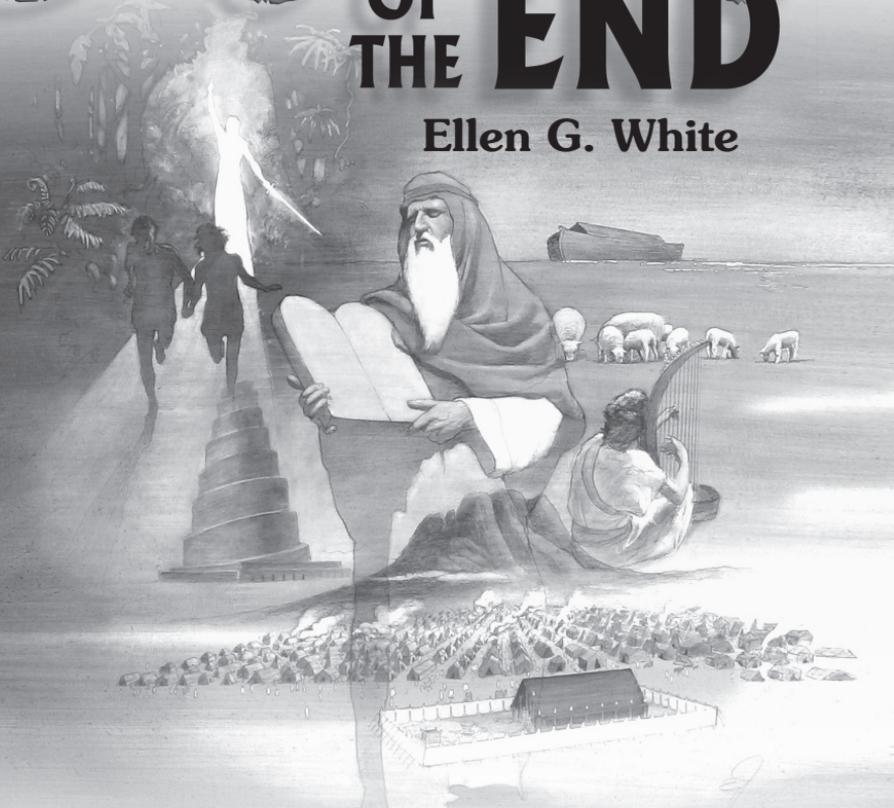


# Beginning OF THE **END**

Ellen G. White



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# Foreword

This volume is an adaptation of *From Eternity Past*, the 1983 condensed edition of Ellen G. White's classic, *Patriarchs and Prophets*. The condensed volume included all the stories and major applications in the original book. Moreover, except for supplying a word here or there for a smooth transition, it rigidly retained Mrs. White's own words. *The Beginning of the End* has taken a step beyond that. It has substituted some modern words, expressions, and sentence constructions for twenty-first century readers. But it is not a paraphrase. It follows *From Eternity Past* sentence by sentence and maintains the force of Mrs. White's writing. It is hoped that new readers will thus develop a taste for Mrs. White's writings and will be led to read and enjoy the original books, though written in the style of an earlier time.

Except where noted, Scripture passages have been quoted from the

New King James Version. It closely parallels the King James Version that Mrs. White usually used, but many people today find that they can read it more easily.

*The Beginning of the End* is rich in insight into the Bible stories of origins—the origin of sin, of this world, of the plan of salvation, and of the people of God. It makes the treasures of *Patriarchs and Prophets* accessible to more people. In this way it helps to make more widely known the beginning of “the great controversy” story that Mrs. White told so compellingly in the five-volume “Conflict of the Ages” series of books. That many more readers may experience the life-changing power of these books and their presentation of Bible themes is the hope and prayer of

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# Why Was Sin Permitted?

God is love." His nature, His law, His love. It ever has been, and it ever will be. Every use of creative power is an expression of infinite love. The history of the great conflict between good and evil from the time it first began in heaven also reveals God's unchanging love.

The Sovereign of the universe was not alone in His work of doing good. He had an associate who could appreciate His purpose and share His joy in giving happiness to created beings. See John 1:1, 2.

Christ the Word was one with the eternal Father, one in nature, in character, in purpose. "His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6. His "goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Micah 5:2.

The Father worked by His Son in the creation of all heavenly beings. "By Him all things were created . . . , whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers." Colossians 1:16. Angels are God's ministers, speeding to execute His will. But the Son, the "express image of His person," "the brightness of His glory," "upholding all things by the word of His power," holds supremacy over

them all. See Hebrews 1:3, 8.

From all His creatures, God wants the service of love—service that springs from an appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in forced obedience. He grants freedom of will to all, that they may give Him voluntary service. So long as all created beings were loyal through love, there was perfect harmony throughout the universe of God. There was no note of discord to mar heaven's harmonies.

But a change came over this happy state. There was one who used wrongly the freedom that God had granted to His creatures. Sin began with him who, next to Christ, had been most honored of God and was highest among the inhabitants of heaven. Lucifer, "son of the morning" (Isaiah 14:12), was holy and undefiled. " "Thus says the Lord GOD: 'You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. . . . You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you.' " " "

Little by little, Lucifer indulged the desire to exalt himself. “ ‘ ‘ ‘Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor.’ ” ’ ’ ’ Ezekiel 28:12-15, 17. “ ‘You have said in your heart: . . . “I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; . . . I will be like the Most High.” ’ ” Isaiah 14:13, 14. Though honored above the heavenly host, he dared to covet worship due alone to the Creator. This prince of angels wanted power that was the right of Christ alone.

Now the perfect harmony of heaven was broken. In heavenly council the angels pleaded with Lucifer. The Son of God presented before him the goodness and justice of the Creator and the unchanging nature of His law. In departing from it, Lucifer would dishonor his Maker and bring ruin upon himself. But the warning given in infinite love and mercy only aroused resistance. Lucifer allowed his jealousy of Christ to prevail, and he became ever the more determined.

The king of the universe called for the heavenly hosts to come before Him, that in their presence He might set forth the true position of His Son and show His relationship to all created beings. The Son of God shared the Father’s throne, and the glory of the eternal, self-existent One encircled both. Around the throne gathered the holy angels, “ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.” Revelation 5:11. Before the inhabitants of heaven, the King declared that

none but Christ could fully enter into His purposes and execute the mighty counsels of His will. Soon Christ was to exercise divine power in the creation of the earth and its inhabitants.

### **The Battle in Lucifer’s Heart**

The angels joyfully acknowledged Christ as supreme, and they poured out their love and adoration. Lucifer bowed with them; but in his heart there was a strange, fierce conflict. Truth and loyalty were struggling against envy and jealousy. The influence of the holy angels seemed for a time to carry him with them. As songs of praise ascended, the spirit of evil seemed overcome; unutterable love thrilled his entire being; his soul went out in harmony with the sinless worshipers in love to the Father and the Son. But again his desire to be supreme returned, and once more he indulged envy of Christ. The high honors given Lucifer called forth no gratitude to his Creator. He gloried in his brightness and wanted to be equal with God. Angels delighted to execute his commands, and he was clothed with glory above them all. Yet the Son of God was exalted above him. “Why,” questioned this mighty angel, “should Christ have the supremacy?”

Lucifer went forth to spread the spirit of discontent among the angels. For a time he concealed his real purpose under an appearance of reverence for God. Subtly he planted doubts concerning the laws that governed heavenly beings, suggesting that angels needed no such rules, for

their own wisdom was a sufficient guide. All their thoughts were holy; it was no more possible for them to do wrong than for God Himself to err. The exaltation of the Son of God as equal with the Father was represented as an injustice to Lucifer. If this prince of angels could only attain to his true, exalted position, great good would come to the entire host of heaven, for it was his purpose to secure freedom for all. Subtle deceptions through the wicked schemes of Lucifer were fast gaining ground in the heavenly courts.

The true position of the Son of God had been the same from the beginning. However, many of the angels were blinded by Lucifer's deceptions. He so artfully instilled into their minds his own distrust and discontent that they did not recognize what he was doing. Lucifer had presented the purposes of God in a false light to excite dissent and dissatisfaction. While he claimed to be perfectly loyal to God, he urged that changes were necessary for the stability of the divine government. While secretly stirring up discord and rebellion, he made it appear that his sole purpose was to promote loyalty and to preserve harmony and peace.

Though there was no open rebellion, division of feeling gradually grew up among the angels. Some looked with favor upon Lucifer's subtle criticisms and suggestions. They were discontented and unhappy, dissatisfied with God's purpose in exalting Christ. But angels who were loyal defended the wisdom and justice of

the divine decree. Christ was the Son of God, one with Him before the angels were called into existence. He had ever stood at the right hand of the Father. So why should there now be discord?

God bore long with Lucifer. The spirit of discontent was a new element, strange, unaccountable. Lucifer himself did not see where he was drifting. But such efforts as only infinite love and wisdom could develop were made to convince him of his error. He was led to see what would be the result of persisting in revolt.

Lucifer was convinced that he was in the wrong. He saw that "the LORD is righteous in all His ways, gracious in all His works" (Psalm 145:17), that the divine statutes are just and that he ought to acknowledge them as such before all heaven. If he had done this, he might have saved himself and many angels. If he had been willing to return to God, satisfied to fill the place appointed him in God's great plan, he would have been reinstated in his office. The time had come for a final decision; he must yield to the divine sovereignty or place himself in open rebellion. He nearly reached the decision to return, but pride prevented him. It was too great a sacrifice for one who had been so highly honored to confess that he had been in error!

Lucifer pointed to the long-suffering of God as an evidence of his own superiority, an indication that the King of the universe would yet agree to his terms. If the angels would stand firmly with him, he

declared, they could still get everything they wanted. He fully committed himself to the great controversy against his Maker. In this way Lucifer, "the light bearer," became Satan, "the adversary" of God and holy beings.

### **Satan Leads in Rebellion**

Rejecting with scorn the appeals of the loyal angels, he called them deluded slaves. He would never again acknowledge the supremacy of Christ. He had determined to claim the honor that should have been given him. And he promised those who would enter his ranks a new and better government under which all would enjoy freedom. Great numbers of the angels declared their purpose to accept him as their leader. He hoped to win all the angels to his side, to become equal with God Himself, and to be obeyed by the entire host of heaven.

Still the loyal angels urged him and his sympathizers to submit to God, setting before them the inevitable result if they refused. They warned all to close their ears against Lucifer's deceptive reasoning and urged him and his followers to seek the presence of God without delay and confess the error of questioning His wisdom and authority.

Many were inclined to repent of their discontent and seek to be again received into favor with the Father and His Son. But Lucifer now declared that the angels who had joined with him had gone too far to return; God would not forgive. For himself, he was determined never again to

acknowledge the authority of Christ. The only course remaining was to assert their liberty and gain by force the rights that had not been granted them.

God permitted Satan to carry forward his work until the spirit of discontent ripened into active revolt. It was necessary for his plans to be fully developed, that all might see their true nature. God's government included not only the inhabitants of heaven but all the world that He had created. Lucifer concluded that if he could carry the angels with him in rebellion, he could carry the worlds also. All his acts were so clothed with mystery that it was difficult to make clear the true nature of his work. Even the loyal angels could not fully discern his character or see to what his work was leading. Everything simple he shrouded in mystery, and by spinning the truth he cast doubt upon the plainest statements of God. And his high position gave greater force to his assertions.

### **Why God Did Not Destroy Satan**

God could use only such methods as were consistent with truth and righteousness. Satan could use what God could not—flattery and deceit. It was therefore necessary to demonstrate before the inhabitants of heaven and all the worlds that God's government is just, His law perfect. Satan had made it seem that he himself was seeking to promote the good of the universe. His true character must be understood by all. He must have time to manifest himself by his wicked works.

He declared all evil to be the result of the divine administration; it was his own purpose to improve upon the statutes of God. Therefore God permitted him to demonstrate the nature of his claims, to show the working out of his proposed changes in the divine law. His own work must condemn him. The whole universe must see the deceiver unmasked.

### **Why Didn't God Destroy Satan?**

Even when Satan was cast out of heaven, Infinite Wisdom did not destroy him. The loyalty of God's creatures must rest upon a conviction of His justice and love. At that time, the inhabitants of heaven and of the world could not have seen the justice of God in the destruction of Satan. Had he been immediately blotted out of existence, some would have served God from fear rather than from love. The influence of the deceiver would

not have been fully destroyed, nor would the spirit of rebellion have been utterly eliminated. For the good of the entire universe through ceaseless ages he must more fully develop his principles, so that his charges against the divine government might be seen in their true light and that the justice of God and the unchangeable nature of His law might be forever placed beyond question.

Satan's rebellion was to be a lesson to the universe through all coming ages—a testimony forever to the nature of sin and its terrible results. Thus the history of this experiment of rebellion was to be an eternal safeguard to all holy beings to prevent them from being deceived as to the nature of transgression.

“ ‘His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He.’ ” Deuteronomy 32:4.

# Creation, God's Answer to Evolution\*

By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. . . . For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast." Psalm 33:6, 9.

As the earth came forth from the hand of its Maker, it was unbelievably beautiful. Everywhere the fruitful soil produced luxuriant green vegetation. There were no foul swamps nor barren deserts. Graceful shrubs and delicate flowers greeted the eye at every turn. The air was clear and healthful. The entire landscape was more beautiful than the decorated grounds of the proudest palace.

After the earth had been called into existence, teeming with animal and vegetable life, human beings—the crowning work of the Creator—were brought upon the stage of action. "God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over . . . all the earth.'" "So God created man in His own image; . . . male and female He created them."

Here is set forth clearly the origin of the human race. God created us

in His own image. There is no reason to suppose that we evolved by slow degrees from lower forms of animal or vegetable life. Inspiration traces the origin of our race, not to a line of developing germs, mollusks, and quadrupeds, but to the great Creator. Though formed from the dust, Adam was "the son of God." Luke 3:38.

The lower orders of being cannot grasp the concept of God, yet they were made capable of loving and serving human beings. "You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, . . . the beasts of the field, the birds of the air." Psalm 8:6-8.

Christ alone is "the express image" (Hebrews 1:3) of the Father, but Adam and Eve were formed in the likeness of God. Their nature was in harmony with the will of God, their minds capable of comprehending divine things. Their affections were pure; their appetites and passions were under the control of reason. They were holy and happy in bearing the image of God and in obeying His will perfectly.

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\* This chapter is based on Genesis 1 and 2.

As our first parents came forth from the hand of their Creator, their faces glowed with the light of life and joy. Adam's height was much greater than that of men now living. Eve was somewhat less in stature, yet her form was noble and full of beauty. The sinless pair wore no artificial garments; they were clothed with a covering of light such as the angels wear.

### **The First Marriage**

After the creation of Adam, "God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.' " God gave Adam a companion fitted for him, who would be one with him in love and sympathy. Eve was created from a rib taken from Adam's side. She was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal, loved and protected by him. She was his second self, showing the close union that should exist in this relationship. "For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it." "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one." Ephesians 5:29; Genesis 2:24.

"Marriage is honorable." Hebrews 13:4. It is one of the two institutions that, after the Fall, Adam brought with him beyond the gates of Paradise. When the divine principles are recognized and obeyed, marriage is a blessing; it guards the purity and happiness of the race and elevates the physical, intellectual, and moral nature.

"The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed." In this garden were trees of every variety, many of them heavy with delicious fruit. There were lovely vines, growing upright, their branches drooping under their load of tempting fruit. It was the work of Adam and Eve to train the branches of the vine to form bowers, thus making a home for themselves from living trees covered with foliage and fruit. In the middle of the garden stood the tree of life, surpassing in glory all other trees. Its fruit had the power to sustain life forever.

"The heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished." "Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good." No taint of sin or shadow of death marred the beautiful creation. "The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." Job 38:7.

### **The Blessing of the Sabbath**

In six days the great work of creation had been accomplished. And God "rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made." All was perfect, worthy of its divine Author; and He rested, not as one weary, but as well pleased with the fruits of His wisdom and goodness.

After resting on the seventh day, God set it apart as a day of rest. Following the example of the Creator,

His human creatures were to rest upon this sacred day, that they might reflect upon God's work of creation and their hearts be filled with love and reverence for their Maker.

The Sabbath was given to the whole human family. In observing it, they would gratefully show that they recognized God as their Creator and rightful Ruler. They were the work of His hands, the subjects of His authority.

God saw that a Sabbath was essential for human beings, even in Paradise. They needed to lay aside their own interests for one day of the seven. They needed a Sabbath to remind them of God and to awaken gratitude because all that they enjoyed came from the hand of the Creator.

God designs that the Sabbath shall direct our minds to His created works. The beauty that clothes the earth is a token of God's love. The everlasting hills, the lofty trees, the opening buds and delicate flowers, all speak to us of God. The Sabbath, pointing to Him who made them all, bids us open the book of nature and trace in it the wisdom, power, and love of the Creator.

Our first parents were created innocent and holy, but they were not placed beyond the possibility of wrongdoing. God made them free moral agents. They could choose whether to obey or disobey. But before they could be eternally secure, their loyalty must be tested. At the beginning of human existence God placed a check upon self-indulgence, the fatal desire that lay at the founda-

tion of Satan's fall. The tree of knowledge was to be a test of the obedience, faith, and love of our first parents. They were forbidden to taste the fruit of this tree, on pain of death. They were to be exposed to the temptations of Satan; but if they endured the trial successfully, they would be placed beyond his power, to enjoy unending favor with God.

### **The Beautiful Garden of Eden**

God placed human beings under law, subjects of the divine government. God might have created them without the power to transgress; He might have prevented them from touching the forbidden fruit; but in that case Adam and Eve would have been mere robots. Without freedom of choice, their obedience would have been forced. Such a course would have been contrary to God's plan, unworthy of the intelligent beings He created, and would have sustained Satan's charge of God's arbitrary rule.

God made our first parents upright, with no bias toward evil. He presented before them the strongest possible motivations to be true. Obedience was the condition of eternal happiness and access to the tree of life.

The home of our first parents was to be a pattern for other homes as their children should go forth to occupy the earth. People today take pride and delight in magnificent and costly homes and glory in the works of their own hands, but God placed Adam in a garden. This was a lesson for all time—true happiness is found

not by indulging in pride and luxury but by communing with God through His created works. Pride and ambition are never satisfied, but people who are truly wise will find pleasure in the enjoyment God has placed within the reach of all.

To the couple in Eden was committed the care of the garden, "to tend and keep it." God appointed work as a blessing, to occupy the mind, strengthen the body, and develop the abilities. In mental and physical activity Adam found one of the highest pleasures of his holy existence. It is an error to regard work as a curse, even though it bring weariness and pain. The rich often look down upon the working classes, but this is out of harmony with God's purpose in the creation. Adam was not to be idle. Our Creator, who understands what is for our happiness, appointed Adam his work. The true joy of life is found only by working men and women. The Creator has prepared no place for do-nothing laziness.

The holy pair were not only children under the fatherly care of God

but students receiving instruction from the all-wise Creator. They were visited by angels and had the privilege of talking face to face with their Maker. They were full of vigor imparted by the tree of life, their intellectual power only slightly less than that of the angels. The laws of nature were opened to their minds by the infinite Creator and Upholder of all. With every living creature, from the mighty whale among the waters to the insect mote that floats in the sunbeam, Adam was familiar. He had given to each its name, and he was acquainted with the nature and habits of all. On every leaf of the forest, in every shining star, in earth and air and sky, God's name was written. The order and harmony of creation spoke of infinite wisdom and power.

So long as Adam and Eve remained loyal to the divine law, they constantly would be gaining new treasures of knowledge, discovering fresh springs of happiness, and obtaining clearer understandings of the immeasurable, unfailing love of God.

# The Predicament of Our First Parents\*

No longer free to stir up rebellion in heaven, Satan found a new field in plotting the ruin of the human race. Moved by envy, he determined to bring upon them the guilt and penalty of sin. He would change their love to distrust and their songs of praise to criticism of their Maker. Thus he would not only plunge these innocent beings into misery but cast dishonor upon God and cause grief in heaven.

Heavenly messengers opened to our first parents the history of Satan's fall and his plots for their destruction, unfolding the nature of the divine government that the prince of evil was trying to overthrow.

The law of God is a revelation of His will, a transcript of His character, the expression of divine love and wisdom. The harmony of creation depends upon perfect conformity to the law of the Creator. Everything is under fixed laws that cannot be disregarded. But human beings alone, of all that inhabit the earth, are responsible to moral law. To them God has given power to comprehend the justice and goodness of His law, and of them unswerving obedience is required.

Like the angels, the dwellers in Eden had been given time to show what they would do. They could obey and live or disobey and perish. He who spared not the angels that sinned could not spare them; transgression would bring upon them misery and ruin.

The angels warned them to be on guard against the schemes of Satan. If they firmly repelled his first subtle enticings, they would be secure. But if they once yielded to temptation, their nature would become so depraved that in themselves they would have no power and no inclination to resist Satan.

The tree of knowledge had been made a test of their obedience and love to God. If they should disregard His will in this particular, they would incur guilt. Satan was not to follow them with continual temptations; he could have access to them only at the forbidden tree.

To accomplish his work undetected, Satan employed a disguise. The serpent was one of the wisest and most beautiful creatures. It had dazzling brightness. Resting in the forbidden tree, feasting on the deli-

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\* This chapter is based on Genesis 3.

scious fruit, it was an object to arrest attention and delight the eye. Thus in the garden of peace lurked the destroyer.

The angels had warned Eve to beware of separating from her husband. With him she would be in less danger than if alone. But she unconsciously wandered from his side. Forgetting the angel's caution, she soon found herself gazing with mingled curiosity and admiration on the forbidden tree. The fruit was beautiful, and she wondered why God had withheld it from them.

Now was the tempter's opportunity. " 'Has God indeed said, "You shall not eat of every tree of the garden" ' "? Eve was startled to hear the echo of her thoughts. The serpent continued with subtle praise of her surpassing beauty, and his words were not displeasing. Instead of fleeing from the spot, she lingered. She didn't suspect that Satan was speaking through the fascinating serpent.

She replied: " 'We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, "You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die." ' " "And the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' "

By partaking of this tree, he declared, they would reach a higher level of life. He himself had eaten and had acquired the power of speech. He implied that the Lord had jealously withheld it from them,

lest they be exalted to equality with Himself; because this fruit imparted wisdom and power, He had prohibited them from tasting or touching it. The divine warning was merely to intimidate them. How could it be possible for them to die? Had they not eaten of the tree of life? God had been seeking to prevent them from reaching a nobler development and finding greater happiness.

Such has been Satan's work from the days of Adam to the present. He tempts people to distrust God's love and doubt His wisdom. In their efforts to probe into what God has withheld, multitudes overlook truths that are essential to salvation. Satan tempts them to disobedience, to believe they are entering a wonderful field of knowledge. But this is all a deception. They are starting down the road that leads to degradation and death.

### **The Subtlety of Satan's Appeal**

Satan told the holy pair that they would gain by breaking the law of God. Today many talk of the narrowness of those who obey God's commandments and claim that they themselves enjoy greater liberty. What is this but an echo of the voice from Eden? "In the day you eat of it"—transgress the divine requirement—"you will be like God." Satan did not let it appear that he had become an outcast from heaven. He concealed his own misery in order to draw others into the same position. So now the transgressors disguise their true character. But they are on the side of Satan, trampling upon

the law of God and leading others to eternal ruin.

Eve disbelieved the words of God, and this was what led to her fall. In the judgment, people will not be condemned because they conscientiously believed a lie but because they did not believe the truth. We must set our hearts to know what is truth. Whatever contradicts God's Word comes from Satan.

The serpent plucked the fruit of the forbidden tree and placed it in the hands of the half-reluctant Eve. Then he reminded her of her own words, that God had forbidden them to touch it lest they die. Seeing no evil results, Eve grew bolder. When she "saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate." As she ate, she seemed to imagine herself entering upon a higher state of existence.

And now, having herself transgressed, she became Satan's agent to ruin her husband. In a state of strange, unnatural excitement, her hands filled with the forbidden fruit, she looked for and found him.

Adam appeared astonished and alarmed. To the words of Eve he replied that this must be the foe against whom they had been warned. Now, as God had said, she must die. In answer she urged him, "Eat," repeating the words of the serpent that they would not surely die. She felt no evidence of God's displeasure but sensed a delicious, exhilarating influence, thrilling every part of her body with new life.

Adam understood that his companion had disobeyed the command of God. There was a terrible struggle in his mind. He mourned that he had permitted Eve to wander from his side. But now the deed was done; he must be separated from her whose society had been his joy.

How could he endure this? Adam had enjoyed the companionship of God and of holy angels. He understood the high destiny opened to the human race if they remained faithful to God. Yet all these blessings were lost sight of in the fear of losing that one gift which, in his eyes, was of more value than every other. Love, gratitude, and loyalty to the Creator—all were swept aside by love to Eve. She was a part of himself, and he could not endure the thought of separation. If she must die, he would die with her. Might not the words of the wise serpent be true? No sign of death appeared in Eve, and he decided to brave the consequences. He seized the fruit and quickly ate.

After his transgression, Adam at first imagined himself entering upon a higher state of existence. But soon the thought of his sin filled him with terror. The love and peace that had been theirs was gone, and in its place they felt a sense of sin, a dread of the future, a nakedness of soul. The robe of light that had enshrouded them disappeared, and to supply its lack they tried to make for themselves a covering. They could not, while unclothed, meet the eye of God and holy angels.

They now began to see the true character of sin. Adam criticized his

companion for leaving his side and permitting herself to be deceived by the serpent. But they both flattered themselves that the God who had given them so many evidences of His love would pardon this one transgression; they would not be subjected to so terrible a punishment as they had feared.

Satan gloated. He had tempted the woman to distrust God's love, to doubt His wisdom, and to transgress His law; and through her he had caused the overthrow of Adam!

### The Sad Change That Sin Produced

The great Lawgiver was about to make known to Adam and Eve the result of their transgression. In their innocence and holiness they had joyfully welcomed the approach of their Creator; now they fled in terror. But "the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, 'Where are you?' So he said, 'I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.' And He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?'"

Adam blamed his wife and thus blamed God Himself: "The woman whom *You gave* to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate." From love to Eve, he had deliberately chosen to give up the approval of God and an eternal life of joy; now he tried to make his companion, and even the Creator Himself, responsible for the transgression.

When the woman was asked, "What is this you have done?" she

answered, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." "Why did You create the serpent? Why did You permit him to enter Eden?"—these were the questions implied in her first excuse. Self-justification was indulged by our first parents as soon as they yielded to the influence of Satan, and it has been exhibited by all the sons and daughters of Adam.

The Lord then passed sentence upon the serpent: "Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life." From the most beautiful of the creatures of the field it was to become the most groveling and detested of all, feared and hated by both man and beast. The words next addressed to the serpent applied to Satan himself, pointing to his ultimate defeat and destruction: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."

Eve was told of the sorrow and pain that she must have. "Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." God had made her the equal of Adam. But sin brought friction, and now their union could be maintained and harmony preserved only by submission on the part of one or the other. Eve had been the first in transgression. By her urging Adam sinned, and she was now placed in subjection to her husband. Man's abuse of the supremacy thus given him has too

often rendered the lot of woman bitter and her life a burden.

Eve had been happy by her husband's side. But she was flattered with the hope of entering a higher sphere than God had assigned her. In attempting to rise above her original position, she fell far below it. In their efforts to reach positions for which God has not fitted them, many today leave vacant the place where they might be a blessing.

To Adam the Lord declared: " 'Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, "You shall not eat of it": Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.' "

God had freely given them good and had withheld evil. But they had eaten of the forbidden tree, and now they would have the knowledge of evil—all the days of their life. Instead of happy labor, anxiety and toil were to be their lot. They would be subject to disappointment, grief, and pain, and finally to death.

God made the first pair rulers over the earth and all living creatures. But when they rebelled against the divine law, the inferior creatures rebelled against their rule. Thus the Lord in mercy would show people the sacredness of His law

and lead them to see the danger of setting it aside, even in the slightest degree.

### **A Plan of Recovery for Humanity**

The life of toil and care henceforth to the lot of humanity was appointed in love, a discipline rendered needful by sin, to place a check upon the indulgence of appetite and passion, to develop habits of self-control. It was a part of God's great plan for the recovery of the human race.

The warning given to our first parents—"In the day that you eat of it you shall surely die"—did not mean that they were to die on the very day they partook of the forbidden fruit. But on that day the irrevocable sentence would be pronounced. That very day they would be doomed to death.

In order to possess endless existence, a person must continue to partake of the tree of life. Deprived of this, the vitality would gradually diminish until life should become extinct. It was Satan's plan that Adam and Eve would eat of the tree of life and thus perpetuate an existence of sin and misery. But holy angels were commissioned to guard the tree of life. Around these angels flashed the appearance of a glittering sword. None of the family of Adam were permitted to pass that barrier; this is why there are no immortal sinners.

### **Is God Too Severe?**

Most people regard the tide of woe that flowed from the transgression of our first parents as too awful a consequence for so small a sin. But

if they would look more deeply into this question, they might recognize their error. In His great mercy God appointed Adam no severe test. The very lightness of the prohibition made the sin exceedingly great. If some great test had been appointed Adam, then those whose hearts incline to evil would have excused themselves saying, "This is a trivial matter, and God is not so particular about little things."

Many who teach that the law of God is not binding upon us urge that it is impossible to obey its precepts. But if this were true, why did Adam suffer the penalty of transgression? The sin of our first parents brought guilt and sorrow upon the world, and had it not been for the goodness and mercy of God, it would have plunged the race into hopeless despair. Let none deceive themselves. "The wages of sin is death." Romans 6:23.

After their sin, Adam and Eve begged to remain in the home of their innocence and joy. They pledged that in the future they would yield strict obedience to God. But they were told that their nature had become depraved by sin. They had lessened their strength to resist evil. Now, in a state of conscious guilt,

they would have less power to maintain their integrity.

In sadness they said Goodbye to their beautiful home and went out to dwell on the earth, where the curse of sin rested. The atmosphere was now subject to marked changes, and the Lord mercifully provided them with a garment of skins as a protection from the cold.

As they witnessed in drooping flower and falling leaf the first signs of decay, Adam and his companion mourned more deeply than people now mourn over their dead. When the beautiful trees dropped their leaves, the scene brought to mind the stern fact that death is the fate of every living thing.

The Garden of Eden remained upon the earth long after its first inhabitants had become outcasts from its pleasant paths. But when the wickedness of Adam and Eve's descendants determined their destruction by a flood of waters, the hand that had planted Eden withdrew it from the earth. When God finally sets all things right, when there shall be "a new heaven and a new earth," it is to be restored, more gloriously adorned than at the beginning. Revelation 21:1.

# The Plan of Redemption Is Unveiled

The fall of Adam and Eve filled all heaven with sorrow. There appeared no escape for those who had transgressed the law. Angels ceased their songs of praise.

The Son of God was touched with pity for the fallen race as the woes of the lost world rose up before Him. Divine love had conceived a plan to save the helpless ones. The broken law of God demanded the life of the sinner. Only one equal with God could make atonement for its transgression. None but Christ could save sinners from the curse of the law and bring them again into harmony with Heaven. Christ would take upon Himself the guilt and shame of sin to rescue the ruined race.

The plan of salvation had been laid before the creation of the earth, for Christ is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8); yet it was a struggle for the King of the universe to give up His Son to die for the guilty race. But "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16. Oh, the mystery of redemption! the love of God for a world that did not love Him!

God was to be revealed in Christ, "reconciling the world to Himself." 2 Corinthians 5:19. Human beings had become so degraded by sin that it was impossible for them to bring themselves into harmony with God, whose nature is purity and goodness. But Christ could give divine power to unite with human effort. Thus by repentance toward God and faith in Christ, the fallen children of Adam might once more become "children of God." 1 John 3:2.

The angels did not feel happy as Christ opened before them the plan of redemption. In grief and wonder they listened as He told them how He must come in contact with the degradation of earth, to endure sorrow, shame, and death. He would humble Himself as a man and become acquainted with the sorrows and temptations that men and women would have to endure in order that He might be able to aid those who are tempted. Hebrews 2:18. When His mission as a teacher would end, He must be subjected to every insult and torture that Satan could inspire. He must die the cruelest of deaths as a guilty sinner. He must endure anguish of soul, the hiding of His Father's face, while the sins of

the whole world were to be upon Him.

The angels offered to become a sacrifice for the human race. But only He who created man had power to redeem him. Christ was to be made "a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death." Hebrews 2:9. As He would take human nature upon Him, His strength would not be equal to that of the angels, and they were to strengthen Him in His sufferings. They were also to guard the subjects of grace from the power of evil angels.

When the angels would witness the agony and humiliation of their Lord, they would wish to deliver Him from His murderers, but they were not to step in. It was a part of the plan that Christ should suffer the scorn and abuse of wicked people.

Christ assured the angels that by His death He would ransom many and recover the kingdom that had been lost by transgression. The redeemed were to inherit it with Him. Sin and sinners would be blotted out, nevermore to disturb the peace of heaven or earth.

Then inexpressible joy filled heaven. Through the celestial courts echoed the first strains of that song that was to ring out above the hills of Bethlehem, " 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.' " Luke 2:14. " 'The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.' " Job 38:7.

### **God Promises a Savior**

In the sentence pronounced on Satan in the garden, the Lord de-

clared, " 'I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.' " Genesis 3:15. This was a promise that the power of Satan, the great adversary, would finally be broken. Adam and Eve stood as criminals before the righteous Judge, but before they heard of the hard work and sorrow that must be their portion or that they must return to dust, they listened to words that could not fail to give them hope. They could look forward to final victory!

Satan knew that his work of depraving human nature would be interrupted, that by some means men and women would be enabled to resist his power. Yet Satan rejoiced with his angels that, having caused humankind to fall, he could bring down the Son of God from His exalted position. When Christ would take upon Himself human nature, He also might be overcome.

Heavenly angels more fully opened to our first parents the plan for their salvation. Adam and his companion were not to be abandoned to Satan. Through repentance and faith in Christ they might again become the children of God.

Adam and Eve saw as never before the guilt of sin and its results. They pleaded that the penalty might not fall on Him whose love had been the source of all their joy; rather let it come on them and their descendants.

They were told that since the law of Jehovah is the foundation of His

government, even the life of an angel could not be accepted as a sacrifice for transgression. But the Son of God, who had created them, could make an atonement for them. As Adam's transgression had brought misery and death, so the sacrifice of Christ would bring life and immortality.

At his creation Adam was placed in dominion over the earth. But by yielding to temptation he became Satan's captive. The dominion passed to the one who had conquered him. Thus Satan became "the god of this world." 2 Corinthians 4:4, KJV. But Christ by His sacrifice would not only redeem the human family but recover the dominion they had forfeited. All that was lost by the first Adam will be restored by the second. See Micah 4:8.

God created the earth to be the home of holy, happy beings. That purpose will be fulfilled when, renewed by the power of God and freed from sin and sorrow, it shall become the eternal home of the redeemed.

### **The Terrible Fruits of Sin**

Sin brought separation between God and the human family, and the atonement of Christ alone could span the abyss. God would communicate with people through Christ and angels.

Adam was shown that while the sacrifice of Christ would be sufficient to save the whole world, many would choose a life of sin rather than of repentance and obedience. Crime would increase through successive

generations. The curse of sin would rest more and more heavily on the human race and the earth. The days of men and women would be shortened by their own course of sin; they would deteriorate in physical, moral, and intellectual power until the world would be filled with misery. Through the indulgence of appetite and passion, people would become incapable of appreciating the great truths of the plan of redemption. Yet Christ would supply the needs of all who would come unto Him in faith. There would ever be a few who would preserve the knowledge of God and remain pure.

The sacrificial offerings were ordained to show repentance for sin and to be a confession of faith in the promised Redeemer. To Adam the first sacrifice was painful. His hand must be raised to take life, which only God could give. It was the first time he had witnessed death. He knew that if he had been obedient to God there would have been no death. He trembled at the thought that his sin must shed the blood of Christ, the spotless Lamb of God. This gave him a vivid sense of the greatness of his transgression, for which nothing but the death of God's dear Son could atone. A star of hope illumined the dark future.

### **The Wider Purpose of Redemption**

But the plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of the human race. It was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded, but it

was to vindicate the character of God before the universe. To this the Savior looked forward when just before His crucifixion He said: " 'Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.' " John 12:31, 32. Christ dying for the salvation of humanity would justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan, establish the law of God, and reveal the nature and results of sin.

From the beginning, the great controversy had been over the law of God. Satan had sought to prove that God was unjust, His law faulty, and that the good of the universe required it to be changed. In attacking the law he aimed to overthrow the authority of God, its Author.

When Satan overcame Adam and Eve, he thought he had gained possession of this world, "because," said he, "they have chosen me as their ruler." He claimed it was impossible for forgiveness to be granted; the fallen race were his rightful subjects, and the world was his. But God gave His own Son to bear the penalty of transgression. Thus sinners might be restored to His favor and brought back to their Eden home. The great controversy, which began in heaven, was to be decided in the very world, on the same field, that Satan claimed as his.

It was the marvel of all the universe that Christ would humble

Himself to save fallen men and women. When Christ came to our world in the form of humanity, all were intensely interested in following Him as He traveled the blood-stained path from the manger to Calvary. Heaven noted the insult and mockery that He received and knew that it was at Satan's instigation. They watched the battle between light and darkness as it grew stronger. And as Christ upon the cross cried out, " 'It is finished!' " (John 19:30), a shout of triumph rang through every world and through heaven itself. The great contest was now decided, and Christ was conqueror. His death answered the question whether the Father and the Son had sufficient love for the human race to exercise self-denial and a spirit of sacrifice. Satan had revealed his true character as a liar and murderer. With one voice the loyal universe united in praising the divine administration.

But if the law was abolished at the Cross, as many claim, then the agony and death of God's dear Son were endured only to give to Satan just what he wanted; then the prince of evil triumphed, and his charges against the divine government were sustained. The fact that Christ bore the penalty for human disobedience is a mighty argument that the law is changeless; that God is righteous, merciful, and self-denying; and that infinite justice and mercy unite in the administration of His government.

# The First Murderer and His Victim\*

Cain and Abel, the sons of Adam, differed widely in character. Abel saw justice and mercy in the Creator's dealings with the fallen race, and he gratefully accepted the hope of redemption. But Cain permitted his mind to run in the same channel that led to Satan's fall—questioning the divine justice and authority.

These brothers were tested to prove whether they would believe and obey the word of God. They understood the system of offerings that God had ordained. They knew they were to express faith in the Savior whom the offerings typified and at the same time to acknowledge total dependence on Him for pardon. Without the shedding of blood, there could be no remission of sin. They were to show their faith in the blood of Christ as the promised atonement by offering the firstborn of the flock in sacrifice.

The two brothers erected their altars alike, and each brought an offering. Abel presented a sacrifice from the flock. "And the LORD respected Abel and his offering." Genesis 4:4. Fire flashed from heaven and con-

sumed the sacrifice. But Cain, disregarding the Lord's direct command, presented only an offering of fruit. There was no sign from heaven to show that it was accepted. Abel pleaded with his brother to approach God in the divinely prescribed way, but his appeals made Cain the more determined to follow his own will. As the eldest, he despised his brother's counsel.

Cain came before God with resentment in his heart. His gift expressed no real sorrow for sin, for it would be an admission of weakness to follow the exact plan marked out by God, of trusting his salvation completely to the atonement of the promised Savior. He would come in his own merits. He would not bring the lamb and mingle its blood with his offering but would present *his* fruits, the products of *his* labor, as a favor done to God. Cain obeyed in building an altar, obeyed in bringing a sacrifice, but gave only partial obedience. The essence—recognition of the need of a Redeemer—was left out.

Both of these brothers were sinners, and both acknowledged the

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\* This chapter is based on Genesis 4:1-15.

claims of God to reverence and worship. To outward appearance their religion was the same up to a certain point, but beyond this the difference was great.

### **The Great Difference Between Cain and Abel**

“By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.” Hebrews 11:4. Abel saw himself a sinner, and he saw sin and its penalty—death—standing between his soul and God. He brought the slain lamb, thus acknowledging the claims of the law that had been violated. Through the shed blood he looked to Christ dying on the cross. Trusting in the atonement there to be made, he had the assurance that he was righteous and his offering accepted.

Cain had the same opportunity of accepting these truths as had Abel. God had not chosen one brother to be accepted and the other rejected. Abel chose faith and obedience; Cain, unbelief and rebellion.

Cain and Abel represent two classes that will exist till the close of time. One avail themselves of the appointed sacrifice for sin; the other depend on their own merits. Those who feel no need of the blood of Christ, who feel that they can secure the approval of God by their own works, are making the same mistake as did Cain.

Nearly every false religion has been based on the same principle—that man can depend upon his own efforts for salvation. It is claimed by some that the human race can refine, elevate, and regenerate itself. As Cain thought to secure divine fa-

vor by an offering that lacked the blood of a sacrifice, so do these expect to exalt humanity to the divine standard, independent of the atonement of Jesus. The history of Cain shows that humanity does not tend upward toward the divine but downward toward the satanic. Christ is our only hope. See Acts 4:12.

True faith will be shown by obedience to all the requirements of God. From Adam's day to the present the great controversy has been over obedience to God's law. In all ages there have been those who claimed a right to the favor of God while disregarding some of His commands. But by works “faith was made perfect,” and without the works of obedience, faith “is dead.” James 2:22, 17. Anyone who professes to know God “and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” 1 John 2:4.

When Cain saw that his offering was rejected, he was angry that God did not accept his substitute in place of the sacrifice divinely ordained, and he was angry with his brother for choosing to obey God instead of joining in rebellion against Him.

God did not leave him to himself but stooped to reason with the man who had shown himself so unreasonable. “‘Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door.’” If he would trust to the merits of the promised Savior and obey God's requirements, he would enjoy God's favor. But if he persisted

in unbelief and sin, he would have no ground to complain that he was rejected by the Lord.

Instead of acknowledging his sin, Cain continued to complain of the injustice of God and to cherish jealousy and hatred of Abel. In meekness, yet firmly, Abel defended the justice and goodness of God. He pointed out Cain's error and tried to convince him that the wrong was in himself. He pointed to the compassion of God in sparing the life of their parents when He might have punished them with instant death. He urged that God loved them or He would not have given His Son, innocent and holy, to suffer the penalty that they had earned. All this caused Cain's anger to burn the hotter. Reason and conscience told him that Abel was in the right, but he was enraged that he could gain no sympathy in his rebellion. In fury he killed his brother.

So in all ages the wicked have hated those who were better than themselves. "Everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed." John 3:20.

The murder of Abel was the first example of the enmity between the serpent and the seed of the woman—between Satan and his subjects and Christ and His followers. Whenever through faith in the Lamb of God a person renounces the service of sin, Satan's anger is kindled. The holy life of Abel testified against Satan's claim that it is impossible for human beings to keep God's law. When Cain saw that he could not control

Abel, he was so enraged that he destroyed his life. And wherever anyone stands in defense of the law of God, the same spirit will be manifested. But every martyr of Jesus has died a conqueror. See Revelation 12:9, 11.

Cain the murderer was soon called to answer for his crime. "The LORD said to Cain, 'Where is Abel your brother?' And he said, 'I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?'" He resorted to falsehood to conceal his guilt.

### **The Punishment of Cain**

Again the Lord said to Cain, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground." Cain had had time to reflect. He knew the terrible nature of the deed he had done and the falsehood he had spoken to conceal it; but he was rebellious still, and sentence was no longer postponed. The divine voice pronounced the terrible words: "So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth."

A merciful Creator still spared Cain's life and granted him opportunity for repentance. But Cain lived only to harden his heart, to encourage rebellion against divine authority, and to be the head of a line of bold sinners. His influence exerted demoralizing power until the earth became so corrupt and filled with

violence that it needed to be destroyed.

The dark history of Cain and his descendants was an illustration of what would have been the result of permitting the sinner to live on forever, to carry out his rebellion against God. The patience of God made the wicked only more bold and defiant. Fifteen centuries after the sentence pronounced upon Cain, crime and pollution flooded the earth. It became clear that the sentence of death on the fallen race was just and merciful. The longer people lived in sin, the more degraded and reckless they became.

Satan is constantly at work to misrepresent the character and government of God and to hold the inhabitants of the world under his deception. God sees the end from the beginning. His plans were far-reaching and comprehensive, not merely to put down the rebellion but to demonstrate to all the universe its nature, fully establishing His wisdom and righteousness in His dealings with evil.

The inhabitants of other worlds were watching with the deepest interest the condition of the world before the Flood. They saw the results of the kind of rule that Lucifer had tried to establish in heaven in casting aside the law of God. The thoughts of human hearts were only evil continually (Genesis 6:5), at war with the divine principles of purity, peace, and love. It was an example of awful wickedness.

By the facts unfolded in the great controversy God carries with Him the sympathy of the whole universe, as step by step His great plan advances to its fulfillment in the final complete destruction of rebellion. It will be seen that all who have rejected the divine precepts have placed themselves on the side of Satan, in warfare against Christ. When the prince of this world shall be judged, and all who have united with him shall share his fate, the whole universe will declare, " 'Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints!' " Revelation 15:3.

# Seth, When Men Turned to God\*

To Adam was given another son to be the heir of the spiritual birthright. The name Seth, given to this son, signified “appointed,” or “compensation”; “ ‘for,’ ” said the mother, “ ‘God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel, whom Cain killed.’ ” Seth resembled Adam more closely than did his other sons, a worthy character following in the steps of Abel. Yet he inherited no more natural goodness than did Cain. Seth, like Cain, inherited the fallen nature of his parents. But he also received the knowledge of the Redeemer and instruction in righteousness. He labored, as Abel would have done, to turn the minds of sinners to revere and obey their Creator.

“As for Seth, to him also a son was born; and he named him Enosh. Then men began to call on the name of the LORD.” The distinction between the two classes became more marked—an open profession of loyalty to God on the part of one, contempt and disobedience on the part of the other.

Before the Fall, our first parents had kept the Sabbath, which was in-

stituted in Eden, and after their expulsion from Paradise they continued to observe it. They had learned what everyone will sooner or later learn, that the divine laws are sacred and unchangeable and that the penalty of transgression will surely follow. The Sabbath was honored by all who remained loyal to God. But Cain and his descendants did not respect the day upon which God had rested.

Cain now founded a city and called it by the name of his eldest son. He had gone out from the presence of the Lord to seek possessions and enjoyment in the earth, standing at the head of that great class of people who worship the god of this world. In that which relates to mere earthly and material progress, his descendants became distinguished. But they were in opposition to the purposes of God for the human race. To the crime of murder, Lamech, the fifth in descent from Cain, added polygamy. Abel had led a pastoral life, and the descendants of Seth followed the same course, counting themselves “strangers and pilgrims on the earth,” seeking “a better, that

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\* This chapter is based on Genesis 4:25 to 6:2.

is, a heavenly country." Hebrews 11:13, 16.

For some time the two classes remained separate. The race of Cain, spreading from their first settlement, scattered over the plains and valleys where the children of Seth had dwelt. The latter, in order to escape their contaminating influence, withdrew to the mountains and there continued the worship of God in its purity. But after some time they began to mingle with the inhabitants of the valleys. "The sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful." The children of Seth displeased the Lord by intermarrying with them. Many of the worshipers of God were drawn into sin by the allurements constantly before them, and they lost their holy character. Mingling with the depraved, they became like them. The restrictions of the seventh commandment were disregarded, "and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose." The children of Seth went "in the way of Cain." Jude 11. They fixed their minds on worldly prosperity and enjoyment and neglected the commandments of the Lord. Sin spread abroad in the earth.

### **Length of Adam's Life**

For nearly a thousand years Adam tried to stop the spread of evil. He had been commanded to instruct his descendants in the way of the Lord, and he carefully treasured what God had revealed to him and repeated it to succeeding generations. For nine generations he described the holy and happy condi-

tions in Paradise and repeated the history of his fall. He told them of the sufferings by which God had taught him the necessity of strict adherence to His law and explained to them the merciful provisions for their salvation. Yet often he was met with bitter reproach for the sin that had brought such woe upon his descendants.

When he left Eden, the thought that he must die thrilled Adam with horror. Filled with sorrow for his own sin and mourning a double loss in the death of Abel and the rejection of Cain, Adam was bowed down with anguish. Though the sentence of death had appeared terrible at first, yet after beholding the results of sin for nearly a thousand years, he felt that it was merciful for God to bring to an end a life of suffering and sorrow.

The age before the Flood was not, as has often been supposed, an era of ignorance and barbarism. The people possessed great physical and mental strength, and their advantages were unrivaled. Their mental powers developed early, and those who cherished the fear of God continued to increase in knowledge and wisdom throughout their lives. Compared to them, famous scholars of our time would appear greatly inferior in mental and physical strength. As people's lifespan has decreased and their physical strength has diminished, so their mental capacities have lessened.

It is true that the people of modern times have the benefit of the accomplishments of others before

them. Masterly minds have left their work for those who follow. But how much greater the advantages of the people of that time! For hundreds of years they had among them him who was formed in God's image. Adam had learned from the Creator the history of creation; he himself witnessed the events of nine centuries. The pre-Flood people had strong memories to retain what was communicated to them and to transmit it accurately to their descendants. For hundreds of years there were seven generations living on the earth at the same time, profiting by the knowledge and experience of all.

Far from being an era of religious darkness, that was an age of great light. All the world had opportunity to receive instruction from Adam, and those who feared the Lord also had Christ and angels for their teachers. And they had a silent witness to the truth, in the garden of God, which for many centuries remained on earth. Eden stood just in sight, its entrance barred by watching angels. The purpose of the garden and the history of its two trees were undisputed facts. And the existence and supreme authority of God were truths that people were slow to question while Adam was among them.

Despite the prevailing iniquity, a holy line of God's followers lived as in the companionship of heaven—people of massive intellect, of wonderful attainments. They had a great mission—to develop a character of righteousness, to teach a lesson of godliness, not only to the people of their time, but for future generations.

Only a few are mentioned in the Scriptures, but all through the ages God had faithful witnesses, true-hearted worshipers.

#### **Enoch—The First Man Never to Die**

Enoch lived sixty-five years and fathered a son. After that he walked with God three hundred years. He was one of the preservers of the true faith, the ancestors of the promised Seed. From the lips of Adam he had learned the story of the Fall and of God's grace as seen in the promise, and he relied upon the Redeemer to come.

But after the birth of his first son, Enoch reached a higher experience. As he saw the child's love for its father, its simple trust in his protection, as he felt the deep tenderness of his own heart for that firstborn son, he learned a precious lesson of the wonderful love of God in the gift of His Son. The boundless love of God through Christ became the subject of his meditations day and night, and he tried to reveal that love to the people around him.

Enoch's walk with God was not in a trance or vision but in all the duties of daily life. As a husband and father, a friend, a citizen, he was the unwavering servant of the Lord.

His heart was in harmony with God's will; for "can two walk together, unless they are agreed?" Amos 3:3. And this holy walk continued for three hundred years. Enoch's faith grew stronger, his love more ardent, with the passing of centuries.

Enoch was a man of vast knowledge, honored with special revela-

tions from God, yet he was one of the humblest of men. He waited before the Lord. To him prayer was as the breath of the soul; he lived in the very atmosphere of heaven.

Through holy angels God revealed to Enoch His purpose to destroy the world by a flood. He also opened the plan of redemption more fully to him and showed him the great events connected with the second coming of Christ and the end of the world.

Enoch had been troubled in regard to the dead. It had seemed to him that the righteous and the wicked would go to the dust together and that this would be their end. He could not see the life of the just beyond the grave. In prophetic vision he was instructed concerning the death of Christ and His coming in glory, attended by all the holy angels, to ransom His people from the grave. He also saw the corrupt state of the world when Christ would appear the second time—that there would be a boastful, self-willed generation trampling upon the law and despising the atonement. He saw the righteous crowned with glory and honor and the wicked destroyed by fire.

Enoch became a preacher of righteousness, making known God's messages to all who would hear. In the land where Cain had tried to flee from the divine presence, the prophet made known the wonderful scenes that he had been shown. "Behold," he declared, "the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all

who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds.'" Jude 14, 15.

While he preached the love of God in Christ, he rebuked the prevailing sins and warned that judgment would surely come upon the transgressor. It is not smooth things only that are spoken by holy men. God puts into the lips of His messengers truths that are sharp and cutting as a two-edged sword.

Some gave heed to the warning, but the multitudes went on more boldly in their evil ways. So will the last generation make light of the warnings of the Lord's messengers.

In the midst of a life of active labor, Enoch steadfastly maintained his fellowship with God. After remaining for a time among the people, he would spend time alone, hungering and thirsting for divine knowledge. Communing with God, Enoch came to reflect the divine image more and more. His face was radiant with the light that shines in the face of Jesus.

As year after year passed, deeper and deeper grew the tide of human guilt, darker and darker gathered the clouds of divine judgment. Yet Enoch kept on his way, warning, pleading, working to turn back the tide of guilt. Though his warnings were ignored by a sinful, pleasure-loving people, he had the assurance that God approved. He continued to battle against evil until God removed him from a world of sin to the pure joys of heaven.

### **Enoch Is Translated to Heaven**

The people of that generation had mocked Enoch because he did

not seek to build up possessions here. But his heart was upon eternal treasures. He had seen the King in His glory in the midst of Zion. His mind, his way of living, were in heaven. The greater the existing iniquity, the more earnest was his longing for the home of God.

For three hundred years Enoch had walked with God. Day by day he had longed for a closer union; nearer and nearer had grown the relationship, until God took him to Himself. Now the walk with God, which he had so long pursued on earth, continued, and he passed through the gates of the Holy City—the first from among earth's inhabitants to enter there.

His loss was felt on earth. Some, both righteous and wicked, had witnessed his departure. Those who loved him made diligent search, but without avail. They reported that he "was not," for God had taken him.

By the translation of Enoch the Lord designed to teach an important lesson. There was danger that men and women would yield to discouragement because of the fearful results of Adam's sin. Many were ready to exclaim, "What good is it that we have feared the Lord and have kept His laws, since a heavy curse is resting upon the race, and death is the reward of us all?" Satan was urging the belief that there was no reward for the righteous or punishment of the wicked and that it was impossible

for human beings to obey the divine statutes. But in the case of Enoch, God shows what He will do for those who keep His commandments. People were taught that it is possible to obey the law of God, that they were able by grace to resist temptation and become pure and holy. His being taken to heaven was an evidence of the truth of his prophecy concerning the hereafter, with its award of immortal life to the obedient and of condemnation and death to the transgressor.

"By faith Enoch was translated so that he did not see death, . . . for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." Hebrews 11:5. The godly character of this prophet represents the state of holiness that must be attained by those who shall be "redeemed from the earth" (Revelation 14:3) at Christ's second advent. Then, as before the Flood, sin will prevail. Many will rebel against the authority of Heaven. But, like Enoch, God's people will seek for purity of heart and conformity to His will until they shall reflect the likeness of Christ. Like Enoch they will warn the world of the Lord's second coming and by their holy example will condemn the sins of the ungodly. As Enoch was translated to heaven, so the living righteous will be translated from the earth before its destruction by fire. See 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18.

# When the World Was Destroyed by Water\*

In the days of Noah a double curse was resting upon the earth as a result of Adam's sin and the murder committed by Cain. Yet the earth was still beautiful. The hills were crowned with majestic trees; the plains were sweet with the fragrance of a thousand flowers. The fruits of the earth were almost without limit. The trees far surpassed in size and perfect proportion any that now exist. Their wood was of fine grain and hard substance, resembling stone and hardly less enduring. Gold, silver, and precious stones existed in abundance.

The human race still retained much of its early vigor. There were many giants known for their wisdom, skillful in devising the most ingenious and wonderful works, but letting iniquity run loose.

God bestowed rich gifts on these pre-Flood people, but they used His bounties to glorify themselves and turned them into a curse by setting their affections on the gifts instead of the Giver. They tried to outdo one another in beautifying their dwellings with skillful workmanship. They reveled in

scenes of pleasure and wickedness. Not wanting to keep God in their knowledge, they soon came to deny the He exists. They glorified human genius, worshiped the works of their own hands, and taught their children to bow down to graven images.

The psalmist describes the effect produced on the worshiper by the adoration of idols: "Those who make them are like them; so is everyone who trusts in them." Psalm 115:8. It is a law of the human mind that by beholding we become changed. If the mind is never raised above the level of humanity, if it is not uplifted to contemplate infinite wisdom and love, humankind will be constantly sinking lower and lower. "The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. . . . The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence." His law was transgressed, and every imaginable sin was the result. Justice was trampled in the dust, and the cries of the oppressed reached to heaven.

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\* This chapter is based on Genesis 6 and 7.

### **Human Life Regarded With Indifference**

Polygamy had been introduced early, though it was contrary to God's plan. The Lord gave one wife to Adam. But after the Fall people chose to follow their own sinful desires. As a result, crime and misery increased rapidly. Neither marriage nor the rights of property were respected. People reveled in violence. They delighted in destroying animals, and the use of flesh for food made them still more cruel and bloodthirsty, until they came to regard human life with indifference.

The world was in its infancy, yet evil had become so deep and widespread that God said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth." He declared that His Spirit would not always strive with the guilty race. If they did not cease their sins He would blot them from His creation; He would sweep away the beasts and the vegetation that furnished such an abundant supply of food and would transform the fair earth into one vast scene of ruin.

### **A Ship to Preserve Life**

One hundred twenty years before the Flood, the Lord told Noah His plan and directed him to build an ark. He was to preach that God would bring a flood of water on the earth. Those who would believe the message and would prepare by repentance and reformation would find pardon and be saved. Methuselah and his sons, who lived to hear the preaching of Noah, assisted in building the ark.

God gave Noah the exact dimensions of the ark and instructed him how to build it. Human wisdom could not have designed a structure so strong and durable. God was the architect and Noah the master builder. It was three stories high, with only one door in the side. Light was admitted at the top, and the different apartments were so arranged that all were lighted. The material was cypress or gopher wood, which would be untouched by decay for hundreds of years. Building this huge structure was a slow process. Because of the size of the trees and the nature of the wood, much more work was required than now to prepare timber. Everything humanly possible was done to make the work perfect, yet the ark on its own could not have withstood the storm. God alone could preserve His servants on the raging waters.

"By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith." Hebrews 11:7. While Noah gave his warning message, his faith was perfected and made evident, an example of believing just what God says. All that he possessed he invested in the ark. As he began to construct that immense boat, crowds came from every direction to see the strange sight and to hear the earnest words of the preacher.

At first, many appeared to receive the warning, yet they did not

turn to God with true repentance. Overcome by the widespread unbelief, they finally joined their former associates in rejecting the solemn message. Some were convicted and would have heeded the warning, but so many people were ridiculing Noah that they entered into the same spirit, resisted the invitations of mercy, and were soon among the boldest scoffers. None go to such lengths in sin as do those who have once had light but have resisted the convicting Spirit of God.

Not all the people of that generation were idolaters. Many claimed to be worshipers of God. They said that their idols were representations of the Deity and that through them the people could obtain a clearer concept of the divine Being. Such people were leaders in rejecting the preaching of Noah, and they finally declared that the divine law was no longer in force and that it was contrary to the character of God to punish disobedience. Their minds had become so blinded by rejecting the light that they really believed Noah's message to be a delusion.

The world was set against God's justice and His laws, and Noah was regarded as a fanatic. Great men—worldly, honored and wise—said, "The threatenings of God are for the purpose of intimidating and will never come true. The destruction of the world by the God who made it and the punishment of the beings He has created will never take place. Fear not, Noah is a wild fanatic." They continued their disobedience and wickedness, as though

God had not spoken through His servant.

But Noah stood like a rock in a storm. Connection with God made him strong in the strength of infinite power. For one hundred twenty years his solemn voice fell on the ears of that generation, warning of events which, as far as human wisdom could judge, were impossible.

Up to that time rain had never fallen; the earth had been watered by a mist or dew. The rivers had never yet passed their boundaries but had carried their waters safely to the sea. God's fixed decrees had kept the waters from overflowing their banks. See Job 38:11.

But time passed on; people whose hearts at times had trembled with fear began to be reassured. They reasoned that nature is above the God of nature. If the message of Noah were correct, nature would be turned out of her course. They showed their contempt for the warning of God by doing the same as they had done before the warning was given. They continued their festivities and gluttonous feasts. They ate and drank, planted and built, laying plans for the future. They claimed that if there were any truth in what Noah had said, the people of renown—the wise, the prudent, and the great people—would understand the matter.

The time of their probation was about to end. The ark was finished exactly as the Lord had directed and was stored with food for humans and animals. And now the servant of God made his last solemn appeal to

the people. Noah pleaded with them to seek a refuge while there was still time. Again they rejected his words and raised their voices in scoffing.

Suddenly beasts of every description were seen coming from mountain and forest, quietly making their way toward the ark. Birds were flocking from all directions, and in perfect order passed to the ark. Animals "went into the ark to Noah" two by two, and the clean beasts by sevens. Philosophers were called upon to account for this unique event, but they could not explain it. The doomed race banished their rising fears by merriment and seemed to invite upon themselves the awakened wrath of God.

God commanded Noah, "Come into the ark, you and all your household, because I have seen that you are righteous before Me in this generation." His influence and example resulted in blessings to his family. God saved all the members of his family with him.

### **An Angel Shuts the Door**

The beasts of the field and the birds of the air had entered the place of refuge. Noah and his household were within the ark, "and the LORD shut him in." The massive door, impossible for those inside to close, was slowly swung into place by unseen hands. Noah was shut in and the rejecters of God's mercy were shut out. So the door of mercy will be shut when Christ shall cease His ministry for guilty sinners before He comes in the clouds of heaven. Then divine grace will no longer restrain

the wicked, and Satan will have full control of those who have rejected mercy. They will try to destroy God's people; but as Noah was shut into the ark, so the righteous will be shielded by divine power.

For seven days after Noah and his family entered the ark, there was no sign of the coming storm. During this period their faith was tested. It was a time of triumph to the world outside. They continued making a joke of the exhibits of God's power. They gathered in crowds around the ark, making fun of its inmates with a reckless boldness that they had never dared to show before.

But on the eighth day dark clouds overspread the heavens. The muttering of thunder and the flash of lightning followed. Soon large drops of rain began to fall. The world had never witnessed anything like this, fear struck every heart. All were secretly inquiring, "Can it be that Noah was right and that the world is doomed?" The animals were roaming about in the wildest terror. Then "the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened." The clouds poured out rain like mighty waterfalls. Rivers broke away from their boundaries and overflowed the valleys. Jets of water burst from the earth with indescribable force.

The people first saw their splendid buildings and beautiful gardens and groves in which they had placed their idols destroyed by lightning from heaven. Altars on which human sacrifices had been offered were torn down, and the worshipers were

made to tremble at the power of the living God.

As the violence of the storm increased, the terror of humans and animals was beyond description. Above the roar of the tempest was heard the wailing of men and women who had despised the authority of God. Satan himself, compelled to remain among the warring elements, feared for his own life. He now uttered curses against God. Many of the people, like Satan, blasphemed God. Others were frantic with fear, stretching their hands toward the ark, pleading to be let in. Conscience was at last aroused to know that there is a God who rules in the heavens.

They called upon Him earnestly, but His ear was not open to their cry. In that terrible hour they saw that transgression of God's law had caused their ruin. Yet they felt no true humility and sorrow, no horror of evil. They would have returned to their defiance of Heaven if the judgment had been removed.

Some clung to the ark until they were carried away by the surging waters or their hold was broken by colliding with rocks and trees. The massive ark trembled in every fiber as it was beaten by the merciless winds. The cries of animals within expressed their fear and pain. But the ark continued to ride safely. Angels were sent to preserve it.

Some of the people tied their children and themselves on powerful animals, knowing that these would climb to the highest points to escape the rising waters. Some fastened

themselves to lofty trees on the hills or mountains, but the trees were uprooted and hurled into the waves. As the waters rose higher the people fled for refuge to the tallest mountains. Often people and animals struggled together for a foothold until both were swept away.

From the highest peaks the desperate people looked abroad upon a shoreless ocean. The solemn warnings of God's servant no longer seemed a subject for ridicule. Those doomed sinners pleaded for one hour's probation, one more call from the lips of Noah! But love, no less than justice, demanded that God's judgments should put a restraint on sin. The despisers of God perished in the black depths.

### **Conditions Before the Flood**

The sins that called for vengeance upon the pre-Flood world exist today. The fear of God is banished from human hearts. His law is treated with indifference and contempt. " 'For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.' " Matthew 24:38, 39. God did not condemn the pre-Flood generation for eating and drinking. He had given the fruits of the earth to meet their physical wants. Their sin was in taking these gifts without gratitude to the Giver, indulging appetite without restraint. It was lawful to marry. He gave special directions

concerning this relationship, clothing it with holiness and beauty. But marriage was perverted and made to serve passion.

### **Similar Conditions Today**

A similar condition exists today. Appetite is indulged without restraint. Professed followers of Christ are eating and drinking with the drunken. Intemperance numbs the moral and spiritual powers and prepares for indulgence of the lower passions. Multitudes become slaves of lust, living for the sensual pleasures. Extravagance saturates society. People sacrifice integrity for luxury and display. Fraud, bribery, and theft go unrebuked. The media report many crimes so cold-blooded that it seems as though every instinct of humanity were blotted out. And these atrocities have become so common that they hardly produce surprise. The pent-up fires of lawlessness, having once escaped control, will fill the earth with woe and desolation. The pre-Flood world represents the condition to which modern society is rushing.

God sent Noah to warn the world, so that the people could be led to repentance and escape the threatened destruction. As the time of Christ's second coming draws near, the Lord sends His servants with a warning to prepare for that great event. Multitudes have been living in violation of God's law, and now in mercy He calls them to obey its sacred commands. All who will put away their sins by repentance and faith in Christ are offered par-

don. But many reject His warnings and deny the authority of His law.

Out of the vast population of the earth before the Flood, only eight people believed and obeyed God's word through Noah. So before the Lawgiver shall come to punish the disobedient, sinners are warned to repent; but the majority will not heed these warnings. "Scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning.'" 2 Peter 3:3, 4.

Jesus asked the significant question, "When the Son of man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" Luke 18:8. "The Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons." 1 Timothy 4:1. "In the last days perilous times will come." 2 Timothy 3:1.

### **When Probation Closes**

As the time for their salvation was closing, the people before the Flood gave themselves up to exciting amusements, filling their lives with mirth and pleasure. In our day the world is absorbed in pleasure-seeking. A constant round of excitement prevents the people from being impressed by the truths that alone can save them from coming destruction.

In Noah's day philosophers declared that it was impossible for the world to be destroyed by water. So now scientific minds try to show that

the world cannot be destroyed by fire. But when everyone considered Noah's prophecy a delusion, then it was that God's time had come. The Lawgiver is greater than the laws of nature. " 'As it was in the days of Noah,' " " 'even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.' " Luke 17:26, 30. "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise . . . ; both

the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up." 2 Peter 3:10.

When religious teachers are pointing forward to ages of peace and prosperity and the people of the world are absorbed in planting and building, feasting and merrymaking, rejecting God's warnings and mocking His messengers—then it is that "sudden destruction comes upon them. . . . And they shall not escape." 1 Thessalonians 5:3.

# After the Flood, a New Beginning\*

The waters rose above the highest mountains. It often seemed to the family within the ark that they would die, as for five long months their boat was tossed about. It was a terrible ordeal, but Noah's faith did not waver.

As the waters began to subside, the Lord caused the ark to drift into a spot protected by a group of mountains preserved by His power. These mountains were only a little distance apart, and the ark moved about in this quiet area. This gave great relief to the weary, storm-tossed voyagers.

Noah and his family longed to go out again on the earth. Forty days after the tops of the mountains became visible, they sent out a raven to discover whether the earth had become dry. This bird, finding nothing but water, continued to fly to and from the ark. Seven days later a dove was sent forth. It found no footing and returned to the ark. Noah waited seven days longer and again sent forth the dove. When she returned at evening with an olive leaf in her mouth, there was great rejoicing. Still Noah waited patiently

for special directions to leave the ark.

At last an angel opened the massive door and told the patriarch and his household to go out on the earth and take with them every living thing. Noah did not forget the One by whose gracious care they had been preserved. His first act was to build an altar and offer sacrifice, thus expressing his gratitude to God for deliverance and his faith in Christ, the great sacrifice. This offering was pleasing to the Lord, and a blessing resulted not only to Noah and his family but to all who would live upon the earth. "The LORD said in His heart, 'I will never again curse the ground for man's sake. . . . While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night, shall not cease.' " Noah had come out onto a desolate earth, but before preparing a house for himself he built an altar to God. His stock of cattle was small, yet he cheerfully gave a part to the Lord to acknowledge that all was His. Likewise, we should acknowledge His mercy toward us by devotion and gifts to His cause.

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\* This chapter is based on Genesis 7:20 to 9:7.

**The Rainbow—Sign of God's Kindness**

So that people would not fear another flood, the Lord encouraged the family of Noah by a promise: "I establish My covenant with you: . . . never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth. . . . I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. . . . When I bring a cloud over the earth, . . . the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud; . . . and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature.' "

How great the condescension of God and His compassion for His wayward creatures!

This does not imply that God would ever forget, but He speaks to us in terms that we can understand. When the children would ask the meaning of the arch that spans the heavens, their parents were to repeat the story of the Flood and tell them that the Most High had placed it in the clouds as an assurance that the waters would never again overflow the earth. It would testify of divine love for humanity and strengthen their confidence in God.

In heaven a likeness of the rainbow encircles the throne and arches over the head of Christ. Ezekiel 1:28; Revelation 4:2, 3. When humanity's great wickedness invites divine judgments, the Savior, interceding with the Father, points to the bow in the clouds, to the rainbow around the throne, as a token of mercy toward the repentant sinner.

"As I have sworn that the waters of Noah would no longer cover the

earth, so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you. . . . My kindness shall not depart from you, nor shall My covenant of peace be removed,' says the LORD, who has mercy on you." Isaiah 54:9, 10.

As Noah looked at the powerful beasts of prey as they came out of the ark, the Lord sent an angel with the assuring message: "'The fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move on the earth, and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs.' " Before this time God had given no permission to eat animals for food; but now that every green thing had been destroyed, He allowed them to eat the flesh of the clean animals that had been preserved in the ark.

The entire surface of the earth was changed at the Flood. Everywhere dead bodies lay on the ground. The Lord would not permit these to remain to decompose and pollute the air. A violent wind, which was caused to dry up the waters, moved them with great force. In some instances it even carried away the tops of mountains and heaped up trees, rocks, and earth above the bodies of the dead. By the same means the silver and gold, choice wood and precious stones, which had enriched the world before the Flood, were concealed. The violent action of the waters piled earth and rocks upon these treasures and even

formed mountains above them. God saw that the more He enriched and prospered sinners, the more they would corrupt their ways before Him.

The mountains, once beautiful, had become broken and irregular. Ledges and ragged rocks were now scattered on the surface of the earth. Where once earth's richest treasures of gold, silver, and precious stones had been, the heaviest marks of the curse were seen. And on countries not inhabited and those where there had been the least crime, the curse rested more lightly.

More terrible manifestations than the world has yet seen will be wit-

nessed at the second advent of Christ. As lightnings from heaven unite with the fire in the earth, the mountains will burn like a furnace and pour forth terrific streams of lava, overwhelming gardens and fields, villages and cities. Everywhere there will be dreadful earthquakes and eruptions.

Thus God will destroy the wicked from off the earth. But the righteous will be preserved, as Noah was preserved in the ark. Says the psalmist: "Because you have made the LORD, who is my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place, no evil shall befall you." Psalm 91:9, 10; see also verse 14 and Psalm 27:5.

# The Beginning of the Literal Week

Like the Sabbath, the week had its beginnings at creation, and it has been preserved through Bible history. God Himself measured off the first week. It consisted of seven 24-hour days. Six days were employed in the work of creation. On the seventh God rested, then set it apart as a day of rest for humanity. “ ‘Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. . . . 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.’ ” Exodus 20:8-11.

This reason appears beautiful and forcible when we understand the days of creation to be literal. The first six days of each week are given to us for labor. On the seventh day we are to refrain from labor to commemorate the Creator's rest.

But the teaching that the events of the first week required thousands upon thousands of years is godlessness in its most subtle and dangerous form. Its real character is so disguised that it is held and taught by many who profess to believe the Bible. “By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.” Psalm

33:6. The Bible recognizes no long ages in which the earth slowly evolved from disorder. Of each successive day of creation, the sacred record declares that it consisted of the evening and the morning, like all other days that have followed.

Geologists claim to find evidence from the earth that it is very much older than the Bible teaches. Bones of men and animals much larger than any that now exist have been discovered, and from this many conclude that the earth was populated long before the time brought to view in the record of creation. Such reasoning has led many professed Bible believers to adopt the position that the days of creation were vast, indefinite periods.

But apart from Bible history, geology can prove nothing. Relics found in the earth do give evidence of conditions differing from the present in many respects, but the time when these conditions existed can be learned only from the Inspired Record. In the history of the Flood inspiration has explained that which geology alone could never discover. In the days of Noah, men, animals, and trees many times larger than now exist were buried and thus

preserved as an evidence to later generations that the inhabitants perished by a flood. God designed that the discovery of these things should establish faith in inspired history. But many today, with their false reasoning, fall into the same error as did the people before the Flood—the things that God gave them as a benefit they turn into a curse by making a wrong use of them.

There is a constant effort to explain creation as the result of natural causes, and even professed Christians accept human reasoning in opposition to Scripture facts. Many oppose investigating the prophecies, especially Daniel and the Revelation, declaring that we cannot understand them. Yet these very persons eagerly receive the suppositions of geologists in contradiction of Moses' account. Just how God accomplished the work of creation He has never revealed to us; human science cannot search out the secrets of the Most High. See Deuteronomy 29:29.

Those who leave the Word of God and try to account for His created works on scientific principles are drifting without chart or compass on an unknown ocean. The greatest minds, if not guided by the Word of God in their research, become bewildered in their attempts to find the relationship between science and revelation. Those who doubt the records of the Old and New Testaments will be led to go a step further and doubt the existence of God. Then, having lost their anchor, they are left to beat about on the rocks of godless despair.

The Bible is not to be tested by human ideas of science. Skeptics, through an imperfect comprehension of either science or revelation, claim to find contradictions between them; but rightly understood they are in perfect harmony. Moses wrote under the guidance of the Spirit of God, and a correct theory of geology will never claim discoveries that cannot be harmonized with his statements.

### **True Science and the Bible Agree**

In the Word of God many questions are raised that scholars can never answer. There is much among the common things of everyday life that human minds with all their boasted wisdom can never fully understand.

Yet scientists think they can comprehend the wisdom of God. The idea is widespread that He is restricted by His own laws. People either deny or ignore His existence or think to explain everything, even the operation of His Spirit on the human heart; and they no longer reverence His name.

Many teach that nature operates in harmony with fixed laws with which God Himself cannot interfere. This is false science. Nature is the servant of her Creator. God does not set aside His laws but is continually using them as His instruments. In nature there is the continual working of the Father and the Son. Christ says, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working." John 5:17.

As regards this world, God's work

of creation is completed. "The works were finished from the foundation of the world." Hebrews 4:3. But His energy is still exerted in upholding the objects of His creation. Every breath, every beat of the heart, is an evidence of the universal care of Him in whom " 'we live and move and have our being.' " Acts 17:28. The hand of God guides the planets and keeps them in position. He "brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, by the greatness of His might and the strength of His power; not one is missing." Isaiah 40:26. Through His power vegetation flourishes, the leaves appear, and the flowers bloom. He "makes grass to grow on the mountains" (Psalm 147:8), and by Him the valleys are made fruitful. "All the beasts of the forest . . . seek their food from God" (Psalm 104:20, 21), and every living creature, from the smallest insect to

the full-gown human, is daily dependent upon His providential care.

All true science is in harmony with His works; all true education leads to obedience to His government. Science opens new wonders to our view; she soars high and explores new depths, but she brings nothing from her research that conflicts with divine revelation. The book of nature and the Written Word shed light on each other.

We may be ever searching, ever learning, and still there is an infinity beyond. The works of creation testify of God's power and greatness. See Psalm 19:1. Those who take the Written Word as their counselor will find in science an aid to understand God. "Since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead." Romans 1:20.

# When Languages Were Changed\*

To repopulate the desolate earth God had preserved only one family, the household of Noah. To him God declared, “I have seen that you are righteous before Me in this generation.” Genesis 7:1. Yet in the three sons of Noah—Shem, Ham, and Japheth—the character of their descendants was foreshadowed.

Noah, speaking by divine inspiration, foretold the history of the three great races that would be fathered by these three men. Tracing the descendants of Ham through the son rather than the father, He declared, “Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants he shall be to his brethren.” The unnatural crime of Ham revealed the corruption of his character. These evil characteristics continued in Canaan and his descendants.

On the other hand, the reverence shown by Shem and Japheth for God’s laws promised a brighter future for their descendants. Concerning these sons it was declared, “Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem, and may Canaan be his servant. May God enlarge Japheth, and may he dwell in the tents of Shem;

and may Canaan be his servant.” The line of Shem was to be that of the chosen people. From him would descend Abraham, and the people of Israel, through whom Christ was to come. And Japheth will “dwell in the tents of Shem.” The descendants of Japheth were especially to share in the blessings of the gospel.

The family line of Canaan descended to the most degrading forms of heathenism. Though the prophetic curse had doomed them to slavery, God bore with their corruption until they passed the limits of divine restraint. Then they became slaves to the descendants of Shem and Japheth.

The prophecy of Noah did not determine the character and destiny of his sons. But it showed what would be the result of the path they had chosen and the character they had developed. As a rule, children inherit the dispositions and tendencies of their parents and imitate their example. Thus the corruption and irreverence of Ham were reproduced in his posterity, bringing a curse upon them for many generations.

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\* This chapter is based on Genesis 9:25-27; 11:1-9.

On the other hand, how richly rewarded was Shem's respect for his father, and what a noble and honored line of holy men appears in his descendants!

For a time, the descendants of Noah continued to live among the mountains where the ark had rested. As their numbers increased, apostasy led to division. Those who wanted to forget their Creator and throw off the restraint of His law felt constantly annoyed by the teaching and example of their God-fearing associates. After a time they decided to separate. So they moved to Shinar on the banks of the Euphrates River, attracted by the beauty of the landscape and the fertility of the soil.

Here they decided to build a city and in it a tower so high that it would be the wonder of the world. God had directed people to disperse throughout the earth, but these Babel builders determined to keep their community united and to establish a kingdom that would embrace the whole earth. Thus their city would become the capital of a universal empire. Its glory would draw the admiration and praise of the world. The magnificent tower, reaching to the heavens, was meant to stand as a monument of the power and wisdom of its builders.

Those who settled on the plain of Shinar disbelieved God's covenant that He would not bring a flood upon the earth again. One purpose in erecting the tower was to secure their safety in case of another deluge. And because they would be able

to go up to the region of the clouds, they hoped to learn the cause of the Flood. The whole undertaking was to exalt the pride of its developers and to turn future generations away from God.

When the tower had been partially completed, suddenly the work that had been advancing so well was stopped. Angels were sent to block the plan of the builders. The tower had reached a great height, and the workers were stationed at different points, each to receive and report to the one next below him the orders for needed material. As messages were passing from one to another, the language was confused so that the directions delivered were often the opposite of those that had been given. All work came to a standstill. The builders were completely unable to account for the strange misunderstandings among them. In their rage and disappointment they blamed one another. As an evidence of God's displeasure, lightnings from heaven broke off the upper portion of the tower and cast it to the ground.

### **God's Purpose in Changing Their Language**

Up to this time, everyone had been speaking the same language. Now those who could understand one another's speech united in groups. Some went one way and some another. "The LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth." This spread people all over the earth; and thus the Lord's plan was accomplished through the very means by which

some had tried to prevent its fulfillment.

But at what a loss! It was God's plan that as people would go out to different parts of the earth they would carry with them the light of truth. Noah, the faithful preacher of righteousness, lived for three hundred fifty years after the Flood, and Shem for five hundred years; as a result, their descendants had opportunity to learn the requirements of God and the history of His dealings with the human race. But they had no desire to keep God in their knowledge; and by the confusion of languages they were largely shut out from communicating with those who might have given them light.

Satan was trying to bring contempt on the sacrificial offerings that pointed to the death of Christ. As the minds of the people were darkened by idolatry, he led them to counterfeit these offerings by sacrificing their own children on the altars of their gods. As people turned away from God, the divine traits of character—justice, purity, and love—were replaced by oppression, violence, and brutality.

The residents of Babel had determined to establish a government independent of God. Some among them, however, feared the Lord. For the sake of these faithful ones, the Lord delayed His judgments and gave the people time to reveal their true character. The followers of God tried to turn them from their plan, but the people were fully united in their Heaven-daring project. If they had gone on unhindered,

they would have corrupted the world in its infancy. If this alliance had been permitted, a mighty power would have emerged to banish righteousness—and with it peace, happiness, and security—from the earth.

Those who feared the Lord cried out to Him to intervene. "But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built." In mercy to the world He defeated the plans of the tower-builders. In mercy He confused their speech, hindering their rebellion. God bears long with human wickedness, giving opportunity for repentance. From time to time His unseen hand is stretched out to restrain iniquity. The world receives unmistakable evidence that the Creator of the universe is the Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth. None can defy His power without reaping the results!

There are tower builders in our time. Humanists dare to pass sentence on God's moral government. They despise His law and boast of human reason. Then, "because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." Ecclesiastes 8:11.

### **Today's Tower of Babel**

Many turn from the plain teachings of the Bible and build up a creed from human speculations and pleasing fables. They point to their "tower" as a way to climb up to heaven. Eloquent lips teach that the sinner

will not die, that salvation may be had without obedience to the law of God. If the professed followers of Christ would accept God's standard, it would bring them into unity. But as long as human wisdom is exalted above God's Holy Word, there will be divisions and dissension. The existing confusion of conflicting beliefs

and denominations is fitly represented by the term *Babylon*, which prophecy applies to the world-loving churches of the last days. See Revelation 14:8; 18:2.

The time of God's investigation is at hand. His sovereign power will be revealed; the works of human pride will be laid low.

# Abraham, the Father of All Believers\*

After Babel, idolatry again became nearly universal, and the Lord finally left the hardened sinners to follow their evil ways, while He chose Abraham, a descendant of Shem, and made him the keeper of His law for future generations. God has always had a remnant to preserve the precious revealings of His will. Abraham inherited this holy trust. Uncorrupted by the widespread apostasy, he faithfully persisted in worshipping God. The Lord communicated His will to Abraham and gave him a knowledge of His law and of salvation through Christ.

God promised Abraham, “I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing.” To this was added the assurance that the Redeemer of the world would come from his descendants: “In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” Yet, as the first condition of fulfillment, there was to be a test of faith; a sacrifice was demanded.

The message of God came to Abraham, “Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will

show you.” Abraham must be separated from the influence of relatives and friends. His character must be distinct, differing from all the world. He could not even explain his action so that his friends would understand. His idolatrous family did not comprehend his motives.

Abraham’s unquestioning obedience is one of the most striking evidences of faith in all the Bible. See Hebrews 11:8. Relying on the divine promise, he abandoned home and family and native land and went out to follow where God would lead. “By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob.” Hebrews 11:9.

There were strong ties to bind him to his country, his relatives, and his home. But he did not hesitate to obey the call. He asked no questions concerning the land of promise—whether the soil was fertile, the climate healthful. The happiest place on earth was the place where God wanted him to be.

Many are still tested as was Abraham. They do not hear the voice of God speaking directly from heaven,

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\* This chapter is based on Genesis 12.

but He calls them by the teachings of His Word and the events of His leading. They may be required to abandon a career that promises wealth and honor and to separate from family in order to start out on what appears to be a path of self-denial and sacrifice. God has a work for them to do; the influence of friends and family would hinder it.

Who is ready, at the call of God, to renounce cherished plans, accept new duties, and enter unfamiliar fields? Those who will do this have the faith of Abraham and will share with him that “far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” 2 Corinthians 4:17. See also Romans 8:18.

The call from heaven first came to Abraham in “Ur of the Chaldeans,” and in obedience he moved to Haran. This far his father’s family accompanied him. Here Abraham remained till the death of Terah.

### **Into the Unknown**

But after his father died the divine voice called him to go forward. Besides Sarah, the wife of Abraham, only Lot chose to share the pilgrim life. Abraham possessed large flocks and many servants. He was never to return, and he took with him all that he had, “all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran.” In Haran both Abraham and Sarah had led others to the worship of the true God. These went with him to the land of promise, “the land of Canaan.”

The place where they first stayed

was Shechem. Abraham made his camp in a wide, grassy valley, with its olive groves and gushing springs. It was a beautiful and fertile country, “a land of brooks of water, . . . of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey.” Deuteronomy 8:7, 8. But a heavy shadow rested on wooded hill and fruitful plain. In the groves were set up the altars of false gods, and human sacrifices were offered on nearby hills.

Then “the LORD appeared to Abram and said, ‘To your descendants I will give this land.’” His faith was strengthened by this assurance. “And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.” Still a traveler, he soon journeyed to a spot near Bethel and again built an altar and called on the name of the Lord.

Abraham set us a worthy example. His was a life of prayer. Wherever he pitched his tent, close beside he set up his altar, calling all within his camp to the morning and evening sacrifice. When he moved away, the altar remained. Roving Canaanites received instruction from Abraham, and wherever any of these came to that altar, they worshiped the living God there.

### **Why God Permitted Abraham to Suffer Famine**

Abraham continued to travel southward, and again his faith was tested. The heavens withheld their rain, and the flocks and herds found no pasture. Starvation threatened the whole camp. All were eagerly

watching to see what Abraham would do, as trouble after trouble came. As long as his confidence appeared unshaken, they felt that there was hope; they were assured that God was his friend and that He was still guiding him.

Abraham clung to the promise, " 'I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing.' " He would not allow circumstances to shake his faith in God's word. To escape the famine he went down to Egypt. In his great trouble he did not turn back to the Chaldean land from which he came but looked for a temporary home as near as possible to the Land of Promise.

The Lord in His wisdom had brought this trial on Abraham to teach him lessons for the benefit of everyone after him who would be called to endure affliction. God does not forget or cast off those who put their trust in Him. The trials that test our faith most severely and make it seem that God has forsaken us are to lead us closer to Christ. We may lay all our burdens at His feet and experience in exchange the peace that He will give us.

The heat of the furnace is what separates the dross from the true gold of Christian character. By difficult, testing trials God disciplines His servants. He sees that some have powers that may be used in the advancement of His work. In His wisdom He brings them into positions that test their character and reveal weaknesses of which they were unaware. He gives them opportunity to correct these defects. He shows them

their own weakness and teaches them to lean on Him. In this way they are educated, trained, and disciplined, prepared to fulfill the grand purpose for which their powers were given to them. Heavenly angels can unite with them in the work to be accomplished on earth.

### **Abraham's Sad Mistake**

In Egypt, Abraham showed that he was not free from human weakness. His wife, Sarah, was "very beautiful," and he was sure that the Egyptians would covet the lovely stranger and kill her husband. He reasoned that he was not guilty of lying in describing Sarah as his sister, for she was the daughter of his father, though not of his mother.

But this was deception. Through Abraham's lack of faith, Sarah was placed in great danger. The king of Egypt ordered her to be taken to his palace, intending to make her his wife. But the Lord, in His great mercy, protected Sarah by sending judgment on the royal household. By this means the king learned that he had been deceived. He reproved Abraham, saying, " 'What is this you have done to me? . . . Why did you say, 'She is my sister'? I might have taken her as my wife. Now therefore, here is your wife; take her and go your way.' " "

Pharaoh's dealing with Abraham was kind and generous, but he told him to leave Egypt. He had ignorantly been about to do Abraham a serious injury, but God had saved the monarch from committing such a great sin. Pharaoh saw in this

stranger a man whom God honored. If Abraham remained in Egypt, his increasing wealth and honor would likely excite the envy or covetousness of the Egyptians, and some injury might be done to him which might again bring judgments on the royal house.

The matter could not be kept secret. It was seen that the God whom

Abraham worshiped would protect His servant and that any harm done to him would be avenged. It is a dangerous thing to wrong one of the children of the King of heaven. The psalmist says that God "reproved kings for their sakes, saying, 'Do not touch My anointed ones, and do My prophets no harm.'" Psalm 105:14, 15.

# Abraham, a Good Neighbor in Canaan\*

Abraham returned to Canaan “very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold.” Lot was with him, and they came to Bethel and pitched their tents. Through hardships and trials they had lived together in harmony, but in their prosperity there was danger of conflict. There was not enough pasture for the flocks and herds of both. It was evident that they must separate.

Abraham was the first to propose plans for preserving peace. Although the whole land had been given to him by God Himself, he courteously chose not to demand this right. “Let there be no strife,” he said, “between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren. Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left.”

Many people under similar circumstances would cling to their individual rights and preferences. Many households and many churches have been divided, making the cause of truth a scandal and a disgrace among the wicked. The children of God all

over the world are one family, and the same spirit of love and peace-making should govern them. “Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another.” Romans 12:10. A willingness to do to others as we would wish them to do to us would prevent or end half the troubles of life. The heart in which the love of Christ is cherished will possess that unselfish love that “does not seek its own.” See also Philippians 2:4.

Lot showed no gratitude to his generous uncle. Instead, he selfishly tried to grasp all the advantages. He “lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, . . . like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt.” The most fertile region in all Palestine was the Jordan valley, reminding its viewers of the lost Paradise and equaling the beauty and productivity of the Nile-enriched plains they had left. There were cities, wealthy and beautiful, inviting to profitable commerce. Dazzled with visions of worldly gain, Lot overlooked the moral evils found there.

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\* This chapter is based on Genesis 13 to 15; 17:1-16; 18.

He "chose for himself all the plain of Jordan," and "pitched his tent even as far as Sodom." Little did he foresee the terrible results of that selfish choice!

Soon after this, Abraham moved to Hebron. In the free air of those upland plains with their olive groves and vineyards, their fields of grain, and the wide pasture of the encircling hills, he settled, content with his simple life, leaving to Lot the perilous luxury of Sodom.

Abraham did not shut away his influence from his neighbors. In contrast to the worshipers of idols, his life and character exerted a telling influence in favor of the true faith. His loyalty to God was unswerving, and his friendliness and kindness inspired confidence and friendship.

While Christ is dwelling in the heart, it is impossible to conceal the light of His presence. It will grow brighter as the mists of selfishness and sin that envelop the soul are dispelled by the Sun of Righteousness.

The people of God are lights in the moral darkness of this world. Scattered in towns, cities, and villages, they are channels through which God will communicate to an unbelieving world the knowledge and wonders of His grace. It is His plan that all who receive salvation will be lights that shine brightly in the character, revealing the contrast with the selfish darkness of the natural heart.

Abraham was wise in diplomacy and brave and skillful in war. Three royal brothers, rulers of the Amorite plains in which he lived, showed

friendship by inviting him to enter an alliance with them for greater security, for the country was filled with violence and oppression. An occasion soon arose for him to call on the help of this alliance.

### **Lot Rescued by Abraham**

Chedorlaomer, king of Elam, had invaded Canaan years before and made it subject to him. Several of its princes now revolted, and the Elamite king again marched into the country to reduce them to submission. Five kings of Canaan fought the invaders, only to be completely defeated. The victors plundered the cities of the plain and left with rich spoils and many captives, among whom were Lot and his family.

From one who had escaped, Abraham learned the story of the calamity that had befallen his nephew. All his affection for him was awakened, and he determined to rescue Lot. Seeking divine counsel, Abraham prepared for war. From his own camp he called up three hundred eighteen trained servants, men trained in the fear of God, in the service of their master, and in the practice of arms. His allies, Mamre, Eshcol, and Aner, joined him, and together they started after the invaders. The Elamites had encamped at Dan, on the northern border of Canaan. Proud and excited with victory, they had given themselves up to celebrating. Abraham came upon the encampment by night. His attack, so vigorous and unexpected, resulted in speedy victory. The king of Elam was killed and his panic-stricken

forces fled in defeat. Lot and his family, with all the prisoners and goods, were recovered, and the riches of the enemy fell into the hands of the victors.

Abraham had not only performed a great service for the country but had proved himself a man of valor. It was seen that Abraham's religion made him courageous in upholding the right and defending the oppressed. When Abraham returned, the king of Sodom came out to honor the conqueror, asking only that the prisoners be restored. The spoils belonged to the conquerors; but Abraham refused to take advantage of the unfortunate, only requiring that his allies receive the portion to which they were entitled.

If given such a test, few would have resisted the temptation to secure such rich plunder. Abraham's example is a rebuke to self-seeking. "I have raised my hand," he said, "to the LORD, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth, that I will take nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap, and that I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich.'" "God had promised to bless Abraham, and the glory should go to Him.

Another who came out to welcome victorious Abraham was Melchizedek, king of Salem. As "priest of God Most High," he pronounced a blessing on Abraham and gave thanks to the Lord, who had brought about deliverance by His servant. And Abraham "gave him a tithe of all."

### Abraham Is Afraid

Abraham had been a man of peace, shunning strife as much as possible. With horror he recalled the carnage he had witnessed. The nations whose forces he had defeated would certainly renew the invasion and take special revenge on him. Furthermore, he had not begun to take possession of Canaan, nor could he now hope for an heir to whom the promise might be fulfilled.

In a vision of the night the divine voice was heard again. "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward." But how was the covenant promise to be fulfilled while the gift of a son was withheld? "What will You give me," he said, "seeing I go childless? . . . Indeed one born in my house is my heir!" He intended to make his trusty servant Eliezer his son by adoption. But he was assured that a child of his own was to be his heir. Then he was told to look up to the countless stars glittering in the heavens, and the words were spoken, "So shall your descendants be." "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Romans 4:3.

The Lord stooped down to enter into a covenant with His servant. Abraham heard the voice of God, telling him not to expect immediate possession of the Promised Land, and pointing forward to the sufferings of his descendants before Canaan would be theirs. The plan of redemption was opened to him in the death of Christ, the great

sacrifice, and His coming in glory. Abraham also saw the earth restored to Eden beauty, given for an everlasting inheritance as the final and complete fulfillment of the promise.

When Abraham had been nearly twenty-five years in Canaan, the Lord appeared to him and said, "Behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations." In pledge of the fulfillment of this covenant, his name Abram was changed to Abraham, "father of a great multitude." Sarai's name became Sarah—"princess," for "she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her."

At this time the rite of circumcision was given to Abraham, to be observed by him and his descendants as a sign that they were separated from idolaters and that God accepted them as His special treasure. They were not to marry the heathen, for by so doing they would be tempted to engage in the sinful practices of other nations and be drawn into idolatry.

### **Abraham Unwittingly Entertains Angels**

God conferred great honor on Abraham. Angels walked and talked with him. When judgments were about to be visited on Sodom, the fact was not hidden from him, and he became an intercessor with God for sinners.

In the hot summer noontide Abraham was sitting in his tent door when he saw three travelers in the distance. Before they reached his tent, the strangers stopped. Without

waiting for them to ask any favors, with the utmost courtesy Abraham urged them to honor him by staying for refreshment. With his own hands he brought water that they might wash the dust of travel from their feet. He selected food, and while they were resting under the cooling shade, he stood respectfully beside them while they ate and drank what he provided. Years later an inspired apostle referred to this act of courtesy: "Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels." Hebrews 13:2.

Abraham had seen in his guests only three tired travelers, not thinking that among them One was divine, whom he might worship without sin. But the true character of the heavenly messengers was now revealed. They were on their way as agents of wrath, yet to Abraham they spoke first of blessings. God takes no delight in vengeance.

Abraham had honored God and the Lord honored him, revealing to him His purposes. "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing?" said the Lord. "The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know." God knew Sodom's guilt, but He expressed Himself in human terms that His justice might be understood. He would go Himself to conduct an examination of their course. If they had not passed the limits of divine mercy,

He would grant them opportunity for repentance.

Two of the heavenly messengers departed, leaving Abraham alone with the One whom he now knew to be the Son of God. And the man of faith pleaded for the inhabitants of Sodom. Once he had saved them by his sword; now he tried to save them by prayer. Lot and his household were still living there, and Abraham attempted to save them from the storm of divine judgment.

With deep humility he urged his plea: "I who am but dust and ashes have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord." He did not claim favor because of his obedience or the sacrifices he had made in doing God's will. As a sinner, he pleaded in the sinner's behalf. Yet Abraham showed the confidence of a child pleading with a loved father. Though Lot had taken up residence in Sodom, he did not join in the sins of its inhabitants. Abraham thought that there must be other worshipers of the true God in that populous city. He pleaded, "Far be it from You. . . to slay the righteous with the wicked. . . Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" As his requests were granted, he gained the assurance that if even ten righteous persons could be found in Sodom, the city would be spared.

Abraham's prayer for Sodom shows that we should cherish hatred of sin but pity and love for the sinner. All around us people are going down to ruin. Every hour some are passing beyond the reach of mercy. Where are the voices of invitation, urging

sinners to flee from this fearful doom? Where are those who are pleading with God for them?

### **Who Prays for "Sodom" Today?**

The spirit of Abraham was the spirit of Christ, who is the great Intercessor in the sinner's behalf. Christ extended toward the sinner a love that infinite goodness alone could imagine. In the agonies of the crucifixion, burdened with the awful weight of the sins of the whole world, He prayed for His murderers, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." Luke 23:34.

The testimony of God is, "Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws." "I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him." It was a high honor to which Abraham was called—to be father of the people who were the guardians of the truth of God for the world, through whom all nations would be blessed in the coming of the Messiah. Abraham would keep the law and deal justly and righteously. And he would not only fear the Lord himself but would instruct his family in doing right.

Abraham's household numbered more than a thousand people. Here, as in a school, they received instruction that would prepare them to represent the true faith. He was training heads of families, and they would

follow his methods of government in their own households.

It was necessary to bind the members of the household together, to build up a barrier against the widespread idolatry. Abraham worked to guard all those who were with him against mingling with the heathen and seeing their idol worship. He took care to impress the mind with the majesty and glory of the living God as the true object of worship.

God Himself had separated Abraham from his idolatrous relatives so that he might educate his family apart from the evil influences in Mesopotamia and preserve the true faith in its purity through his descendants.

### **The Influence of Daily Living**

Abraham's children and household were taught that they were under the rule of the God of heaven. There was to be no oppression by the parents and no disobedience by the children. The silent influence of his daily life was a constant lesson. There was a fragrance about the life, a nobility of character, which revealed to everyone that he was connected with Heaven. He did not neglect the humblest servant. His household did not have one law for the master and another for the servant. He treated all with justice and compassion as heirs with him of the grace of life.

How few in our day follow this example! Too many parents show a blind and selfish sentimentalism, mistakenly called love, that leaves children to the control of their own

will. This is cruelty to the youth and a great wrong to the world. Their parents' laxness strengthens the desire of young people to follow their own wishes instead of submitting to God's requirements. They then grow up to transmit their irreligious, rebellious spirit to their children and grandchildren. Obedience to parental authority should be taught as the first step in obedience to the authority of God.

The widespread teaching that God's laws are no longer binding has the same effect on the morals of the people as idolatry. Parents do not command their household to keep the way of the Lord. Children, as they make homes of their own, feel no obligation to teach their children what they themselves have never been taught. This is why there are so many godless families, and why wickedness is so widespread.

A reformation is needed, deep and broad. Parents and ministers need to reform; they need God in their households. They must bring His Word into their families and teach their children kindly and untiringly how to live in order to please God. The children of such a household have a foundation that cannot be swept away by the incoming tide of irreligion and doubt.

In many households parents feel they cannot spare a few moments to thank God for the sunshine and showers and for the protection of holy angels. They have no time for prayer. They go out to labor as the ox or the horse, without one thought of God or heaven. The Son of God

gave His life to ransom them, but they have little more appreciation of His goodness than animals do.

If ever there was a time when every house should be a house of prayer, it is now. The father, as priest of the household, should offer to God a morning and evening sacrifice of prayer, while the wife and children unite with him in prayer and praise. Jesus will love to stay in such a household.

From every home love should flow out in thoughtful kindness, in gentle, unselfish courtesy. There are

homes where God is worshiped and the truest love reigns. His mercies and blessings fall on these praying ones like morning dew.

A well-ordered household is a powerful argument in favor of the Christian religion. A noble influence at work in the family affects the children. The God of Abraham is with them. God speaks to every faithful parent: "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment" (KJV).