human eyes beheld the scene.” 12

Was Judas a Caiaphas? Was he professing heathenism? Or was he a member of the newly organized Christian church? In The Desire of Ages, p. 294, we read that the disciples had been eager for Judas to become one of their number. We then read that Judas actually “joined the disciples.” “He was not insensible to the beauty of the character of Christ. He felt the influence of that divine power which was drawing souls to the Saviour. He who came not to break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax would not repulse this soul while even one desire was reaching toward the light. The Saviour read the heart of Judas; He knew the depths of iniquity to which, unless delivered by the grace of God, Judas would sink. In connecting this man with Himself, He placed him where He might, day by day, be brought in contact with the outflowing of His own unselfish love. If he would open his heart to Christ, divine grace would banish the demon of selfishness, and even Judas might become a subject of the kingdom of God.” 13

Judas was ordained to the ministry 14 and was then brought “within the inner circle of [Christ’s] chosen and trusted disciples.” 15 He was named treasurer, minister, evangelist; he could heal the sick and cast out devils. 16

Why Judas was not expelled

Why was Judas (a tare—and this goes for all tares) permitted to remain in the inner circle of disciples? First of all, Christ wanted to give him an opportunity to change his defects of character. “The fact that Judas was numbered among the twelve, with all his faults and defects of character, is an instructive lesson, one by the study of which Christians may be profited. When Judas was chosen by our Lord, his case was not hopeless. He had some good qualities. In his association with Christ in the work, by listening to His discourses, he had a favorable opportunity to see his wrongs, to become acquainted with his defects of character if he really desired to be a true disciple. He was even placed in a position by our Lord where he could have his choice either to develop his covetous disposition or to see and correct it.” 17

Another major reason for not expelling Judas was that Christ would have incurred untold difficulties with the remaining disciples and with the unbelieving Jews. “Christ knew, when He permitted Judas to connect with Him as one of the twelve, that Judas was possessed of the demon of selfishness. He knew that this professed disciple would
betray Him, and yet He did not separate him from the other disciples, and send him away. He was preparing the minds of these men for His death and ascension, and He fore-saw that should He dismiss Judas, Satan would use him to spread reports that would be difficult to meet and explain.”

Therefore, Judas is an example of all the tares that would appear in the church of Christ till the close of time. Christ knew his character but the disciples did not. “The history of Judas presents the sad ending of a life that might have been honored of God. Had Judas died before his last journey to Jerusalem he would have been regarded as a man worthy of a place among the twelve, and one who would be greatly missed.” And so it is today. Some of the more experienced brethren may be able to recognize a Judas, but the rest of the church may not distinguish those characteristics until the fruit is fully ripened.

It is for this very reason that the Judases are invited to the Lord’s Supper. They are church members that are in serious need of spiritual help. This help could not be given better any time than at the communion service because “Christ by the Holy Spirit is there to set the seal to His own ordinance. He is there to convict and soften the heart. Not a look, not a thought of contrition, escapes His notice. For the repentant, brokenhearted one He is waiting. All things are ready for that soul’s reception. He who washed the feet of Judas longs to wash every heart from the stain of sin.”

For this very reason, “One should exclude themselves from the communion because some who are unworthy may be present. Every disciple is called upon to participate publicly, and thus bear witness that he accepts Christ as a personal Saviour. It is at these, His own appointments, that Christ meets His people, and energizes them by His presence. Hearts and hands that are unworthy may even administer the ordinance, yet Christ is there to minister to His children. All who come with their faith fixed upon Him will be greatly blessed. All who neglect these seasons of divine privilege will suffer loss. Of them it may appropriately be said, ‘Ye are not all clean.’”

Not in heart servants

For the sake of answering another common objection we again quote a paragraph from The Desire of Ages, p. 656: “When believers assemble to celebrate the ordinances, there are present messengers unseen by human eyes. There may be a Judas in the company, and if so, messengers from the prince of darkness are there, for they attend all who refuse to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. Heavenly angels also are present. These unseen visitants are present on every such occasion. There may come into the company persons who are not in heart servants of truth and holiness, but who may wish to take part in the service. They should not be forbidden. There are witnesses present who were present when Jesus washed the feet of the disciples and of Judas. More than human eyes beheld the scene.”

In the first place, notice the words in bold of this paragraph. What does it mean, “There may come into the company persons who are not in heart servants of truth and holiness, but who may wish to take part in the service”? What does it mean to be in the company? We’ll let the upper portion of the same paragraph explain that. There it says “a Judas in the company.” The bottom part “in the company” must mean in the same way that Judas was a part of the company. As we have already studied, Judas was a member of the early Christian church. So when it says: “There may come into the company persons who are not in heart servants of truth and holiness, but who may wish to take part in the service. They should not be forbid-den”—this means that when a person joins the church and we have questions as to whether or not he or she is a Judas, we are not to forbid him or her from participating in the communion service.

Furthermore, who are those that are not in heart servants of truth and holiness? These are the Judases. It does not read that they are persistently living in open violation of the law of God! Or that they are people like the Egyptians who sympathize with the cause of God and have even made many if not all of the outward reforms in their life but who have not yet come to the point of becoming members of the church. It only mentions that they are not servants of God in heart. And who can read the heart? Only God. Therefore, these are again the tares who have not joined Christ but have outwardly joined the church.

To verify that this is the meaning of this passage, the very next paragraph applies the very same wording to the one officiating at the communion service. “Hearts and hands that are unworthy may even administer the ordinance, yet Christ is there to minister to His children.”

If the previous paragraph means a nonmember, then this one too means a nonmember—a concept which we definitely cannot accept! We cannot recognize a Catholic priest or ministers of any of the various Protestant denominations to administer these ordinances in our churches. If we would do so, then we would have to recognize the churches they represent (i.e., Babylon the great and her daughters) as the church of Christ on earth today. Open communion fits perfectly into the ecumenical movement. If we were to accept this, then we could freely encourage our sons and daughters to marry into these churches. There would be no reason for us even to exist as a separate people, and we would have to cease preaching the second and fourth angels’ messages and the message to the Laodicean church. But that is
As we come together in fully accepting Christ as our personal Saviour, we will harmonize upon the doctrines and be a united force in this world.

not God’s plan today in these closing hours of earth’s history.

Which ministers have been entrusted by Christ with this service? “These ordinances are regarded too much as a form, and not as a sacred thing to call to mind the Lord Jesus. Christ ordained them, and delegated His power to His ministers, who have the treasure in earthen vessels. They are to superintend these special appointments of the One who established them to continue to the close of time. It is in these, His own appointments, that He meets with and energizes His people by His personal presence. Notwithstanding that there may be hearts and hands that are unsanctified who will administer the ordinance, yet Jesus is in the midst of His people to work on human hearts. All who keep before them, in the act of feet-washing, the humiliation of Christ, all who will keep their hearts humble, who will keep in view the true tabernacle and service, which the Lord pitched and not man, will never fail to derive benefit from every discourse given, and spiritual strength from every communion. They are established for a purpose. Christ’s followers are to bear in mind the example of Christ in His humility. This ordinance is to encourage humility, but it should never be termed humiliating in the sense of being degrading to humanity. It is to tender our hearts toward one another. Those who come to the sacramental service with their hearts open to the influences of the Spirit of God will be greatly blessed, even if the ones who officiate are not benefited thereby.”

What does “exclusive” mean?

“This covenant deed was to be ratified by Christ’s own blood, which it had been the office of the old sacrificial offerings to keep before the minds of His chosen people. Christ designed that this supper should be often commemorated, in order to bring to our remembrance His sacrifice in giving His life for the remission of the sins of all who will believe on Him and receive Him. This ordinance is not to be exclusive, as many would make it. Each must participate in it publicly, and thus say: ‘I accept Christ as my personal Saviour. He gave His life for me, that I might be rescued from death.’”

The appeal in these statements—to avoid being “exclusive”—is being made in the sense of having this service publicly rather than privately.

Conclusion

If someone belongs to another church, or acts independently, or believes differently, or lives in open sin, we can have no communion with him or her. “But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a ruler, or a drunkard, or an extortioneer; with such an one no not to eat” (1 Corinthians 5:11). “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (Romans 16:17, 18).

Dear reader, I appeal to you to surrender your whole heart, mind, and soul to the power of the Holy Spirit working through God’s word: to unite your interests with the people of God who are identified as the remnant in Revelation 12:17 “which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” A people who are earnestly contending “for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). A people who are attempting, by the grace of our Saviour, not to act like the “seven women” [churches] who “shall take hold of one man [Christ], saying, We will eat our own bread [doctrines based upon church tradition rather than the word of God], and wear our own apparel [righteousness]: only let us be called by thy name [Christians], to take away our reproach” (Isaiah 4:1).

The prayer of Christ before Calvary is yet to be fulfilled: “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:21). This prayer was prayed not only for the disciples who in person followed Jesus on earth “but for them also which shall believe on me through their word” (John 17:20).

How is this unity to take place? The Spirit of God answers this: “The cause of division and discord in families and in the church is separation from Christ. To come near to Christ is to come near to one another. The secret of true unity in the church and in the family is not diplomacy, not management, not a superhuman effort to overcome difficulties—though there will be much of this to do—but union with Christ.

“Picture a large circle, from the edge of which are many lines all running to the center. The nearer these
lines approach the center, the nearer they are to one another.

“Thus it is in the Christian life. The closer we come to Christ, the nearer we shall be to one another. God is glorified as His people unite in harmonious action.” 25

“Then as the children of God are one in Christ, how does Jesus look upon caste, upon society distinctions, upon the division of man from his fellow man, because of color, race, position, wealth, birth, or attainments? The secret of unity is found in the equality of believers in Christ. The reason for all division, discord, and difference is found in separation from Christ. Christ is the center to which all should be attracted; for the nearer we approach the center, the closer we shall come together in feeling, in sympathy, in love, growing into the character and image of Jesus. With God there is no respect of persons.” 26

The way to achieve this is in an upper room experience. Those of us who seek to hasten the second coming of Christ need to meet together to study His will in the doctrines that He has left for us to teach. As we come together in fully accepting Christ as our personal Saviour, we will harmonize upon the doctrines and be a united force in this world. It is only then that we are prepared to partake of the emblems of our crucified and risen Saviour—emblems which are an effective symbol of that unity.

References:
1. The Present Truth, November, 1850.
2. Testimonies, vol. 6, p. 91.
3. The Review and Herald, January 1870 (Volume 37, No. 6).
4. The Desire of Ages, p. 656.
5. Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 70.
6. Ibid., p. 74.
7. Ibid., p. 71.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., p. 72.
10. Ibid., pp. 72, 73.
11. Ibid., pp. 71, 72.
12. The Desire of Ages, p. 656.
13. Ibid., p. 294.
15. Ibid., p. 92.
17. Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 41.
18. The SDA Bible Commentary [E. G. White Comments], vol. 5, p. 1102.
20. Ibid., p. 656.
21. Ibid.
22. Testimonies, vol. 6, p. 408.
23. The Review and Herald, June 22, 1897.
24. Ibid.

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The Need of Haste in Mission Work

They are dying by tens! don’t you know it?
Dying without the light.

They know not Christ as their Saviour;
His cross is hid from their sight.

They are dying by hundreds! O hear it!
In the chains of ignorance bound.

They see not their need of a Saviour,
The Saviour whom you have found.

They are dying by thousands! Believe it!
O what are you going to do?
Your Saviour cares for these lost ones,
And longs to bless them through you.

They are dying by millions! Yes, millions!
All over the world’s wide lands,
In Africa, India, and China.
Can you sit just folding your hands?

Dying while you are sleeping,
Dying while you are at play,
Dying by night and by day.

Some do not know they are needy;
Some of them care not at all.
But some of them hunger for Jesus,
Yet know not on whom to call.

They grope for a light in their darkness;
They call on their gods for aid;
There is no one to tell them of Jesus,
And the sinner’s debt which He paid.

None did I say? ’Twas an error;
For God has a few lights out there;
But when it’s not three to a million,
O won’t you begin to care?

—Author unknown
### African Region

- **New members at Kanonga, D. R. Congo, August 2000**
- **New families at Tshikapa, D. R. Congo, August 2000**
- **The Executive Committee of the mission at Kinshasa, D. R. Congo, August 2000**
- **Baptism at Francistown, Botswana, August 2000**
Delegates of Natal Transvaal Field Conference, July 2000

Prospective Bible workers’ seminar at Mpika, Zambia, September 2000

Church trustees and prospective Bible workers’ seminar at Mpika, Zambia, September 2000

Zambia Field delegates, May 2000

Seminar held in Zambia, July 2000
European Region

Old age home in Tarnalelesz, Hungary, September 2000

Baptism in Italy, July 2000

Old folks in front of their home in Hungary, September 2000

Asian Region

A sister (center) of our church in Mongolia
Pacific Region

Camp meeting in Japan, August 2000

Central American Region

Delegates of the Central American Union, June 2000

Seminar in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, June 2000

Guyana’s Georgetown group, June 2000

Seminar for ministers and workers in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, June 2000
The book of Zechariah was written by “Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet” (Zechariah 1:1), who belonged to a priestly family (Nehemiah 12:4). His name means “Yahweh reminds,” or “Yahweh has remembered.” He was a prophet after the exile, contemporary with Zerubbabel, the high priest Joshua, and Haggai the prophet.

Zechariah wrote the prophetic book that bears his name, in which divine revelation is manifest through symbols and figures. It brought messages of hope, courage, comfort, and care from the covenant-keeping God to His people Israel and its leaders during the time of the restoration.

These messages were not only “good words and comfortable words” (Zechariah 1:13) to the Jewish people of that time, but they also contain the eternal gospel of hope and love for us to “whom the ends of the world are come” (I Corinthians 10:11), because “whatsoever things were written afore-time were written for our learning” (Romans 15:4). Let us consider the precious and important lessons that are presented to us in the fourth vision of the prophet, the vision of Joshua the high priest and the Angel of the Lord.

The experience of Israel’s remnant

Seventy years of captivity had passed. Through Cyrus’s decree (Ezra 1:1–4), the command was given for the Jews to regain their freedom to return to Jerusalem, in answer to God’s call. For more than a decade they engaged in rebuilding the city and Temple, but because of the siege of their enemies they became discouraged and the reconstruction was left neglected and unattended. In that situation, God sent them poignant messages through the prophets Zechariah and Haggai. In the vision of Zechariah chapter 3 we find a message of mercy and reconciliation, as the prophet beheld the high priest Joshua standing before the “angel of the Lord,” ministering in behalf of God’s discouraged remnant, while Satan appears at the right side to resist him (Zechariah 3:1).

What is Joshua’s situation here? How does he feel? “The high priest cannot defend himself or his people from Satan’s accusations. He does not claim that Israel is free from fault. In filthy garments, symbolizing the sins of the people, which he bears as their representative, he stands before the Angel, confessing their guilt, yet pointing to their repentance and humiliation, and relying upon the mercy of a sin-pardoning Redeemer. In faith he claims the promises of God.”

“Joshua, as the representative of God’s people, stands under condemnation, clothed with filthy garments.” He has nothing to argue in his behalf or in behalf of the people. Israel had separated from God. Under the siege of their enemies they had stopped the construction and had instead engaged in the selfish love of gain. “Satan is pressing upon his soul a sense of guiltiness that makes him feel almost hopeless. Yet there he stands as a suppliant, with Satan arrayed against him.”

At that difficult moment the mercy of God is made manifest and the Angel of the Lord intervenes in behalf of Joshua and the people of Israel. The powerful voice is heard saying to the accuser: “The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan, even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee” (Zechariah 3:2). God, in the person of the preexisting Christ, conquers the malignant accusations with the powerful argument of Calvary.

The order is given: “Take away the filthy garments from him.... Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment” (Zechariah 3:4). And not this only, but God also commands: “Set a fair
mitre upon his head” (Zechariah 3:5). “His own sins and those of his people were pardoned. Israel was clothed with ‘change of raiment’—the righteousness of Christ imputed to them.”

Now the Angel of the Lord solemnly promises to the high priest the conditional reward of eternal life: “If thou wilt keep my charge, . . . I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by” (Zechariah 3:7). What is the meaning of this promise? “If obedient, [Joshua] should be honored as the judge, or ruler, over the temple and all its services; he should walk among attending angels, even in this life, and at last he should join the glorified throng around the throne of God.”

God has given to Joshua and Israel the grace of pardon. The righteousness of Christ represented as the “white raiment” is imputed to them, and finally the promise of the eternal covenant is proclaimed: “Hear now, O Joshua, . . . I will bring forth my servant the Branch” (Zechariah 3:8). Why is the coming of the “Branch” here proclaimed? Because “it was by faith in the coming Saviour that Joshua and his people had received pardon. Through faith in Christ they had been restored to God’s favor. By virtue of His merits, if they walked in His ways and kept His statutes, they would be ‘men wondered at,’ honored as the chosen of Heaven among the nations of the earth.”

The only hope for Joshua and Israel was upon the coming of a Saviour. Only Jesus could make effective the mediation of Joshua by forgiving and saving his people.

The experience of the penitent sinner

This vision has important and wonderful lessons for each one of us who are in a similar situation as Joshua, because “Zechariah’s description of Joshua, the high priest, is a striking representation of the sinner for whom Christ is mediating that he may be brought to repentance.”

This parabolic prophecy is not only very important for those who have recently accepted Christ as a personal Saviour, but also for all who have reconciled with Him by repentance and faith, because “over every soul that is rescued from the power of evil, and whose name is registered in the Lamb’s book of life, the controversy is repeated. Never is one received into the family of God without exciting the determined resistance of the enemy.”

The penitent sinner answering the Lord’s call stands in the same situation as did Joshua. He, the sinner, is “clothed with filthy garments,” and Satan tries to discourage him, trying to induce him into thinking that God cannot receive him this way. Satan tries to make him think that he must do something by himself before he can go before the Lord. This is a great mistake! Nothing can commend the sinner to the favor of God.

The Spirit of Prophecy says that “Just here is a point on which many
may err, and hence they fail of receiving the help that Christ desires to give them. They think that they cannot come to Christ unless they first repent. But must the sinner wait till he has repented before he can come to Jesus? Is repentance to be made an obstacle between the sinner and the Saviour? Absolutely not! Man cannot repent by himself, but by God’s own grace, ‘repentance unto life’ (Acts 11:18) is granted to but by God’s own grace, ‘repentance not! Man cannot repent by himself, but by God’s own grace, ‘repentance unto life’ (Acts 11:18) is granted to

That goes forth from Christ, that unto life’ (Acts 11:18) is granted to

but by God’s own grace, ‘repentance not! Man cannot repent by himself, but by God’s own grace, ‘repentance unto life’ (Acts 11:18) is granted to

and that comes from Calvary—“the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance” (Romans 2:4).

That goodness, that incomparable love, led Joshua before the Lord, and it is the same virtue that leads the repentant sinner before the Saviour. But what happens at this moment? Satan appears “standing at his right hand to resist” (Zechariah 3:1) the repentant sinner. “With his masterly power he presents every objectionable feature of character as sufficient reason for the withdrawal of Christ’s protecting power, thus allowing Satan to discourage and destroy those whom he has caused to sin.” And then “with garments of sin and shame the enemy clothes those who have been overpowered by his temptations, and then he declares that it is unfair for Christ to be their Light, their Defender.”

But just as the divine order was given in behalf of Joshua, the Lord likewise gives the blessed order in behalf of the penitent sinner: “Take away the filthy garments” because “I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment” (Zechariah 3:4). What is the meaning of this symbolic yet powerfully solemn declaration? The iniquity is transferred to the blameless, pure, and holy Son of God; and the unworthy man is justified of all unrighteousness before God. He can then say as did David: “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered” (Psalm 32:1). Blessed is the believing and penitent man or woman “to whom the Lord will not impute sin” (Romans 4:8).

This is the vital saving truth that is the foundation of the Christian faith which we as believers in Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour must support and teach: That Christ can save us “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy” (Titus 3:5). God is willing to justify and accept the repentant sinner only by grace and through faith, and again “not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:9).

Now “the redeemed sinner, clothed in the robes of Christ’s righteousness, may stand in the presence of a sin-hating God, made perfect by the virtue and merits of his Saviour.” And “therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1). The peace of God that exceeds all knowledge touch the strings of the soul, and in the heart of the redeemed sinner, resound the chords of gratitude and praise, making the words of the prophet his own: “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for him hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness” (Isaiah 61:10).

But justification does not stop here, because Jesus Christ has not merely imputed to the sinner an outward righteousness, justifying him before God. He has provided even more! He extends that same righteousness to the converted sinner, imparting to his heart a new life, His own character, the power of an indestructible life through the Spirit of the Lord. Thus the “man is created anew in Christ Jesus, he becomes a partaker of the divine nature. God has, through His own power, united in man the human and the divine. He clothes humanity with the robe of Christ’s righteousness. Man is enabled to discern the Saviour; and by beholding, he is changed into the likeness of His character. He recognizes the words of Christ, ‘All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.’ He who discerns Christ is a partaker of His Spirit and His righteousness. He has the inward assurance that Christ is abiding in the soul temple.”

And even more! Christ says: “Let them set a fair mitre upon his head” (Zechariah 3:5.) “The miter placed upon Joshua’s head was such as was worn by the priests, and bore the inscription, ‘Holiness to the Lord’ (Exodus 28:36), signifying that notwithstanding his former transgressions, he was now qualified to minister before God in His sanctuary.” This means He “that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, . . . hath made [the converted sinner a priest] unto God and his Father” (Revelation 1:5, 6). “Clothed in the bright robe of his Redeemer’s character, he [the penitent sinner] sits together with Christ in heavenly places.”

The glorious promise of the covenant of eternal love that was pronounced upon Joshua, again is announced to the justified sinner: “If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, . . . I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by” (Zechariah 3:7). “This is the honor that God will bestow on those who are clothed with the garments of Christ’s righteousness. With such encouragement as this, how can men continue in sin? How can they grieve the heart of Christ?”

The experience of the remnant during the time of the end

We read that “Zechariah’s vision of Joshua and the Angel applies with peculiar force to the experience of God’s people in the closing scenes of the great day of atonement.”

“The prophecy of Revelation 13 declares that the power represented by the beast with lamblike horns shall cause ‘the earth and they which dwell therein’ to worship the papacy—there symbolized by the beast ‘like unto a leopard.’ The beast with two
horns is also to say “to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast;” and, furthermore, it is to command all, “both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond,” to receive the mark of the beast (Revelation 13:11–16). It has been shown that the United States is the power represented by the beast with lamblike horns, and that this prophecy will be fulfilled when the United States shall enforce Sunday observance, which Rome claims as the special acknowledgment of her supremacy.” 18

In that short time of trouble “the remnant church will be brought into great trial and distress,” 19 because “men in positions of trust will be embittered against the little handful of God’s commandment-keeping people.” 20

“Human enactments, laws manufactured by satanic agencies under a plea of goodness and restriction of evil, will be exalted, while God’s holy commandments are despised and trampled underfoot. And all who prove their loyalty by obedience to the law of Jehovah must be prepared to be arrested, to be brought before councils that have not for their standard the high and holy law of God.” 21

“As Joshua pleaded before the Angel, so the remnant church, with brokenness of heart and unflagging faith, will plead for pardon and deliverance through Jesus, their Advocate.” 22 Satan will be ready “to accuse them, as he stood by to resist Joshua. He points to their filthy garments, their defective characters. He presents their weakness and folly, their sins of ingratitude, their unlikeliness to Christ, which has dishonored their Redeemer. He endeavors to affright the soul with the thought that their case is hopeless, that the stain of their defilement will never be washed away. He hopes to so destroy their faith that they will yield to his temptations, turn from their allegiance to God, and receive the mark of the beast.” 23

“But while the followers of Christ have sinned, they have not given themselves up to be controlled by the satanic agencies. They have repented of their sins and have sought the Lord in humility and contrition, and the divine Advocate pleads in their behalf.”

Jesus declares, “‘The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan. I gave My life for these souls. They are graven upon the palms of My hands. They may have imperfections of character; they may have failed in their endeavors; but they have repented, and I have forgiven and accepted them.”

“The assaults of Satan are strong, his delusions are subtle; but the Lord’s eye is upon His people. Their affliction is great, the flames of the furnace seem about to consume them; but Jesus will bring them forth as gold tried in the fire. Their earthliness will be removed, that through them the image of Christ may be perfectly revealed.” 24

“The spotless robe of Christ’s righteousness is placed upon the tried, tempted, faithful children of God. The despised remnant are clothed in glorious apparel, nevermore to be defiled by the corruptions of the world. Their names are retained in the Lamb’s book of life, enrolled among the faithful of all ages. They have resisted the wiles of the deceiver; they have not been turned from their loyalty by the dragon’s roar. Now they are eternally secure from the tempter’s devices. Their sins are transferred to the originator of sin. A ‘fair miter’ is set upon their heads.

“While Satan has been urging his accusations, holy angels, unseen, have been passing to and fro, placing upon the faithful ones the seal of the living God.” 25

Conclusion

These are the two great truths that we can learn from the vision of Joshua and the Angel. First, this vision represents the experience of any repentant sinner who seeks divine pardon in contrition of heart, despite Satan’s accusations. He receives justification by faith both imputed and imparted, represented by the white raiment of unspotted linen that Jesus Christ freely offers to all repentant sinners. O, how great is the mercy of God in our behalf!

The second application of this vision brings a prophetic promise which occurs while Jesus is meditating in the heavenly sanctuary. Notwithstanding the persecution that the remnant church will face when the Sunday law is enforced, as Satan tries to destroy their faith, the divine Mediator and only Advocate of His people in virtue of His merits will fulfill the mystery of God in behalf of His remnant people, “which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27). The “earthliness will be removed” by the merits of Christ’s mediation, in order that before His second and glorious coming, the remnant church may perfectly reflect His spotless purity. May the Lord bless us to be among those for whom Jesus will fulfill His mystery!

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The Perfect Exercise of Love

B. PAMOFWE

What is love? Love cannot be defined in one word. Some writers have defined it as a warm liking or affection, as in a relationship between people who are in love. Love is often just assumed to be a powerful emotion felt for another person, manifesting itself in deep affection. But if these definitions were correct, then the only way to define the word “love” would be through actions or demonstrations in various ways. Can it be granted then, that all actions, demonstrations and relations between people who are in love are a manifestation of love in a true sense of the word? The answer is NO! Why? Because examples both from the Bible and human experience show that there are some people who manifest what can be termed as pretentious love. Look at what Judas Iscariot did on the day when he led Christ into the hands of the enemies. “And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him” (Matthew 26:47–49).

From the above scripture, you can see that the kiss which Judas gave Christ was not a demonstration of love, but a pretentious one. Love is demonstrated in word or action as it comes from a pure heart. When expressed in uprightness and sincerity, love can be seen. It can be felt, noticed, touched.

“But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). “Because we are the gift of His Father, and the reward of His work, Jesus loves us. He loves us as His children. Reader, He loves you. Heaven itself can bestow nothing greater, nothing better, therefore trust.” Inspiration thus teaches us what perfect love is all about, as demonstrated by God through Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of mankind.

Our duty and love to Jehovah

There are four Hebrew words, Adonai, Eli, Elohim, and YHWH—Yahweh (Jehovah), and these have been used since Old Testament times. All in all, they exalt the greatness of God the Creator and each has a specific connotation. Some Bible translations interpret each of these various expressions in distinct ways, emphasizing how God is present to His people, that He is the Almighty, or that He is a God special to His people Israel. There are also names which depict His relationship to the world at large, revealing Him as its Creator and ruler.

In short, all the expressions, meanings or references affirm the supremacy of the Creator God as compared to any other supposed gods or goddesses, hence the reasons why we as people owe Him obedience, love and homage. “For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God” (Romans 14:11). “We love him, because he first loved us.” “And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.” “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous” (1 John 4:19, 21; 5:1–3). “I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:1, 2).

The perfect exercise of love toward our fellowmen

The perfect exercise of love includes our whole duty to God and to our fellowmen. The love of God to man is manifested in Jesus Christ. “In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him” (1 John 4:9).

When we speak of love toward our fellowmen, the inspired word of God gives us some examples of people who exercised this perfect love. How could it be possible, since so many professed Christians seem unable to exercise this love? But these were men like us, born of the same flesh, and they did just as God required of them. The apostle Paul...
declared to his hearers, “We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein” (Acts 14:15). Likewise, James affirms that “Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months” (James 5:17). “Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another” (1 John 4:11). “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 John 3:16). The love which Jonathan—and, to some extent, his sister Michal, Saul’s daughter—demonstrated towards David the son of Jesse, and that which David reciprocated to their family, could be called a manifestation of the perfect exercise of love in the true sense of the word.

“And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father’s house. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle” (1 Samuel 18:1–4).

Why did Jonathan knit his soul with that of David? David was neither rich nor learned. What did Jonathan expect from this pitiful fugitive in return? Jonathan was a prince, with everything to himself—why then did he not knit his soul with the sons of the nobles in Israel, his fellow aristocrats? He instead chose David from a poor family whose father was not known even by the king. “And when Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine, he said unto Abner, the captain of the host, Abner, whose son is this youth? And Abner said, As thy soul liveth, O King, I cannot tell. And the king said, Enquire thou whose son the stripling is. And as David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner took him, and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand. And Saul said to him, Whose son art thou, young man? And David answered, I am the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite” (1 Samuel 17:55–58).

The above scripture confirms that David came from a poor and unknown family. The question still remains, why? The prince knit his soul with someone with such a humble heritage—yes—because when one exercises perfect love, he does not look at the status of a person, for love knows no distinctions.

“One day the king made no inquiry concerning the absence of David; but when his place was vacant the second day, he questioned, ‘Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat, neither yesterday nor today? And Jonathan answered Saul, David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Bethlehem: and he said, Let me go, I pray thee; for our family hath a sacrifice in the city; and my brother, he hath commanded me to be there: and now, if I have found favor in thine eyes, let me get away, I pray thee, and see my brethren. Therefore he cometh not unto the king’s table.’ When Saul heard these words, his anger was ungovernable. He declared that as long as David lived, Jonathan could not come to the throne of Israel, and he demanded that David should be sent for immediately, that he might be put to death. Jonathan again made intercession for his friend, pleading, ‘Wherefore shall he be slain? what hath he done?’ This appeal to the king only made him more satanic in his fury, and the spear which he had intended for David he now hurled at his own son.

“The prince was grieved and indignant, and leaving the royal presence, he was no more a guest at the feast. His soul was bowed down with sorrow as he repaired at the appointed time to the spot where David was to learn the king’s intentions toward him. Each fell upon the other’s neck, and they wept bitterly. The dark passion of the king cast its shadow upon the life of the young men, and their grief was too intense for expression. Jonathan’s last words fell upon the ear of David as they separated to pursue their different paths, ‘Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying, The Lord be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed forever.’”

“While the young man was playing before the king, filling the palace with sweet harmony, Saul’s passion overcame him, and he hurled a javelin at David, thinking to pin the musician to the wall; but the angel of the Lord turned aside the deadly weapon. David escaped and fled to his own house. Saul sent spies that they might take him as he should come out in the morning, and put an end to his life. Michal informed David of the purpose of her father. She urged him to flee for his life, and let him down from the window, thus enabling him to make his escape.”

What we have read of David’s experiences from the above scriptures and the Spirit of prophecy testify of the perfect love exercised toward David by Jonathan and his sister Michal, who were both Saul’s children. This type of love is the true love which cannot be compared to any except to that which Jesus Christ demonstrated as the Redeemer of the world. “A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity” (Proverbs 17:17). “The human heart longs for sympathy in suffering. This longing Christ felt to the very depths of His being.”

The price of the perfect exercise of love

“A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a
brother” (Proverbs 18:24). “Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy” (Micah 7:18).

When Jonathan and David met for the last time, both did swear in the name of the Lord. How was their oath fulfilled? “And as soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of a place toward the south, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times: and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded. And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying, The Lord be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever. And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city” (1 Samuel 20:41, 42).

How many are there in the world or in churches today who are following in the footsteps of Jonathan, Michal or the Lord Jesus Christ, showing perfect love to their fellowmen, their fellow believers and to their Creator? It is imperative, my brothers and sisters, to emulate these good examples, especially, my brothers and sisters, to emulate these good examples, especially during the last days of our world’s history, for we shall soon hear the words of our Master fulfilled, “Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the foundation of the world: for I was an hungry, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:34–40).

“When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay” (Ecclesiastes 5:4, 5). David had made a vow, and the sacred history records that “David reigned over all Israel; and David executed judgment and justice unto all his people” (2 Samuel 8:15). “And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan’s sake? And there was of the house of Saul a servant whose name was Ziba. And when they had called him unto David, the king said unto him, Art thou Ziba? And he said, Thy servant is he. And the king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan’s sake? And Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet. And the king said unto him, Where is he? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he is in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, in Lodebar. Then king David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, from Lodebar. Now when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell on his face, and did reverence. And David said, Mephibosheth. And he answered, Behold thy servant! And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father’s sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually. And he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am? Then the king called to Ziba, Saul’s servant, and said unto him, I have given unto thy master’s son all that per-
THE prophecy of Isaiah 58:12–14 is very important because it foretells a work of restoration of the breach made in the law of God. For many centuries the Sabbath truth has been cast down, but it is to be exalted and observed by the true people of God in these last days of the history of the world. The prophecy reads:

“And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in. If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”

The Sabbath reform started in the early days of the Advent movement, and the pioneers understood the importance of this message. Though they could not see its close connection with the third angel’s message, they understood that it predicted the Sabbath reform. The servant of the Lord speaks of their early experience:

“When we began to present the light on the Sabbath question, we had no clearly defined idea of the third angel’s message of Revelation 14:9–12. The burden of our testimony as we came before the people was that the great second advent movement was of God, that the first and second messages had gone forth, and that the third was to be given. We saw that the third message closed with the words: ‘Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.’ And we as clearly saw as we now see that these prophetic words suggested a Sabbath reform.”

In the above statement it can be seen that the Sabbath reform is connected with the third angel’s message. One is as important as the other. This is the message that should be preached to the world.

“The third angel's message calls for the presentation of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment, and this truth must be brought before the world; but the great center of attraction, Jesus Christ, must not be left out of the third angel’s message.”

The third angel’s message and the heavenly sanctuary are two subjects which are always connected:

“God had committed to His people a work to be accomplished on earth. The third angel’s message was to be given, the minds of believers were to be directed to the heavenly sanctuary, where Christ had entered to make atonement for His people. The Sabbath reform was to be carried forward. The breach in the law of God must be made up. The message must be proclaimed with a loud voice, that all the inhabitants of earth might receive the warning.”

“The third angel closes his message thus: ‘Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.’ As he repeated these words, he pointed to the heavenly sanctuary. . . .

“After Jesus opened the door of the most holy, the light of the Sabbath was seen, and the people of God were tested, as the children of Israel were tested anciently, to see if they would keep God’s law.”

It is evident that the Sabbath reform which is the message of the third angel is also the sealing message. Compare the above Testimony with Early Writings, pp. 42, 43. These messages are important because the destiny of souls hangs upon their understanding and acceptance:

“I was shown three steps—the first, second, and third angel’s messages. Said my accompanying angel,
Woe to him who shall move a block or stir a pin of these messages. The true understanding of these messages is of vital importance. The destiny of souls hangs upon the manner in which they are received. I was again brought down through these messages, and saw how dearly the people of God had purchased their experience.

The Spirit of Prophecy emphasizes the fact that the third angel’s message, which points to the Sabbath or the seal of the living God, should be preached with great power. Decided efforts should be made to bring the message for this time prominently before the people. The third angel is to go forth with great power. Let none ignore this work or treat it as of little importance. . . .

“There is to be no change in the general features of our work. It is to stand as clear and distinct as prophecy has made it. We are to enter into no confederacy with the world, supposing that by so doing we could accomplish more. If any stand in the way, to hinder the advancement of the work in the lines that God has appointed, they will displease God. No line of truth that has made the Seventh-day Adventist people what they are is to be weakened. We have the old landmarks of truth, experience, and duty, and we are to stand firmly in defense of our principles, in full view of the world.”

The precious truths that constitute the “old landmarks” should remain firm and thus we have to defend them. For us they are a sacred principle. The sealing or Sabbath message is one of these truths. It ought to be preached in clear and distinct lines as prophecy has revealed it to us.

“We are God’s commandment-keeping people. For the past fifty years every phase of heresy has been brought to bear upon us, to cloud our minds regarding the teaching of the Word — especially concerning the ministration of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, and the message of Heaven for these last days, as given by the angels of the fourteenth chapter of Revelation. Messages of every order and kind have been urged upon Seventh-day Adventists, to take the place of the truth which, point by point, has been sought out by prayerful study, and testified to by the miracle-working power of the Lord. But the waymarks which have made us what we are, are to be preserved, and they will be preserved, as God has signified through His Word and the testimony of His Spirit. He calls upon us to hold firmly, with the grip of faith, to the fundamental principles that are based upon unquestionable authority.”

The commandment-keeping people of God are those who will have in their foreheads the seal of the living God. (Compare Revelation 14:1, 12; 7:2-4.) The Spirit of Prophecy tells us: “The worshipers of God will be especially distinguished by their regard for the fourth commandment, since this is the sign of God’s creative power and the witness to His claim upon man’s reverence and homage. The wicked will be distinguished by their efforts to tear down the Creator’s memorial and to exalt the institution of Rome. In the issue of the conflict all Christendom will be divided into two great classes, those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and those who worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark.”

“In the issue of the great contest two parties are developed, those who ‘worship the beast and his image,’ and receive his mark, and those who receive ‘the seal of the living God,’ who have the ‘Father’s name written in their foreheads.’ This is not a visible mark.”

The ninth chapter of Ezekiel reveals the importance of being sealed in the forehead. The class that will not have the seal of God in their foreheads will be destroyed. The destiny of each person depends upon the acceptance or rejection of this message. One will be protected in the day of slaughter only if he or
she is sealed. Otherwise destruction will follow.

“It is now that we must keep ourselves and our children unspotted from the world. It is now that we must wash our robes of character and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. It is now that we must overcome pride, passion, and spiritual slothfulness. It is now that we must awake and make determined effort for symmetry of character. . . .

“What are you doing, brethren, in the great work of preparation? Those who are uniting with the world are receiving the worldly mold and preparing for the mark of the beast. Those who are distrustful of self, who are humbling themselves before God and purifying their souls by obeying the truth—these are receiving the heavenly mold and preparing for the seal of God in their foreheads. When the decree goes forth and the stamp is impressed, their character will remain pure and spotless for eternity.

“Now is the time to prepare. The seal of God will never be placed upon the forehead of an impure man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of the ambitious, world-loving man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of men or women of false tongues or deceitful hearts. All who receive the seal must be without spot before God—candidates for heaven. Go forward, my brethren and sisters. I can only write briefly upon these points at this time, merely calling your attention to the necessity of preparation. Search the Scriptures for yourselves, that you may understand the fearful solemnity of the present hour.” 10

“The day of God’s vengeance is just upon us. The seal of God will be placed upon the foreheads of those only who sigh and cry for the abominations done in the land. . . .

“Our own course of action will determine whether we shall receive the seal of the living God or be cut down by the destroying weapons.” 11

“The Lord has shown me that precious souls are starving, and dying for want of the present, sealing truth, the meat in due season; and that the swift messengers should speed on their way, and feed the flock with the present truth. I heard an Angel say, ‘speed the swift messengers, speed the swift messengers; for the case of every soul will soon be decided, either for Life, or for Death.’ ” 12

References:
1 Testimonies, vol. 1, pp. 78, 79.
2 Selected Messages, bk 1, p. 383.
3 Ibid., pp. 67, 68.
4 Early Writings, p. 254.
5 Ibid., pp. 258, 259.
6 Testimonies, vol. 6, pp. 16, 17.
7 Selected Messages, bk 1, p. 208.
8 Testimonies, vol. 9, p. 16.
9 The SDA Bible Commentary [E. G. White Comments], vol. 7, p. 980. (See The Great Controversy, p. 450.)
11 Ibid., p. 212.
12 The Present Truth, September, 1849.
which was more pleasing to God.

Ellen White was also unselfish when she was a little girl. In telling the story of her own childhood, she writes:

"With my sister I learned a trade, and although we would earn only twenty-five cents a day, from this sum we were able to save a little to give to missions. We saved little by little until we had thirty dollars. Then when the message of the Lord's soon coming came to us, with a call for men and means, we felt it a privilege to hand over the thirty dollars to father, asking him to invest it in tracts and pamphlets to send the message to those who were in darkness. . . .

"With the money that we had earned at our trade, my sister and I provided ourselves with many fancy and expensive toys. But I would buy my mother a dress and some shoes. I would buy my brothers shoes and sweaters. And if there would be any money left, I would buy myself a pair of winter gloves." So we can see that, just as the Bible verse says, it seems like this kindhearted, unselfish child "hated" the gift of $100. But this was only in the sense that she refused to spend it all on herself. She had a higher plan in mind denied Himself of food in order to relieve those who appeared more needy than He. . . . When [His brothers] spoke harshly to poor, degraded beings, Jesus sought out these very ones, and spoke to them words of encouragement. To those who were in need He would give a cup of cold water, and would quietly place His own meal in their hands." —The Adventist Home, p. 384.

"With the money that we had earned at our trade, my sister and I provided ourselves with clothes. We would hand our money to mother, saying, 'Buy so that, after we have paid for our clothing, there will be something left to give for missionary work.' And she would do this, thus encouraging in us a missionary spirit." —The Adventist Home, p. 384.

"With the money that we had earned at our trade, my sister and I provided ourselves with many fancy and expensive toys. But I would buy my mother a dress and some shoes. I would buy my brothers shoes and sweaters. And if there would be any money left, I would buy myself a pair of winter gloves." So we can see that, just as the Bible verse says, it seems like this kindhearted, unselfish child "hated" the gift of $100. But this was only in the sense that she refused to spend it all on herself. She had a higher plan in mind