

The Dynamics of Forgiveness

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Dear Members of the Endtime Issues Newsletter:

One day a student asked me: "How many times do I need to ask God to forgive me? How can I be sure that God has forgiven me?" These questions trouble many sincere believers seeking reassurance of divine forgiveness and cleansing.

Our guest contributor, Roy Gane, Ph. D., is a respected young Old Testament scholar who teaches at Andrews University Theological Seminary. He addresses these very questions in his delightful book *Altar Call*. When I read this book, I was impressed by the perceptive way Gane explains how the sanctuary rituals help us understand how God deals with the sin problem.

For most Adventists the sanctuary has become an old doctrine investigated by our pioneers. After the October 22, 1844 disappointment they reexamined the sanctuary doctrine and concluded that the cleansing accomplished on the Day of Atonement found its antitypical fulfillment in 1844 with the beginning of the investigative judgment in heaven. This teaching in recent years has been largely ignored, because it is perceived by some Adventists as undermining their assurance of salvation. The thought of our lives being investigated by a heavenly court, leads some to doubt their acquittal and eternal salvation.

IMPORTANCE OF THE SANCTUARY DOCTRINE

The trend to ignore the sanctuary doctrine is unfortunate because such doctrine provides a unique understanding of Christ's heavenly ministry on our behalf. Properly understood, the Pre-Advent judgment that began in 1844 does not destroy our joy and assurance of salvation because it is not a scheme of retribution, but a revelation of our standing before God as we are found to be in Christ. "Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?" asks Paul. "It is God who justifies; who is to condemn?" (Rom 8:33-34).

As our records are opened in the Pre-Advent judgment, we have nothing to fear because our Mediator stands for us. Essentially, this judgment is the outworking of the message of the Gospel which contains the Good News that God not only justifies penitent sinners in this present life, but also vindicates them on the day of His judgment by giving them the reward of eternal life.

Many Christians are uncertain about the Second Advent because they are wondering what on earth is Christ doing in heaven? Surprisingly, many seem to feel that He is doing very little. Even standard systematic theology books have very little to say about Christ's heavenly ministry, thus giving the impression that at the Ascension Christ took a leave-of-absence to recover from His exhaustive earthly mission.

The New Testament, however, describes the interim period between Christ's Ascension and Return, not as a leave-of-absence, but as a time of intense activity of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary on behalf of believers. The Savior's heavenly ministry is described by such human analogies as "priest" (Heb 7:15; 8:4; 10:21), "high priest" (Heb 2:17; 3:1; 4:14; 9:11), "mediator" (1 Tim 2:5; Heb 8:6; 9:15), and "intercessor" (Rom 8:34; 1 John 2:1; Heb 7:25).

It is the assurance of Christ's present ministry in heaven that gives us reason to hope that "he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil 1:6). The temporal distance between the First and Second Advents is shortened by the confidence that Christ is actively working to bring to consummation the redemption already accomplished on this earth. It is the lack of this confidence in Christ's heavenly ministry that accounts to a large degree for the uncertainty many Christians feel regarding the reality of Christ's Return. If the heavenly ministry of Jesus, which is the link that joins together the First and Second Advents is broken, then it is hardly possible to keep alive one's faith and hope in a soon-Coming Savior.

In his book *Altar Call*, Gane offers a fresh understanding of the relevance of the sanctuary services for our spiritual life today. I enjoyed reading especially chapters 18 to 22 where Gane discusses the divine dynamics of forgiveness in the light of object lessons from the sanctuary service. Sensing that many of our subscribers would appreciate this timely study, I asked Gane to excerpt and rearrange a couple of chapters for this newsletter.

In many ways this Bible study is an appetizer to stimulate your appetite for reading the book *Altar Call*. You can order a copy of this user-friendly, perceptive, and inspirational book, from your ABC Christian Bookstores, or by sending a check for \$15 per copy (postpaid; orders of 10 copies or more = \$9/copy) to Roy Gane, Diadem, Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI 49104-1500. For additional information regarding *Altar Call*, including contents and reviews, see www.andrews.edu/~gane.

A REPORT OF THE AUSTRALIAN VISIT

From November 16 to 24, I spent 8 delightful days in Melbourne, Australia, speaking at four churches: Lylidale, Nunawading, Geelong, and Dandelong. At the Lylidale and Dandelong churches we had well-attended weekend rallies for the English and Polish fellow believers respectively. At the Nunawading and Geelong churches we had midweek meetings. Even at the midweek meetings were well-attended.

This Australian lecture tour was of special significance to me because during the past four years service calls for my ministry were not approved by conferences and/or the South Pacific Division. A major reason was an unfortunate incident that occurred five years ago when I requested the youth leader at the Stuart Point campmeeting in North New South Wales, to instruct his rock band not to play before my message the heavy beat rock music I heard the night before when I arrived. Later on I did apologize for failing to address the issue in a more pastoral way.

That unfortunate incident taught me that we cannot blame people for doing what is wrong, if we do not help them to understand what is right. Instead of condemning fellow believers for playing rock music during the church service, my pastoral responsibility is to take time to help them understand the Biblical distinctions between sacred music for worship and secular music for entertainment.

Most of our music leaders are unaware that percussion instruments, like drums and tambourines, were never used in the worship services of the Temple, the synagogue, or the early church. The major reason is the association of these instruments with social entertainment, which in Bible times was generally of religious nature. Allowing percussion instruments during the worship service would have tempted God's people to view the service as social entertainment.

You will find an in-depth study of this subject in our symposium *THE CHRISTIAN AND ROCK MUSIC*. Six of the seven contributors are professional musicians with doctorates in musical arts. If you do not have a copy of this timely book, let me know. We will be glad to mail you copies for yourself and your church members. We offer it to churches by the case of 28 copies for only \$170.00, that is \$6.00 per copy, instead of the regular price of \$20.00.

The above incident was blown out of proportions and resulted in a ban of my ministry in Australia—a ban which was recently lifted. I would like to take this opportunity to express my wholehearted gratitude especially to Elder Chester Stanley, President of the newly formed Australian Union. He approved the service request and made it possible for me to speak in Australia again.

Elder Stanley is one of the most gracious Christian gentleman I have ever meet in my life. I first met him at the South Queensland Campmeeting, just prior to the Stuart Point incident. At that time he was the President of the South Queensland Conference. He invited me to speak in the adult tent every night. The response was overwhelming. Every evening many people drove in from Brisbane to attend the meetings. On the way to the airport Elder Stanley told me that we had the largest campmeeting attendance in the history of the South Queensland Conference.

Elder Stanley attended all three lectures of the SABBATH ENRICHMENT SEMINAR I delivered at the Lylidale SDA church. On the Sabbath of November 17, 2002, we had lunch together at the home of Pastor Neil Watts of the Lylidale SDA Church. During lunch Elder Stanley told us the problems caused by the use of beat music in worship are of great concern to some of our leaders. In fact, such problems were addressed at the recent Presidents' Council of the South Pacific Division. It is evident that our worship leaders need spiritual guidance at this time.

Dr. Neil Watts, pastor of the Lylidale SDA Church, in Melbourne, emailed me this note about the SABBATH SEMINAR held at his church.:

Dear Sam,

I just want to thank you for the weekend Sabbath Seminar which you recently presented at Lilydale church. It was appreciated by all who attended and gave them not only a better appreciation of the meaning of the Sabbath, but also a new confidence in our Sabbath message. This was especially relevant in view of the current attacks on the Sabbath by some of our former brethren. Thanks again for your messages and I trust that your ministry will continue to be a blessing to many others.

Yours in Christ's service

Neil

Our church in Australia and New Zealand faces the enormous challenge of reaching a materialistic and secularly minded society. At present the progress report is not very encouraging. The *South Pacific Record* of June, 29, 2002, reports that the net growth in Australia and New Zealand for the year 2001, was only 38 souls. There is an urgent need to help our fellow believers in Australia and every where around the world, to understand, experience, and share more fully the timely message God has called us to proclaim in the closing time of earth history.

The news of the success of the rallies in Melbourne have been broadcast far and wide. The result is that several Adventist churches in Sydney, Brisbane, and Auckland have already invited me for next year. I look forward to share my ministry again “down under” during this coming year. Australians are inquisitive in their thinking and welcome the opportunity to hear a scholar who opens their mind to the deeper meaning of the Word of God. I look forward to minister again in some of their churches next year.

A REPORT ON THE JAMAICAN VISIT

Three days after returning home from Australia, my wife and I left for 8 days of speaking engagements in Jamaica. This was a well-deserved reward for my wife who has been alone practically every weekend during this past year. On the weekend of November 28-29, I spoke at a rally held at the Hagley Park SDA in Kingston—one of the largest churches in the city with a seating capacity of about 1,000. On Thursday, December 5, I gave several lectures at the annual campmeeting of the Eastern Jamaica Conference.

On Friday and Saturday, December 6-7, I spoke a rally organized by the Western Jamaican Conference and held in the “Frazier” gymnasium that seats about 2,000 people. Elder Charles Brevitt, the Conference Secretary told me that about 2,200 persons attended the rally at the West Jamaica Conference auditorium. The reception and response was very gratifying.

Our Adventist church in Jamaica is well-established with about 200,000 members in a population of 2.8 million people. Our Jamaican fellow believers are well-known for their commitment to the Adventist message and church. For me it is always a pleasure to share my research in our Caribbean churches in the America and England. Our members are very eager to learn and to share their faith.

Our church in Jamaica faces the enormous challenge to influence the moral values of their society. Paradoxically, Jamaica has the distinction of having, not only for the largest number of churches per capita in the world, but also the third highest murder rate in the world. Practically all the homes are protected by steel grills over the doors and windows. I was told that these “prison bars” are a necessity to discourage thieves from breaking in.

It is hard for me to believe that Jamaica, one of the most religious country in the world with the largest number of Christian churches, has also one of highest rates of crime and political corruption. Most of the multimillion dollar villas belong to politicians who have used their office to enrich themselves. It is evident that the moral values of the Christian message are not affecting in a significant way the Jamaican society. A pastor explained to me that part of the problem is the preaching of the freedom of the Gospel by the popular evangelical churches. People interpret the freedom of the Gospel as freedom to follow their evil inclinations. Our Adventist church needs to develop new strategies to impact more directly the moral fabric of the Jamaican society.

PROMOTION OF SUNDAY AS THE BIBLICAL SABBATH

A deceptive development of our times is the promotion of Sunday observance as the biblical seventh day Sabbath. The concern over the sharp decline in attendance to Sunday church services in most Christian countries, is causing some church leaders to promote Sunday observance as the moral imperative of the Sabbath commandment.

The most outstanding example is the lengthy Pastoral Letter, *Dies Domini*—the Lord's Day, promulgated by Pope John Paul I on May 31, 1998. I have examined at length this document in chapter 1 of my book *The Sabbath Under Crossfire*. In this historical document, the pope makes a passionate plea for a revival of Sunday observance, by appealing to the moral imperative of the Sabbath commandment. His major objective is to influence the international community of nations to promulgate a civil Sunday legislation to facilitate Sunday observance.

Without hesitation John Paul applies to Sunday God's blessing and sanctification of the seventh day at creation. He writes: "Sunday is the day of rest because it is the day 'blessed' by God and 'made holy' by him, set apart from the other days to be, among them, 'the Lord's Day.'" (*Dies Domini*, paragraph 14). The Pope's attempt to make Sunday the "extension and full expression" of the creative and redemptive meanings of the Sabbath (*Dies Domini*, paragraph 17), is very ingenious, but it lacks biblical and historical support. The reason is simple, Sunday is not the Sabbath because the two days differ in authority, meaning, and experience.

Pope John Paul's efforts to promote Sunday as the biblical seventh day Sabbath, are supported by church leaders. For example, on October 27, 2002, the SIR agency in Germany reported that Cardinal Karl Lehmann, Archbishop of Mainz and president of the German bishops' conference, spoke at the opening of a conference called "The Seventh Day: History of Sunday." He described the event as an "extraordinary occasion to reflect again on Sunday and the dangers that threaten it." By identifying Sunday with the Biblical seventh day Sabbath, Lehmann, like the Pope, attempts to make Sunday observance a the moral imperative of the Sabbath commandment.

The deceptive efforts to promote Sunday as the Biblical seventh day Sabbath assumes different forms. Perhaps the most popular manifestation is the publication of calendars where the days of the week are given horizontally, beginning with Monday as the first day of the week and ending with Sunday as the seventh day. Such calendars have been in existence in European countries for considerable time and now they are appearing in America as well. In fact, even airlines flight schedules now identify Sunday as the seventh day. For example, if a flight does not operate on Sunday, the code used to explain it is "X 7," which means, except on the seventh day Sunday.

The deceptive attempts to make Sunday the seventh day of the week, negate the very popular reason given for Sundaykeeping, namely, the resurrection of Christ on the first day of the week. How can Christians legitimately claim to observe Sunday as the memorial of Christ's resurrection on the first day of the week, while at the same time promoting Sunday as the Biblical seventh day Sabbath? This blatant contradiction reflects the problems in trying to legitimize an institution that lacks Biblical support.

A NEW YEAR RESOLUTION

My new year resolution is to travel less and to study more. When I asked Andrews University for an early retirement on July 1, 2000, my intent was to devote myself more fully to research and writing. What has happened since then is that I have accepted so many speaking engagements, that I have spent far more time travelling than researching. During this past year, for example, I have been conducted seminars practically every weekend.

The intense traveling schedule, coupled with the responsibility of preparing ENDTIME ISSUES newsletters, have left me with no time to research and write a new book. Thus, I am resolving by God's grace to accept fewer speaking invitations during this coming year, so that I can work on my new book entitled *POPULAR HERESIES*. Hopefully, this book will come out before the end of 2003.

The aim of *POPULAR HERESIES* is to trace historically and examine biblically popular heresies such as the immortality of the soul, Sunday sacredness, once saved always saved, the Rapture, evolution, eternal torment, intercession of Mary and the saints, papal infallibility, dispensationalism, infant baptism, speaking in tongues, etc. This book should prove to be a most helpful witnessing tool. You will be glad to give it to your Christian friends who wants to know why some of their beliefs are wrong while our Adventist beliefs are right. My plan is to post some of the chapters of this new book to receive your input.

A NEW DISTURBING FALSE ALLEGATION

Over the years I have faced several false allegations designed to discredit my commitment to the Adventist church. The fact that by God's grace I was able to enter, study, and publish my dissertation *FROM SABBATH TO SUNDAY*, at the prestigious Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, Italy, has made me suspect as a "Jesuit spy" in the eyes of many. It is hard for many to believe that the Lord would make it possible for me not only to study at the Gregoriana, but also to publish a dissertation which defends the continuity of the Sabbath and the post-apostolic origin of Sunday.

Frankly, sometimes it is hard for me to believe that it really happened. I can only thank God for making it possible. Today, it would be impossible, because the controversy generated by *FROM SABBATH TO SUNDAY* has caused the Gregoriana to close its doors to non-Catholics.

In recent weeks a new false allegation has been circulating, namely, that I am drifting away from the Adventist faith by promoting teachings contrary to our beliefs. Before dealing with this new false allegation, let me say few words about the older false accusation that is still alive.

A Word About the "Jesuit Spy" Accusation

During my recent visit to Australia somebody handed me a magazine largely devoted to defame me as a Jesuit infiltrator. Those who accuse me of being a "Jesuit spy" ignore that the reason my dissertation *FROM SABBATH TO SUNDAY* was approved and published, is not because I compromised my commitment to the Sabbath or to the Adventist Church. Rather, it is simply because I proved the validity of the historical Catholic claim to have been responsible for changing the Sabbath to Sunday.

All what I did was to find documents which show how the Bishop of Rome went about in leading many Christians away from Sabbathkeeping into Sundaykeeping. The reason *FROM SABBATH TO SUNDAY* has now become controversial in some Catholic circles, is simply because of the recent attempts to justify Sunday observance, no longer as a Catholic institution, but as a biblical ordinance rooted in the Sabbath commandment.

On my part I can understand why some fellow believers are suspicious about me. After all, for an Adventist to be able to enter, study, earn a doctorate, and publish a dissertation defending the validity of the Sabbath in the most prestigious Jesuit University of the Catholic church, sounds too nice to be true. Sometimes, I myself have difficulty to believe that it has really happened. I can never stop to thank God for making it happen, because today it would be impossible for me to repeat what I did. The negative reactions from certain Catholic leaders in Central and South America, have caused the Gregoriana to remove *FROM SABBATH TO SUNDAY* from circulation and to close her door to non-Catholics.

Even a cursory reading of the four volumes I have written on the Sabbath, suffices to show the senselessness of the accusation that I am a Jesuit spy. My written and oral defense of the validity and value of the seventh day Sabbath during the past 30 years, provides an unmistakable proof of my deep commitment to this pivotal doctrine of our Adventist message.

A Look at a New False Allegation

While the "Jesuit spy" false accusation is still lingering, a new one has recently surfaced. Simply stated the new false accusation is that I am drifting away from the Adventist faith because of what I have written in two recent newsletters. In ENDTIME ISSUES No. 86 I proposed to broaden our interpretation of the Little Horn/Antichrist mentioned in Daniel 7, by including such an anti-god powers like Islam. In ENDTIME ISSUES No 88, I made a plea for a balanced understanding of Ellen White by accepting her prophetic gift, while at the same time recognizing her limitations. These proposals have been interpreted by some of our church leaders as a drifting away from the Adventist faith.

Some Adventist church leaders have gone so far as to advise their pastors to no longer invite me to speak in their churches. When this action was reported to me, I thought it was another false rumor. But, this is not the case. In a telephone conversation with Pastor Dan Francisco of the Deltona Beach SDA Church, in Florida, he confirmed to me that at their recent Florida workers' meeting, a brief announcement was made that the North American Division recommends to pastors not to invite me to conduct seminars because I am allegedly drifting away from the Adventist faith.

Pastor Dan Francisco, who subscribes to this newsletter, was not deterred by this advice, because of the marvelous response to the SABBATH SEMINAR held at his Deltona SDA church last January 5, 2002. The church was packed with many visitors from near and far. Because of the positive response, he has urged me several times to bring my ADVENT SEMINAR at his church during 2003. We are now in the process of finalizing the date.

Tracking the origin of a false allegation is not easy. Since I was told that the instruction to the Florida's pastors came from the North American Division, I called its office, asking for the president or the secretary to call me back at their early convenience. Elder Harold W. Baptiste, our NAD secretary, graciously called me back and reassured me that he never heard of such an instruction given by their NAD office. He concluded that someone must have fabricated such a false rumor. It is surprising that conference leaders would act upon a false rumor without verifying it. I am waiting for an answer from the Florida Conference on this matter.

My Interpretation of 1260 Days Prophecy

The issue that has generated the greatest controversy, is my proposal to broaden the scope of the anti-god power, known as the Little Horn or Antichrist, by including the role that Islam has played in persecuting God's people and promoting false worship. It is interesting that both the dominion of the Papacy and of Islam arose at the breaking up of the Roman empire, represented in Daniel 7 by the 10 horns of the Fourth Terrible Beast.

The influence of the papacy extended over the western part of the Roman empire, while Islam gained control of the eastern part of the empire.

During the first century of Islam's expansion from 632 to 732, Muhammad's successors subdued Egypt, Palestine, Syria, part of Turkey and all the countries of northern Africa. In 711 they crossed from Africa to Spain and crossed the Pyrenees into southern France until they were stopped in 732 by the Frankish ruler Charles Martel. The expansion continued for the next thousand years in western Europe and in far-eastern countries. Truly the description of the Little Horn as a power that began small but became exceedingly powerful fits well both the Papacy and Islam.

This proposed broader interpretation of the Little Horn, has stirred up considerable controversy, because traditionally we have applied all the seven prophecies of the three and half times/1260 days/42 months (Dan 7:25; 12:7; Rev 11:2; 11:3; 12:3; 12:6; 13:5), EXCLUSIVELY to the period of papal supremacy between 538 to 1798. My intent is not to reject the prophetic role of the papacy. I spent five years in Rome investigating how the papacy changed the Sabbath to Sunday. Rather, my intent is to ascertain if these seven prophecies allow for a broader application both in time and scope. I spent about 200 hours investigating the first text Daniel 7:25 and writing a 30 pages report.

My plan was to continue the investigation of this amazing sevenfold prophecy. But, when I read the negative reactions to my initial proposal from few, influential church leaders, I felt that the wisest thing for me to do at this time is to abandon this research project altogether. It became evident that any attempt to modify our traditional interpretation (with the intent of making it more credible) would have a devastating impact upon my ministry.

For the sake of peace, I decided NOT to post the first installment of the Bible study I had submitted to 8 competent scholars for evaluation. Furthermore, I decided to abandon this research project altogether by returning to the library and to my colleagues the 30 plus volumes piled up on my desk. I promised to the Lord and to my wife that I will not investigate the 1260 days prophecy until specifically asked by an official commission appointed by the General Conference. I want to enjoy some peace in the sunset years of my life by acting in harmony with our church leaders.

This was a painful decision to take, especially because Ellen White repeatedly and specifically encourages us to study more deeply Daniel and Revelation. For example, she states: "There should be a closer and more diligent study of the Revelation, and a more earnest presentation of the truths it contains—truths which concern all who are living in these last days" (*Evangelism* 197).

Again she writes: "As we near the close of this world's history, the prophecy recorded by Daniel demand our special attention, as they relate to the very time in which we are living. With them should be linked the teachings of the last book of the New Testament Scriptures. Satan has led many to believe that the prophetic portions of the writings of Daniel and of John the revelator cannot be understood. But the promise is plain that special blessing will accompany the study of these prophecies" (*Prophets and Kings* 547; see also *Great Controversy* 341).

Ellen White's exhortations to conduct "a closer and more diligent study" of Daniel and Revelation, presupposes that there are new truths to be discovered. But at this time it is practically impossible for me or any Adventist Bible to undertake such an in-depth study, because any new discovery is expected to support traditional interpretations. Such a criteria negates the possibility of honest, objective research. Ultimately we must decide whether we want to be true to SCRIPTURE or TRADITION.

It has always been my firm belief that our Adventist church is committed to search and uphold the truth, even if it means modifying some traditional interpretations. This belief has been my guiding light during the past 30 years of research, writing, and lecturing. I have reasons to believe that our Adventist church is still committed to search for truth. The negative incidents mentioned earlier should not becloud our Adventist commitment to truth, irrespective of consequences.

MY COMMITMENT TO THE ADVENTIST MESSAGE

My attempt to propose a broader interpretation of the 1260 days prophecy, has led some concerned fellow believer to question my commitment to the Adventist message. A pastor emailed me a message to find out if it were true that Andrews University has just fired me because of my proposed broader interpretation of the 1260 days prophecy. The fact is that Andrews University has always been very supportive of my itinerant ministry. At my request Andrews granted me an early retirement at the age of 62 two and a half-years ago, on July 1, 2000.

I would like to take this opportunity to reassure my subscribers and church leaders that I am not drifting away from the Adventist faith. On the contrary, I have always been a deeply committed Adventist. Through the years I have paid a high price for standing for our traditional Adventist beliefs and practices. As a teenager I faced ridicule and rejection for refusing to attend school on Saturday, at a time when most Adventist families were sending their children to school on the Sabbath.

During the five years I spent at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, on numerous occasions I stood up to defend our Adventist doctrines. In fact, I labored persistently with my Adviser, Prof. Vincenzo Monachino, to lead him to accept the Biblical and historical validity of the Sabbath. On the day of the defense of my dissertation, on June 14, 1974, it was thrilling for me to hear Monachino admit publicly that after spending two years supervising my research he had changed his mind and had come to accept the continuity of the Sabbath and the post-apostolic origin of Sundaykeeping.

During the 26 years that I have taught in the Religion Department of Andrews University, often I have been criticized for being too-conservative in my teachings and writings. The reason is that I uphold our traditional Adventist teachings on such areas as the 1844 investigative judgment, dress and adornment, total abstinence, the sanctity of the Sabbath, the sacredness of marriage, the prophetic guidance of Ellen White, the normative authority of Scripture, the male/female role distinctions in the home and church, and the sacred music for worship. As you know I have written a book on most of these subjects.

The goal of my ministry has always been to deepen the understanding and experience of the fundamental aspects of our message. The response has been gratifying. Everywhere capacity crowds attend my Sabbath, Advent, and Christian Lifestyle Seminars. Thousands of people in many parts of the world have accepted our Adventist message and joined our church as a result of my spoken word and printed page.

THE NEED TO REEXAMINE THE 1260 DAYS PROPHECY

To refute the false allegation that I am drifting away from the Adventist faith, I wish to state unequivocally that I fully accept our traditional Adventist teaching that the three and half times/1260 days dominion of the Little Horn in Daniel 7 and of the Beast in Revelation 13, applies primarily to the prophetic role of the papacy in promoting false worship and persecuting God's people. As mentioned earlier, I have spent five years at the Pontifical Gregorian University investigating how the papacy led Christians away from Sabbathkeeping into Sundaykeeping.

The issue is not the prophetic role of the papacy, but whether all the seven prophecies of the three and half times/1260 days/42 months apply EXCLUSIVELY to the period of papal supremacy between 538 to 1798. Is it possible that some of them might include also other anti-god powers, like Islam, that have persecuted God's people and promoted false worship? Furthermore, do the dates of 538 and 1798 really support the respective establishment and downfall of papal supremacy, as taught in our Adventist literature?

My recent preliminary study of the seven texts (Dan 7:25; 12:7; Rev 11:2; 11:3; 12:3; 12:6; 13:5) mentioning this prophetic period, has been very informative. For example, I was surprised to note that the termination point of these sevenfold prophecies is the judgment and/or the establishment of God's Kingdom—events that transcend 1798.

Similarly, the historical events associated with 538, make it difficult to attribute to this date the establishment of papal supremacy. The historical records indicate that while in theory Emperor Justinian affirmed and expanded the authority of the papacy, in practice he forced three popes to promote his political agenda. For example, in 537 Justinian through his general Belisarius selected Vigilius as the new pope while the previous Pope Silverius was still alive—an illegal act strongly condemned by the Catholic canon law.

The pontificate of Pope Vigilius (537-555) is characterized by humiliation at the hand of Justinian who kidnapped him and brought him to Constantinople in order to force him to sign a heretical document defending the Eastern monophysite view of Christ's nature. After eight years of humiliating pressure under practical house arrest in Constantinople, Vigilius signed the heretical doctrinal document, known as "The Three Chapter," which Justinian himself wrote. The outcome of this papal compromise was that Vigilius was excommunicated by some Western bishops, and his papal authority was rejected in several western provinces, causing several schisms in western provinces that lasted until the Pontificate of Gregory I.

The question is: Does the humiliation and excommunication of Pope Vigilius legitimately support the establishment of papal supremacy in 538? It seems to me that we have some problems that we need to address. These problems are recognized by committed Adventist scholars. In the newly released study *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, published by Andrews University in 2002, Ranko Stefanovich, intentionally avoids mentioning the dates of 538/1798, because he told me that he encountered the same problems that I have. The same is true of the recent books by Hans LaRondelle and Roy Naden, both of whom have shared with me the same concerns.

The problems associated with our traditional biblical interpretation and historical application of this prophetic period, cannot be addressed by one or few independent scholars. Only a commission duly appointed by the General Conference can undertake such a task.. This is why I have asked the director of the Biblical Research Institute to discuss the matter with our General Conference President Jan Paulsen. He is by far the most competent, trained theologian that our Adventist church has ever had as a president. He hold a doctorate in theology from Tübingen University. This gives me I reasons to believe that he would support this initiative.

Personally I have decided to abandon altogether any further study of the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, because I am tired of controversy. I want to enjoy some peace in the sunset years of my life. I will not touch again this sensitive subject, until the General Conference appoints a commission to reexamine this important time prophecy. When this happens, I would be glad to resume my research and present my findings, if requested.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AT THE END OF THIS NEWSLETTER

At the end of this newsletter you will find the following important announcements:

- 1) The date and location of my weekend seminars for December 2002 and January 2003
- 2) Information on how your church can invite me next year to present the popular PowerPoint Seminars on the SABBATH, SECOND ADVENT, and CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE.
- 3) A special Christmas offer on my books, audio cassettes, videos, DVDs, and CD-Roms
- 4) Information on how your church can purchase one of the best LCD VIDEO PROJECTOR on the market (HITACHI 370, 2200 lumens) at a substantially reduced price through an Adventist dealer in Dallas, Texas.

A THANK YOU NOTE

The year 2002 is fast coming to an end. I cannot help but take a moment to express my wholehearted gratitude to all of you who have supported my ministry with your prayers, messages of encouragements, and your orders of my publications and recordings. Your encouragement and support has motivated me to accomplish greater things for the Lord.

If you wish to donate as a Christmas present some of my books or recordings, please note the special offer at the end of this newsletter.

May the Lord grant you wisdom, courage, and strength to meet the challenges of the NEW YEAR. May the enabling power of His Spirit, help each one of us "to live sober, upright, and godly lives [while] awaiting the Blessed Hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

ENDTIME ISSUES No. 92: THE DYNAMICS OF FORGIVENESS
Roy Gane, Ph. D., Professor of Old Testament. Andrews University Theological Seminary

We are so used to forgiveness being granted that we take it for granted. We have come to think that forgiveness is easy, to be dispensed the way we hand out compliments. But forgiveness is tough, even for God. The sanctuary service teaches us that God cannot forgive without sacrifice. True forgiveness is not automatic. It has a cost. To forgive means to give up something.

We should have a forgiving attitude, as Jesus did when He prayed on the cross, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). If we do not forgive others, we cannot expect to receive forgiveness from God. The Lord's Prayer includes the words: "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matt 6:12). But in carrying out our duty of forgiving, we should not overlook the cost of forgiveness and regard it as an unthinking "knee-jerk" reaction.

Michael Carneal, age 14, shot and killed three girls who were his classmates at Heath High School in West Paducah, Kentucky. Almost immediately, surviving classmates put up a sign saying "We forgive you, Mike!" Dennis Prager reacted to this example of what he regards as a "feel-good doctrine of automatic forgiveness":

Even by God, forgiveness is contingent on the sinner repenting, and it can be given only by the one sinned against.

"And if your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him," reads Luke 17:3-4. "And if seven times of the day he sins against you, and seven times of the day turns to you saying, I repent, you shall forgive him." ("When Forgiveness Is a Sin," *Reader's Digest* [March, 1998], p. 38; reprinted from *The Wall Street Journal*, December 15, 1997).

Perhaps Prager has underestimated the cost of emotional pain borne by the students who put up the sign. Perhaps the forgiveness that they offered to Mike was not as automatic and meaningless as Prager supposes. But Prager's caution is worth considering. True forgiveness is not automatic, and it does have a cost.

A Christian should offer forgiveness the way God does: as a deliberate, conscious, and meaningful choice, whether or not the person who has committed the wrong repents and accepts the forgiveness, or even asks for it.

Forgiveness is not only something that is offered, it is a transaction between two parties, the one wronged and the one who has committed the wrong. Until the one who has committed the wrong repents and accepts forgiveness, forgiveness is not complete in the sense that the offender does not receive the benefit of forgiveness. At the Israelite sanctuary, God continually made forgiveness available. But a sinner was only said to be "forgiven" when he/she accepted God's forgiveness by bringing a sacrifice (Lev 4:31, 35).

The Pain of Forgiveness

If you want to see how agonizing true forgiveness can be, look at the story of Joseph in the book of Genesis. When Joseph was second in command to Pharaoh and his brothers showed up in Egypt to buy grain, Joseph did not immediately reveal his identity. Before he forgave his brothers, he tested them in all kinds of ways, to find out whether they were the same sort of individuals who had stripped him, thrown him in a pit, callously sat down to eat, and then sold him to a living death of slavery (Gen 37:23-28).

Forgiveness was tough for Joseph. Because his brothers passed the character tests he set up, thereby showing their change of heart and repentance for what they had done to Joseph, he became willing to reveal himself in order to forgive them.

We know that the story has a good ending. So we tend to take too much for granted. What if Joseph's brothers had failed his test by abandoning Simeon in Egypt (Gen 42:18-24)? What if they had consented to Benjamin remaining as Joseph's slave because he had allegedly stolen Joseph's silver cup (44:1-17)? Would Joseph have forgiven them? Perhaps not.

Judah's speech, imploring Joseph to let Benjamin go, put the capstone on Joseph's realization that his brothers were repentant, reformed men. Judah ended his speech: "Now therefore, please let your servant remain as a slave to my lord in place of the boy; and let the boy go back with his brothers. For how can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? I fear to see the suffering that would come upon my father" (Gen 44:33-34).

These words melted Joseph's heart. "Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, 'Send everyone away from me.' So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it. Joseph said to his brothers, 'I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?'" (Gen 45:1-3).

Philip Yancey comments: "When grace finally broke through to Joseph, the sound of his grief and love echoed throughout the palace. What is that wail? Is the king's minister sick? No, Joseph's health was fine. It was the sound of a man forgiving. Behind every act of forgiveness lies a wound of betrayal, and the pain of being betrayed does not easily fade away. (*What's So Amazing About Grace?* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997], p. 85).

Joseph revealed himself, and then he expressed his forgiveness in words and by kissing his brothers and weeping upon them (Gen 45:4-15). He did not reveal himself until he was ready to forgive.

The Love Behind Forgiveness

Unlike Joseph, God pursued Adam and Eve to reveal Himself as soon as they sinned (Gen 3:8-9). God continued to reveal Himself to patriarchs, to the Israelites at the sanctuary, to prophets, and ultimately to all of us when Christ emigrated to our Planet.

God's willingness to reveal Himself has consistently shown His willingness to offer forgiveness. Had He not wanted to forgive us, He would not have bothered to reveal Himself. If God did not reveal Himself in order to help us, we could not take the first step toward repentance. Repentance is a gift of God (Acts 5:31). If God waited for us to repent before He revealed Himself, we would all be lost.

Think about this. If it was hard for Joseph to forgive after his brothers showed repentance, how much harder must it be for God to offer forgiveness before we even realize our need for repentance?

"Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person — though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us" (Rom 5:7-8). We have wounded the great, sensitive heart of God by rebelling against Him. If anything, He must suffer the pain of betrayal more than we do when people wrong us. But through His tears He reaches out because love overcomes pain.

If God was already in pain because of human sin, why did He immeasurably add to His own pain by having Christ die on the cross? Couldn't He avoid the pain? Only if He protected His heart by covering it with rejection, steeling Himself against forgiving us, abandoning His desire for a relationship with us. If He did this He would not be a God of ultimate love as He claims to be (1 Jn 4:8).

Love includes justice as well as mercy. To give mercy at the expense of justice would be to compromise love. Christ's sacrifice makes it possible for God to maintain His

justice when He gives us mercy by forgiving us for breaking God's law. Justice demands that we die. Christ has died in our place to fulfill that demand: "...he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed" (Isa 53:5).

The law we have broken is love (Matt 22:36-40). But love is also the powerful force that impels God to try to save us at any cost. We see this divine obsession in Judges 10:16. When the Israelites put away their idols and turned back to worshiping the Lord, "he could no longer bear to see Israel suffer." He couldn't stand it! He just had to deliver Israel. And deliver Israel He did.

God chooses to save us. John 3:16 says: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son..." (NASB). He chose to give. He wasn't paying taxes. He chose to give because of who He chooses to be: the God of love. His giving is the outflow of His chosen nature.

The Restoration of Forgiveness

When He was on earth, Christ showed how God wants to forgive and restore faulty human beings. The story goes like this: Disarranged locks of long, dark hair frame a tear-streaked face. Lowered eyes, wild with terror, glance about furtively. She is wearing, well, whatever she could grab to hastily cover herself before going before the king for judgment. King? Yes, but he's not on a throne and few people recognize that He is king. Instead of guards around Him He has a few fishermen.

This woman doesn't choose to go before the king. She is dragged there by a group of men, men of honorable demeanor who express horror at her crime. But they also seem to be delighted to have the opportunity to bring her to the king, as if they are glad that she sinned so they could catch her.

"We caught her, we did, in the act, yes, the very act of adultery. Adultery, no less, yes it was adultery all right. What do you say, teacher, what do you say we should do with this wretched woman? Moses made it clear, yes, very clear, what we should do: He commanded us to stone such a woman. But what do you say, teacher, what do you say we should do with her?"

Jesus knows that He is on trial with the woman. Whatever He says, they will get Him. If He says to stone her according to the law of Moses, they will turn Him over to the Roman authorities for illegally taking the law into His own hands by condemning someone to death. If He says not to stone her, He will be speaking against the law of Moses and therefore lose all credibility with the Jews who follow Him. There are only two answers to the question of what to do with the woman: stone her or don't stone her. They have Him either way. Brilliant.

They might expect Jesus to question the details of the case. Had she really committed adultery? Was she presently married? Where was her lover? It takes two to commit adultery and the law of Moses condemns both together, not just the woman (Deut 22:22). Apparently they have the answers to these questions and Jesus knows that she is really an adulteress. Her lover must have mysteriously been allowed to escape.

Whatever He might say, Jesus is trapped. So He doesn't say anything. Instead, He bends down and starts writing with His finger in the limestone dust that covers the ground in Jerusalem. "Teacher, don't ignore us. This is a serious case. What should we do with this woman?" He straightens up and replies: "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her" (Jn 8:7).

So Jesus does not say that the woman should die according to the law of Moses; He assumes that she is worthy of death and simply addresses the way in which the execution is to be carried out. He doesn't directly say to stone her. He says in effect, if

you want to stone her, go ahead, but remember that only a righteous person has the right to begin the execution. Then He bends down and keeps on writing in the dust.

"What's He writing? I'd better take a look. Oh, no! He's writing my sin—here in public where everyone can see! How does He know about that? If anyone else finds out I'm going to be dead meat, a mere grease spot on the pages of history! I'd better get out of here before they catch me and stone me with that adulterous woman!"

They have condemned her loudly, but they depart quietly. And quickly too, as fast as their long Pharisaic robes will let them go. The next time Jesus straightens up, they are all gone and He is left with only the woman standing before Him. She is still there cowering, waiting for the first stone to strike her.

He says to her: "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She manages to squeak out the words, "No one, sir." Jesus replies, "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again" (Jn 8:11). "Neither do I condemn you." Jesus doesn't say she isn't guilty and worthy of death. God's finger, which wrote the sins of the Pharisees in the dust, had written the seventh commandment in stone over a thousand years earlier: "You shall not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14). His law is eternal, immutable, irrevocable. He has written it in stone.

But sins are not written in stone. Thank God. Jesus writes even the sins of Pharisees in dust, not stone! Our sins are not eternal because Jesus can wipe them out. When Jesus says to the woman, "Neither do I condemn you," what He means is: I forgive you as an act of mercy. He doesn't dispute her guilt, but He prevents her execution from being carried out.

Jesus also says: "Go your way, and from now on do not sin again." His forgiveness is redemptive. He forgives people so that they might have a chance to begin a new, better kind of life. He accepts us just as we are, but He doesn't leave us just as we were! "Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy; when I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me" (Mic 7:8).

God is eager to restore us. No, that's not strong enough. He is obsessed with restoring us! This is in spite of the fact that forgiveness is tough for Him, as proven by the sacrifice of Christ. When God grants us forgiveness freely, as a gift, let us never, never, never take it for granted. Look at the cross again and remember the cost of forgiveness.

Christ Remedies Our State of Sin

When Christ forgives us, we have a problem that remains. We are still faulty human beings who can sin again. We are still sinners living in a world of sin and having a natural desire to sin. The Bible describes what happens: "But one is tempted by one's own desire, being lured and enticed by it; then, when that desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and that sin, when it is fully grown, gives birth to death" (Jas 1:14-15).

Trying to overcome sin can be like attempting to row a canoe upstream just above Niagara Falls. With your desires and Satan's clever temptations against you, you are going over. But when you are in Christ, there is a powerful force pulling you to safety. The apostle Peter wrote: "His divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Thus he has given us, through these things, his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of lust, and may become participants of the divine nature" (2 Pet 1:3-4).

Although we are sinful, through Christ we can "become participants of the divine nature"! This does not mean that we become gods, but we do receive divine power to overcome sin and emulate God's moral character. "Until we receive glorious, pure, new bodies at Christ's Second Coming" (1 Cor 15:51-54), we will have weak, mortal bodies that contain minds bent toward sin. But we can become participants of the divine nature

by having Christ living in us (Gal 2:20). The divine nature overcomes and controls the sinful nature.

Christ's sacrifice provides forgiveness and victory over sinning. But it is also Christ's sacrifice that promises the permanent solution of new bodies that contain no fallen disposition and that live forever. "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" (1 Cor 15:55). Christ died not only to wipe out our acts of sin, but also to give us eternal life (Jn 3:16).

For Christians, the ritual of baptism signifies our acceptance of Christ's promise to cleanse us from sin and give us new life through His sacrifice and resurrection (Rom 6:1-11; compare 1 Pet 3:21-22). This idea that Christ gives life as well as forgiveness was shown by the ancient Israelite ritual system. Remember that the Israelites received atonement through sacrifice not only for acts of sin, but also for ritual impurities. We will find that such impurities represented mortality that is removed by Christ's sacrifice.

Ritual Impurities Represented Mortality

Ritual impurity disqualified an Israelite from coming in contact with holy things, that is, things that were closely connected with the Presence of the Lord. For example, God prohibited a person who was ritually impure from eating the holy flesh of a well-being offering (Lev 7:20). Impurity could not be brought into contact with holiness.

The purpose of the laws in the Bible regulating impurity was to safeguard that which was holy from contamination by impure people or things. Since the Lord resided with the Israelites in the midst of all their impurities (Lev 16:16), they had to be very careful to observe the boundaries of purity that He set up.

Ritual impurity was not the same as ordinary physical dirtiness. You could scrub yourself in the tub and still be ritually impure. But ritual impurity did result mainly from physical states of human beings. It could also result from contact with an animal used in a ritual to remove sins (Lev 16:21, 26).

You were regarded as impure if something contaminated you, for example, if you came in contact with a carcass or corpse (see Lev 11:24-28; Num 19), if you had a scaly skin disease (so-called "leprosy"; Lev 13-14), or if you had a discharge from your genital organs (Lev 12, 15; Deut 23:10-11). Even when you were healed from scaly skin disease or no longer had a genital discharge, you were regarded as ritually impure until you were purified by the appropriate ritual.

The idea that ritual impurity was not ordinary physical dirtiness is reinforced by the facts that going to the bathroom did not result in ritual impurity, even a physically clean corpse was ritually impure, and purification from minor ritual impurities such as sexual intercourse included waiting until evening (Lev 15:18). Waiting until evening could not contribute to ordinary physical cleanliness.

My best modern illustration of what ritual impurity is like comes from my childhood. When I was in fourth grade, boys wanted to stay away from girls, who were supposed to have something contagious called "cooties." This word literally means "lice." But my classmates and I did not know this. For us, having "cooties" did not refer to literal physical contamination. I am not aware that any girls in my class had lice. But they were female, and young males wanted to protect their male image by distancing themselves from girls.

Like ritual impurity, our "cooties" were conceptual in nature. They expressed ideas that put people and things in categories on the basis of their physical natures or states. "Cooties," of course, were a ridiculous expression of immaturity that did not survive the onslaught of puberty. Ritual impurity, on the other hand, was designed by God to teach profound principles to mature people.

In the Bible, comparison between passages dealing with cases of ritual impurity (see especially Lev 11-15; Num 19) yields a common denominator to the various impurities: all have an aspect of death about them. The holy God could not be approached too closely by mortals under the curse of death resulting from sin. This was especially true when their mortality was emphasized by factors such as contact with dead bodies, the deterioration of skin disease, or loss of blood and/or the seeds of life (sperm or ova) from the reproductive organs.

In addition to safeguarding the holiness of the sanctuary and things connected with it, the Israelites' system of purity made it impossible for them to worship the dead as the Egyptians did. In Egypt, tombs were temples because dead people were regarded as holy gods. But in Israel, the dead were impure (Lev 21:1-4, 11; Num 6:6-17; 19:1-22), and impurity was the opposite of holiness.

As we saw earlier, ritual impurities were not sins even though they resulted from a mortal state that had resulted from sin (compare Rom 6:23). Indeed, some causes of ritual impurity such as menstruation (Lev 15:19) and nocturnal emissions (Deut 23:10-11) were normal, involuntary functions of the human body. A person could not help doing these things.

Some kinds of ritual impurity, such as coming in contact with a corpse, could usually be avoided (Num 6:9 gives an exception). But becoming impure was wrong only if God prohibited it. For example, while lay Israelites were permitted to become impure by participating in funerals, priests were restricted in this regard because of their special holiness (Lev 21:1-4, 10-11). Violation of such a restriction would be sin, not because ritual impurity was sin, but because violation of a divine command was sin.

Life Through Water and Blood

Ritual impurities pointed to death. But the rituals by which the Israelites received purification pointed to life through Christ and His sacrifice. These rituals included ritual bathing and sin offerings. The purification process could not begin until the source of the impurity stopped. For example, if a person had scaly skin disease, he/she could not even begin to undergo ritual purification until the symptoms of the disease had disappeared (Lev 14).

A person with a light impurity that lasted only one day would wash his/her clothes and body and wait until evening to be pure (see for example Lev 15:5-8). This ritual bathing by immersing in water is the forerunner of Christian baptism. For a new Christian, going down into the water (Acts 8:38) represents purification from a morally evil life by burying his/her old life of sin and rising to a new life in Christ (see Rom 6:1-14).

Why did the Israelites wait until evening before they became pure? Because the impurity only lasted until the end of the day. But there may an additional factor here: Christ died about the time of the "evening" (or late afternoon) sacrifice (Matt 27:46-51; compare Num 28:4). So His sacrifice provided purification at the end of the day.

Severe impurities that lasted a week or more required sin offerings (see for example Lev 12:6-8; 15:14-15). Like all other sacrifices at the sanctuary, these represented Christ's sacrifice, but they provided the atonement of ritual purification, not forgiveness. This highlights a magnificent and neglected fact: Through Christ's sacrifice, He not only forgives us from our sins (1 Jn 1:9), He heals us from our disease of mortality and gives us eternal life (Jn 3:16)! Psalm 103 refers to the two aspects of our restoration: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits — who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases" (Ps 103:2-3).

When Christ died on the cross, He not only took care of sins and mortality that had occurred up to that time, He made forgiveness and life available to generations of people who had not even been born. This idea is reflected in an unusual Israelite sin offering. A red cow was burned outside the camp in order to make ashes, which were stored. Later

on, when a person was contaminated by contact with a corpse, some of the ashes were mixed with water and sprinkled on the impure person in order to purify him/her (Num 19). The ashes functioned as a ritual "sponge" to remove impurity from the person. Even though the burning of the cow happened before the ashes were applied to the person, those who participated in the burning of the cow and storage of the ashes contracted a mild impurity (Num 19:7-8, 10). Why? The burning sacrifice was bearing future impurity. It was as though the corpse contamination traveled back in time and space through the ashes of the cow to the sacrificial event.

So it was with Christ. He bore all the sins and mortality of the world, including those of the future. This has special meaning to us because we are living in that future. Christ is the source of our purification. The fact that Christ is the source of purification was emphasized by the fact that when He died and a soldier pierced His side, "blood and water came out" (Jn 19:34). These are the two main purifying elements of the Israelite ritual system: blood and water.

Christ is Our Source of Purity and Life

Christ was already a source of purity during His ministry on earth. Did you ever wonder how Jesus could touch lepers in order to heal them (for example Matt 8:3) and not become impure Himself? Have you thought about the woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years (Lk 8:43-48)? According to Leviticus 15, such a woman was ritually impure and whoever touched her became impure (verses 25-27; compare vs. 19). She could not worship in the temple court, eat holy food at special celebrations, or have sexual relations with her husband if she was married (compare Lev 18:19; 20:18). Her life was affected in serious ways beyond her physical suffering. In a sense she was cut off from God and man. No wonder she was desperate.

Why did the woman only touch the hem of Jesus' garment? To avoid making Him impure. But Jesus asked: "Who touched me?" Who in all that pushing, shoving, Near Eastern crowd had touched Him? If you have been in such a crowd in that part of the world as I have, you know how ridiculous that question must have sounded to those close to Jesus. But the woman knew what He meant and she trembled, thinking He was about to rebuke her for making Him impure.

Instead of rebuking the woman, He gave her a blessing. She didn't make Him impure at all. Why not? Because Jesus is the source of purity. He noticed the touch because He felt power going from Himself to the woman (Lk 8:46). Jesus is like the spring or cistern of water in Leviticus 11:36. Carcasses of unclean animals could defile other things (verses 29-35), but they could not contaminate a spring or cistern of water because it was a source of purity.

The message is: Come to Jesus and let Him touch you. Grasp the hem of His garment. Do not be afraid. You can come to Jesus all filthy as you are, in need of every kind of cleansing and healing, and He can help you without becoming defiled Himself. He will not rebuke you. He will only bless you.

There's more. God can make you a source of purity and healing in the world. When you go out into an environment full of all kinds of moral pollution, you can give cleansing by putting people in touch with Christ without being defiled yourself. As long as you are with Christ, guided by Him on His errands, you are safe. Don't be afraid.

Now that our worship is directly focused toward God's heavenly sanctuary, where Christ is ministering as our Priest, we no longer have God's glorious Presence visually manifested at a particular physical location on earth. So the ritual purification laws of ancient Israel, which were designed to safeguard the interactions between the Israelites and their God in His earthly sanctuary, no longer apply. We do not need to have people stationed at the doors of our churches to make sure that participants in Communion are not ritually impure.

We should not ignore the purity laws of the Bible just because they do not apply to us. They teach us how our fallen state separates us from God and they show us how God brings wholeness, purity, and life from brokenness, defilement, and death.

Our lives are battlegrounds. But we can have victory now. Better yet, God will clean up the mess and give us ultimate peace. We will live without fear of sin or death. Christ's sacrifice guarantees that death will be no more (Rev 21:4).

UPCOMING WEEKEND SEMINARS

As a service to our subscribers, I am listing the date and the location of the upcoming seminars for the months of November and December, 2002. Every Sabbath it is a great pleasure for me to meet our subscribers who travel considerable distances to attend the seminars.

DECEMBER 6-7: WESTERN JAMAICA CONFERENCE RALLY

For information call the Conference Secretary, Elder Charles Brevitt at (876) 952-4820 or 979-9026.

DECEMBER 13-14: RALLY IN BATTLE GROUND, WASHINGTON

Location: Cherry Grove Friends Church, 9100 NE 219th Street, Battle Ground, Washington 98604

For information call Pastor Dave Bostrom at (360) 666-9877

JANUARY 16 TO 19: KOREAN UNION WIDE SABBATH CONGRESS

For information call Lee Hark Bong at (2) 966-0072 or 966-0073 or 3299-5200.

JANUARY 31/FEBRUARY 1, 2003: LEXINGTON SDA CHURCH, KENTUCKY

Location: 968 Lane Allen Road, Lexington, KY 40504

For information call Elder David Parker at (502) 223-8020

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This past year I have spent over 1000 hours to organize all my seminar lectures with PowerPoint slides. The response has been overwhelming. Every weekend capacity crowds attend the seminars which are designed to enrich the understanding and experience of our message. Feel free to contact me for a date and further information.

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I bought one of this projectors myself, after I discovered that it outperformed my new IN-FOCUS projector, which I purchased few months ago. I made this discovery in Gentry, Arkansas, where I was invited to speak. Tim Rosenburg, the church pastor, showed me the HITACHI projector that their church had just bought. In fact they bought four of them, for the youth, elementary school, and academy. We set up both projectors side by side and to my surprise I found that the HITACHI provided a much brighter and sharper picture. Pastor Tim Rosenburg placed me in contact with the Adventist dealer in Texas who buys these projectors from HITACHI for our churches.

If your church is planning to buy a video projector, I would be glad to place you in contact with our Texan brother. Just email to me your name and phone number and I will

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I am extremely happy with this new HITACHI projector that I use every weekend. The image is bright and clear, even when some lights are on. It is small, weighs only about 56 pounds and I can put both the projector and the lap top computer in my brief catalogue briefcase, with space left over for my Bible and two books. If your church is looking for a good video project at a reasonable price, you will be very happy this one.

SPECIAL CHRISTMAS OFFER ON THE NEWLY RECORDED SABBATH SEMINAR

The many messages of appreciation for the newly SABBATH ENRICHMENT SEMINAR, have led me to extend the special offer until December 31, 2002. The seminar was recorded last March 15-17, 2002, at the First Fort Worth SDA Church in Texas by the TEXAS MEDIA CENTER. We spent a lot of time and efforts preparing this new recording where I use about 100 PowerPoint slides for each presentation. The response has been very gratifying. Church leaders in different parts of the world are expressing appreciation for the blessings of these timely Sabbath messages. Your personal effort to share them with your congregation is much appreciated.

The new SABBATH SEMINAR consists of a total of 8 one-hour lectures covering the following topics: the gripping story of my search for the Sabbath at a Vatican University in Rome; the discoveries I made in Vatican libraries on how the change came about from Sabbath to Sunday in early Christianity; practical principles on how to keep the Sabbath to experience Christ's rest and peace in our lives; an update report on the most recent Sabbath/Sunday developments; and a sacred concert with two outstanding tenors entitled THE SABBATH IN SONGS. The concert was recorded in a television studio in South Bend, Indiana.

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