

The voice of people



Bible correspondence

The Holy Seed Church



THE VOICE OF PEOPLE

The Holy Seed Church accepts the Bible as the only source of our beliefs.

We always consider our movement to be the result of the protestant coercion sole scripture the Bible as the only standard of faith and practice for Christians.

Currently, The Holy Seed Church hold 54 Fundamental beliefs that can be organized into seven categories the doctrines of God, man, salvation that church, the Christian's life, culture and last day events. In each teaching God is the architect, who in wisdom, grace and infinite love is restoring a relationship with humanity that will last for eternity.

WHO IS GOD?

God is love, power and splendor and God is a mystery. His ways are far beyond us, but he still reaches out to us. God is infinite yet intimate, three yet one, all. Knowing yet all forgiving. We will spend eternity cherishing an ever deepening relationship with God the Father Son and Holy Spirit.

Despite the distance sin demands, God has revealed himself in countless ways. The Bible is the story of God striving to reconnect with these children, and is a major method God uses to reach us. A mosaic of authors, styles and perspectives the Bible reveals a God who is ever creative ever patient and ever-seeking to restore our relationship with him. Though written by or diary people, through the Spirit it pierces our hearts, opens our eyes and us to live for him.

God the father reached his Son Jesus Christ who chose not just to visit us, but to become one of us. Born human so we can be reborn in the Spirit, Jesus showed us God's love and character and how far God was willing to go to save us from self-destruction. What we could not do for ourselves, he did for us, dying in our place so we can live forever. He conquered death through resurrection, and promised to return to take us home.

Meanwhile, God has not left us alone The Holy Spirit is here to comfort us guide us and witnesses for God's love. The same Spirit who inspired prophets and empowered Jesus Christ who shaped scripture and retested the world enables and empowers each one of us. The Spirit activates the "Body of Christ" the church, through spiritual gifts and humble attitude of service and compassion.

LESSON: ONE

We Can Believe in the God

Jim once asked an atheist if he ever wrestled, even for a few moments, with the thought that maybe does exist.

"Absolutely!" the atheist said, to Jim's surprise. "Years ago when our first child was born I almost became a believer in God. As I looked down at that miniature-but-perfect little human being in the crib, as I watched the flexing of those tiny fingers and saw the dawning of recognition in those little eyes, I went through a period of several months during which I almost ceased to be an atheist. Looking at that child almost convinced me there had to be a God."

EVERYTHING DESIGNED HAS A DESIGNER

The design of the human body demands the existence of a designer. Scientists tell us that the brain stores and remembers thousands of mental images, integrates and solves problems, appreciates beauty, comprehends self, and desires to develop the best in each person. Electrical charges originating from the brain control all the muscular activity of our bodies.

Computers also function through electrical impulses. But it took a human mind to invent the computer and a human being to build the computer and tell it what to do. No wonder the psalmist concluded that the human body speaks loud and clear of a wonderful Creator: "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well." Psalm 139:14. {Unless otherwise noted, all scriptural texts in the DISCOVER guides are from the New International Version of the Bible "NIV".}

We don't have to go far to find the "works" of God. The intricate design of the human brain and the other organs of our body are the "works" of God, and point to an infinitely skillful designer. No pump built by man can compare with the human heart. No computer network can equal our nervous system. No television system is as efficient the human voice, ear, and eye. No central air conditioning and heating system can match the work done by our nose, lungs, and skin. The complexity of the human body suggests that someone designed it, and that someone is God.

The human body is a complete system of organs all interrelated, all thoroughly designed. The lungs and heart, nerves and muscles, all perform incredibly complicated tasks that depend on other incredibly complicated tasks.

If you were to mark ten coins from one to one ten, put them in your pocket, shake them around, and then pull them out and the back in your pocket one by one, what is the likelihood you could do so in exact numerical sequence? By mathematical law you have only one chance in ten billion of tasking them out in order from one to ten.

Now consider the chances of a stomach, brain, heart, liver, arteries, veins, kidney, ears, eyes, and teeth all developing together and beginning to function at the same moment in time. What is the most reasonable explanation for the design of the human body? "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness,'

So God created man in his own image

Male and female he created them." Genesis 1:26, 27. The first man and woman could not just have happened. The Bible affirms that God designed us in his image. He thought us up and brought us into being.

EVERYTHING MADE HAS A MAKER

But evidence for God is not confined to the design of our bodies; it's also spread across the heavens. Leave the lights of the city, and look up into the night sky. That Milky Way is really a galaxy of billions of blazing suns similar to our sun. In fact our sun and its planets are a part of the Milky Way. And our Milky Way is but once an estimated more than one hundred billion galaxies that can be seen through giant telescopes on earth and through the Hubble telescope in space. No wonder the psalmist concluded that the stars speak of a glorious maker:

"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands" Psalm 19:1-3. What may we reasonably conclude by looking at the intricate design and vast size of the universe? "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Genesis 1:1. "[God] is before all things, and in him all things hold together." Colossians 1:17.

All creation testifies about God the master Designer and Infinite Creator. In the simple words, "in the beginning God," we find the answer to the mystery of life. There is a God who created everything. Many great scientific minds today believe in God. Dr. Arthur Compton, Nobel prize-winning physicist, commenting on this verse of Scripture, once said:

"For myself, faith begins with a realization that a supreme intelligence brought the universe into being and created man. It is not difficult for me to have this faith, for it is plain that where there is a plan there is a divine intelligence. An orderly, unfolding universe testifies to the truth of the most majestic statement ever uttered, 'In the beginning God.'"

The Bible does not attempt to prove God; it declares his existence. Dr. Arthur Conklin, a noted biologist, once wrote: "The probability of life originating from an accident is comparable to the probability of an unabridged dictionary resulting from an explosion in a print shop."

We know that human beings can't make something from nothing. We may build things, invent things, put things together, but we have never brought into being from scratch even the tiniest frog or the simplest flower. The things about us cry out that God designed, God created, God sustains. The only believable answer to the origin of the universe, this world, and human beings is God.

GOD COMES INTO PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEOPLE

The God who designed the starry heavens, who created the universe, seeks a personal relationship with us. He had a personal relationship with Moses: "The Lord would speak to Moses as a man speaks with his friend" {Exodus 33:11}. And God wants to enter into a personal relationship with you and become your friend. Jesus promised those who follow him: "You are my friends." {John 15:14}.

We have all wrestled with the idea of God, for humans are naturally religious. No animal ever builds an altar for worship. Yet everywhere you find men and women, you find them worshiping. Deep within every human heart is a natural desire to worship, an awareness of God, a desire to become a friend of God. When we respond to our longing and find God, there is no longer a doubt about his existence and our need.

During the 1990s millions of atheists in Russia renounced atheism and turned to God. A university professor in St. Petersburg made a statement that typifies the comments made by many transformed atheists in the former Soviet Union:

"I have searched for a meaning to life in my scientific research, but found nothing to have confidence in. the scientists around me have confidence in. the scientists around me have the same empty feeling. As I looked at the vastness of the universe in my study of astronomy, and the emptiness of my soul I felt there must be some meaning.

Then, when I received the Bible you gave me and began reading it, the vacuum in my life was filled. I have found the Bible to be the only source of confidence to my soul. I have accepted Jesus as my Savior and have found true peace and satisfaction in life."
A Christian believes in the God because he or she has met him and discovers that he satisfies the heart's deepest needs.

The God, whom Christians have joyfully found to exist, gives us a new perspective, new meaning, new motives, and new joys. God doesn't promise a life free from trouble and conflict, but he does assure us that he will guide and sustain us if we come into a personal relationship with him. And millions of Christians will testify that they would give up everything rather than go back to a life without God. This is the greatest wonder of all that the Almighty God designed, created, and sustains the universe also desires a personal relationship with every man and woman, body and girl. David marveled at this, when he wrote:

"When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him?" Psalm 8:3, 4.

Our Creator is "mindful" of each one of us. He takes as personal an interest in you as if you were the only being he had created. So we can believe in God:

Because of the intricate design in everything he created about us. Because of the longing for God within us that leaves us restless till we find our rest in him. And, because when we seek and find him, God satisfies our every need and longing to the full!

WHAT KIND OF GOD IS HE?

It is only reasonable that a personal God would want to reveal himself to his created beings just as a father desires that his children know him. And in the Bible God tells us who he is and he is like. What pattern did God use for creating men and women?

“so God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him.” Genesis 1:27.

Since we are made in God’s image, our abilities to reflect and feel, to remember and hope, to ponder and analyze all are derived from him.

What is God’s dominant trait?

“God is Love.” 1st John 4:8.

God relates to human beings out of his own heart of love. There is nothing he has done or ever will do which is not motivated by a selfless, sacrificial love.

HOW JESUS REVEALS WHAT GOD IS LIKE

In the Bible God repeatedly speaks of himself as a father.

“Have we not all one father? Did not one God create us?” Malachi 2:10.

Some of the father images we see today are anything but desirable. There are neglectful dads, abusive dads. Gods is not like that. He is a caring, sensitive Father. He is the kind of Dad who loves to play games with his son or daughter, the kind of Dad who charms his kinds by telling wonderful bedtime stories.

Our loving Father wanted to want to do more than reveal Himself through the words of scripture. He knew that a person we live with is much more real to us than someone we only hear about or read about in a book. So he came to our world as a real person the person of Jesus.

“(Jesus) is the image of the invisible God.” Colossians 1:15. So if you have seen Jesus, you have seen God. He came down on our level he became like us so He could teach us how to live and be happy, and so we could see what God is really like. Jesus is God made visible. He Himself said, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” {John 14:9}.

As you read the story of Jesus in the four Gospels, the first four books of the New Testament, you will discover a fascinating portrait of our heavenly Father. Rough fishermen dropped their nets to follow Christ, and small children flocked to receive his blessing. He could comfort the most devastated sinner and disarm the most self-righteous hypocrite. He healed everything from blindness to leprosy.

In all his actions Jesus demonstrated that God is love! He met human need in a way no one had ever done before him or has since! Jesus’ final glorious revelation of what God is like happened at the cross.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but eternal life.” John 3:16.

Jesus died not only to give us a happier life now, but also to give us eternal life. For long ages people wondered, and hoped, and dreamed about God. They saw his handiwork in the sky and in the beauties of nature. Then at the cross, Jesus broke the silence of the ages, and people found themselves looking into the very face of God, seeing him as he really is love, eternal and immortal love! You can discover God right now as Jesus reveals him. That discovery will lead you to make a very personal affirmation: "Father, I love you!"

LESSON: TWO

We Can Believe in the God

The famous mutineers who sank the British ship bounty ended up settling with their native women on the lonely island of Pitcairn in the South pacific. The group consisted of nine British sailors, six Tahitian men, ten Tahitian women, and a girl of fifteen. One of the sailors discovered how to distill alcohol, and soon drunkenness corrupted the island colony. Fighting among the men and women grew into violent exchanges.

After a while only one of the original men who reached the island survived. But this man, Alexander Smith, discovered a Bible in one of the chests taken from the ship. He began to read it and to teach the others what it said. As he did so his own life changed, and finally the lives of all on the island.

The islanders were completely isolated from the outside world until the arrival of the United States ship Topaz in 1808. Its crew found the island a thriving, prosperous community with no whisky, no jail, and no crime. The Bible had changed the island from a hell on earth to an example of what God wants the world to be. And so it remains today. Does God still speak to people through the pages of the Bible?

He certainly does. As I write this, I'm looking at the answer sheet sent to us by a student of one of our Bible courses. A note at the bottom states, "I am in prison, on death row, sentenced to die for a crime. Before I took this Bible course, I was lost, but now I have something to look forward to and I have found a new love." The Bible possesses a power that can actually transform people's lives. When people really begin to study the Bible, lives are dramatically changed.

HOW GOD SPEAKS TO US THROUGH THE BIBLE

After creating Adam and Eve, the first man and woman on earth, God spoke to them face-to-face. But when God came to visit with them after they sinned, what did the couple do? "The man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day and they hid from the lord GOD among the trees

of the garden.” Genesis 3:8. {Unless otherwise noted, all scriptural texts is the DISCOVER guides are from the new International Version of the Bible “NIV”.}

Sin interrupted face-to-face contact with God. After sin came to our world, how did God communicate with people? “Surely the sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets.” Amos 3:7. God has not left us in the dark about life and its meaning. Through his prophets persons God called to speak and write for him he has revealed his answers to life’s great questions.

WHO WROTE THE BIBLE?

The prophets gave God’s messages by voice and pen while they lived, and when they died, their writings lived after them. These prophetic messages were then gathered together, under God’s leading; in the book we call the Bible. But how reliable are their writings? “You must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” 2nd peter 1:20, 21. The writers of the Bible wrote not according to their own will or desire, but only as they were moved, or inspired, by but only as were moved, or inspired, by the Spirit of God. The Bible is God’s own Book! In the Bible God tells us about himself and reveals his purposes for the human race. It shows God’s view of the past, and also opens up the future, telling us how the problem of evil will finally be resolved and how peace will come to our world. Is the entire Bible a message from God?

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” 2nd Timothy 3:16, 17. The Holy Bible affects human beings so profoundly because “all” the Bible is “God-breathed,” an inspired document, God’s Book. The prophets related what they saw and heard in human language, but their message came directly from God. So if you want to know what life is all about, read the Holy Scriptures. Reading the Bible will transform your life. The more you prayerfully read it, the more peace of mind you’ll experience. The same Holy Spirit who inspired the prophets to write the Bible, will make the Bible’s teachings, its gospel, effective in transforming your life if you invite the Spirit to be present as you read the Bible.

THE UNITY OF THE BIBLE

The Bible is actually a library of 66 books. The 39 books of the Old Testament were composed from about 1450 B.C. to about 400 B.C., the 27 books of the New Testament between A.D. 50 and A.D. 100. The prophet Moses began the first five books of the Bible sometime before 1400 B.C. The apostle John opened the last book of the Bible, Revelation, about A.D. 95. During the 1,500 years between the

writing of the first and last books of the Bible, at least 38 other inspired writers made their contributions. Some were businessmen, others shepherds, fishermen, soldiers, physicians, preachers, kings human beings from all walks of life. They often lived within contrasting cultures and philosophies.

But here is the wonder of it all: when the 66 books of the Bible with their 1,189 chapters made up of 31,173 verses are brought together, we find perfect unity and harmony in the message they convey. Suppose a man should knock at your door and, when invited in, place an oddly shaped piece of marble on your living room floor, then leave without a word. Other visitors follow in succession until about 40 individuals have each deposited their numbered marble piece into place. When the last one has gone, you see with surprise that a beautiful statue stands before you. Then learn that most of the “sculptors” had never met each other, coming, as they did, from south America, China, Russia, Africa, and other parts of the world. What would you have to conclude? That someone had planned the statue and had sent to each man accurate specifications for his particular piece of marble. The Bible as a whole communicates one coherent message just like a perfect marble statue. One mind planned it all, the mind of God. Scripture’s remarkable unity gives evidence that though human beings wrote down the thoughts, they were inspired by God.

YOU CAN TRUST THE BIBLE

The preservation of the Bible is remarkable. All of the early manuscripts of the Bible were copied by hand long before there were printing presses. Scribes made copies of the original manuscripts and distributed them. Thousands of copies of such manuscripts or portions of them still survive.

Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament that go back 150 to 200 years before Christ were found near the Dead Sea in 1947. It’s amazing that these two-thousand-year-old scrolls contain exactly the same truths as we find in the Old Testament of Bible printed today. This is powerful evidence of how reliable God’s Word is.

The apostle first wrote much of the New Testament as letters they sent to Christian churches established after the death and resurrection of Christ. More than 4,500 manuscripts of all or a part of the New Testament are on display in the great museums and libraries of Europe and America. Some of them date back to the second century. By comparing these early manuscripts with today’s Bible, we can readily see that the New Testament has also remained essentially unchanged since it was first written.

Today the Bible or portions of it have been translated into over 4,060 languages and dialects. It is the world's best-seller: over 200 million Bibles and Bible portions are sold each year.

The historical accuracy of the Bible is remarkable. Many archaeological discoveries have dramatically confirmed the accuracy of the Bible. Historians have discovered clay tablets and stone monuments which have brought to light names, places, and events previously known only from the Bible.

For example, according to Genesis 11:31, Abraham and his family "set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to {the land of} Canaan." Because only the Bible spoke of, certain scholars stated that no such city had ever existed. Then archaeologists uncovered a temple tower in southern Iraq with a cylinder at the base written in cuneiform that contained the name Ur. Later findings revealed Ur as the thriving metropolis of a highly developed civilization. That city's identity had been forgotten, only the Bible preserved its name until the spade of the archaeologist confirmed its authenticity. And Ur is only one of many examples of archaeology confirming the accuracy of the Bible.

The accurate fulfillment of Bible predictions shows that you can trust the Bible. Scripture contains many remarkable predictions of future events now being fulfilled before our eyes. We examine some of these exciting prophecies in future lessons.

HOW TO UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE

As you explore God's word, keep these principles in mind: Study the Bible with a prayerful heart. If you approach Scripture with a heart and mind opened through prayer, it becomes a personal contact with Jesus (John 16:13-14).

Read the Bible daily. Daily Bible study is a key to power in our lives, an encounter with the mind of God (Romans 1:16).

As you read it, let the Bible speak for itself. Ask: what did the Bible writer intend to say? By grasping what a text means we can apply it intelligently to our life today.

Study the Bible by subject. Compare scripture with scripture. Jesus used this method to prove that he was the Messiah:

"And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in ALL the Scriptures concerning himself." Luke 24:27.

By putting together all that the Bible has to say on a certain subject we gain a balanced perspective.

Study the Bible to receive power to live for Christ. The word of God is described in Hebrews 4:12 as a sharp, double-edged sword. It's more than words on a page; it's a living weapon in our hands to fight off temptations to sin.

Listen as God speaks to you through his Word. If a person is to know the Bible truth about a certain subject, he or she must be willing to follow what it teaches (John 7:17), not what some person thinks, or what some church teaching asserts.

THE BIBLE CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE

"The unfolding of [God's] word gives light; it gives understanding to the simple." Psalm 119:130.

Studying the Bible will strengthen your "understanding," give you the strength to overcome destructive habits, and enable you to develop physically, mentally, morally, and spiritually.

The Bible speaks to the heart. It deals with the experiences of humanity birth, love, marriage, parenthood, and death. It heals the deepest wound in human nature, sin and the misery resulting from it.

God's Word is not a book of one race, one age, one nation, or one culture. Although written in the east, it also appeals to men and women in the West. It enters the homes of the humble and the mansions of the wealthy. Children love its exciting stories. Its heroes inspire young people. The sick, the lonely, and the aged discover in it comfort and hope for a better life.

Because God works through the Bible, it has great power. It breaks even hearts hardened against all human emotion, softening and filling them with love. We have seen the Bible change a former bandit and opium smoker into a zealous preacher. We have seen the Bible turn a liar and a cheat into an honest and upright teacher. And we have seen this Book snatch people from the brink of suicide and give them a hopeful new beginning. The Bible awakens love among enemies. It makes the proud humble and the selfish generous. The Bible strengthens us in weakness, cheers us in despondency, comforts us in sorrow, guides us in uncertainty, and soothes us when weary. It shows us how to live courageously and how to die without fear.

God's Book, the Bible, can change your life! You'll see that more and more clearly as you continue studying the DISCOVER guides. Why was the Bible written for us? Jesus answers:

"But these [Bible truths] are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that by believing you may have life in his name." John 20:31.

The greatest reason we should become acquainted with the Holy Scriptures is that it is full of pictures that reveal Jesus Christ and assure us of eternal life. By looking at Christ throughout the Bible, we are changed and become more like him. So why not begin now to discover the power of God's word that can make you more like Jesus?

LESSON: THREE

DOES MY LIFE REALLY MATTER TO GOD?

Some morning, the world seems a paradise. You wake up, take a deep breath by the window, and look out on golden sunshine reflecting on the trees, leaf by leaf. Some moments make life seem so precious: the face of a beloved friend as you say good-bye, a mood, the unexpected affection of a small child.

But other mornings, the world seems a place of horror. You wake up to newspaper headlines screaming about yet another terrorist bombing that maimed or blinded a child, yet another serial killer claiming his tenth victim, yet another famine or flood or war or earthquake. These are moments when nothing makes sense, nothing seems fair.

What does it all mean? Can we make sense of our wonderful and terrible world? Why are we here? Does my life really matter to God or am I just a minor cog in some vast cosmic machine?

GOD CREATED A WORLD PERFECT

God is the Creator, the architect and designer of everything from supernovas to butterfly wings. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made their starry host by the breath of his mouth? For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm." Psalm 33:6-9. (Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptural texts in the DISCOVER guides are from the King James Version of the Bible [KJV].) God has only to speak and the elements obey his will.

SIX DAYS TO MAKE OUR WORLD

"In six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy." Exodus 20:11.

The eternal, all-powerful Creator could have formed the world in a moment "by the breath of his mouth." But God chose to take six days to do it-six minutes, or even six seconds would have been sufficient. The first chapter in the Bible, Genesis 1, describes what God created on each day of the creation week.

What crowning masterpiece did God create on the sixth day? "GOD CREATED MAN IN HIS OWN IMAGE, in the image of God he created him; MALE AND FEMALE HE CREATED THEM." {Genesis 1:27.}

God decided to create individuals like himself who could reason and feel and love. Every person is made in God's "image." By the sixth

day, the world was filled with plants and animals, and then God introduced his masterpiece of creation. According to Genesis 2:7, the Almighty formed Adam's body from the dust of the ground. So when God breathed "the breath of life" into his nostrils, man became "a living being" that is, he came to life. God named the first man created in his image, Adam, a word that simply means "man," and the first woman, Eve, which means "Living" (2:20; 3:20). A loving Creator saw the need for human companionship.

Fresh from the hand of God, Adam and Eve both reflected his image. God could have programmed beings like robots to wander contentedly about the Garden of Eden and raise their voices in adoration to him. But God wanted more: real relationships. Robots can smile, speak, even do the dishes, but they can't love.

God created us in his image, with the capacity to think and choose, and to remember, understand, and love. Adam and Eve were God's children, and inexpressibly dear to him.

CREATION WEEK

1. Day One: Light; sequence of day and night
2. Day Two: Sky (the Atmosphere)
3. Three: Plants / vegetation, Earth and Seas
4. Day Four: Sun and moon Luminaries
5. Day Five: Sea, Animals and birds
6. Day Six: land animals and human Beings
7. Day Seven: the Sabbath day, when Jesus Christ came he rested in Sabbath day but he said, "Son of Man is the Lord of Sabbath." Because of this find that every day is the Sabbath day, we can not sin for seven days and then come back to repent. As can from President William Simiyu he said, our breath we should be prayers every hour and everyday" the world observe Seven days the whole week namely Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. According to the scripture we support to pray everyday do not on Seventh day alone.

EVIL COMES TO A PERFECT WORLD

Adam and Eve had everything to make them happy. They enjoyed perfect physical and mental health, living in a beautiful garden home in a flawless world (Genesis 2:8; 1:28-31). God promised those children and the ability to do creative thinking, and to find satisfaction in the work of their hands (Genesis 1:28; 2:15). They experienced face-to-face fellowship with their maker. No trace of worry, fear, or sickness marred their blissful days. How did the world change so drastically into a place of suffering and tragedy? The second and third chapters of Genesis tell the entire story of how sin entered our world. Read them at your leisure. Here is a brief summary of their contents.

Some time after God established a perfect world, the Devil came to the Garden of Eden to tempt Adam and Eve into disobeying their Creator. God limited the Devil's

sphere of influence to one tree in the garden, the “tree of the knowledge of Good and evil.” And he warned the first human couple to stay clear of this tree and never to eat its fruit, or they would die.

But one day Eve wandered over by the forbidden tree. The devil quickly launched into his sales pitch. He claimed God had lied to her and that if she ate the tree’s fruit she wouldn’t die, but would become wise like God himself, knowing good and evil. Tragically Eve and then Adam, who had only known good, allowed the Devil to con them, and they sampled the forbidden fruit thus breaking their bond of trust and obedience with God.

God planned for Adam and Eve to “rule” over our world as the stewards of God’s created works (Genesis 1:26). But because they broke faith with God and chose the Devil as their new leader, the couple lost their jurisdiction. Today the Devil claims the world as his and tries his best to enslave its people.

There are many times when we find ourselves doing something selfish or even cruel when we really want to do the opposite. Why? Because the invisible enemy, the Devil, works to make people fail morally.

As you read chapter 3 of Genesis, you will discover that sin caused Adam and Eve to hide from God in fear. Sin affected all of creation. Thorns appeared along with the flowers. The soil suffered from drought, and labor became a burden. Disease began to strike at random. Jealousy, animosity, and greed multiplied human miseries. Most terrible of all, with sin came death!

WHO IS THIS DEVIL WHO INFECTED OUR WORLD WITH IN?

“He was AMURDERER FROM THE BEGINNING, there in no truth in him. When he lies, he lies; he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and THE FATHER OF LIES.”
John 8:44.

According to Jesus, the Devil is the originator of sin the universe, the “father” of sin and thus of murder and lying.

Thomas Carlyle, the great English philosopher, once took Ralph Waldo Emerson through some of the worst streets of London’s East End. As they walked along, silently observing the wretchedness evil around them, Carlyle finally asked, “Do you believe in the Devil now?”

DID GOD CREATE THE DEVIL?

No! A good God would not create a devil. And yet the Bible states the Devil, along with the angels he had deceived, lost their place in heaven and came to our world.

“And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down that ancient serpent called the devil or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.”

Revelation 12:7-9. How did the Devil get into heaven in the first place?

“You were anointed as A GUARDIAN CHERUB, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you.” Ezekiel 28:14, 15.

God did not create the Devil; he created Lucifer a perfect angel, one of heaven's leading angels, standing next to God's throne. But then he sinned "wickedness was found in" him. Expelled from heaven, and posing as Adam and Eve's friend, he became humanity's deadliest enemy.

WHY DID LUCIFER, THIS PERFECT ANGEL, SIN?

"How you have fallen from heaven, o morning star, Son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth. You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne, above the stars of God; I will make myself like the most high.'" Isaiah 14:12-14.

The being who became the Devil was originally called Lucifer, meaning "day star" or "shining one." In this angel's heart, vanity and ambition began to take the place of devotion. The seed of pride grew into an obsession to take God's place.

Lucifer must have worked hard to persuade other heavenly beings. It's easy to imagine Satan arguing that God was holding something back from them, and that the divine law was too restrictive and that God was an uncaring sovereign. He slandered the one whose character defines what love is. How was this conflict in heaven resolved? "Your heart became proud, so I threw you to the earth." Ezekiel 28:17. Pride changed the chief of angels into the Devil or Satan. And in order to preserve the peace and harmony of heaven, he and one third of heaven's angels who joined him in rebellion, had to be expelled (Revelation 12:4, 7-9).

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR SIN?

Why didn't God create beings incapable of sinning? If he had, there would be no problem of evil in our world. But God wanted people who could have meaningful relationships. So "God created man in his own image" (Genesis 1:27).

This means we are free and responsible. We can decide to love God or turn backs on him. God gave the angels and human beings of every generation, a spiritual nature and a capacity to make real choices.

"Choose for yourselves this day whom you will service." Joshua 24:15.

God challenges the beings he created in his image to choose to do right because their reasoning his image to choose to do right because their reasoning powers tell the "God's way is best." And turn from wrong because their reasoning powers warn against the results of disobedience and sin.

Only beings with the power to reason and choose can experience real live. God longed to create individuals who could comprehend and appreciate his character, freely respond to him in love, and be filled with love for others. God wanted to share his love so much that he was willing to take the enormous risk of creation angels and people with the power of choice. He knew it was possible that someday one of his created beings might choose not to serve him. The Devil was the first being in the universe to make that terrible choice. The tragedy of sin began with (John 8:44, 1st John 3:8).

THE CROSS MAKES PSSIBLE THE DESTRUCTION OF SIN

Why didn't God destroy Lucifer before his sin-disease could spread? Lucifer had challenged the fairness of God's government. He had told lies about God. If God had destroyed Lucifer immediately, the angels would have

begun to serve him from fear rather than from love. This would have defeated the purpose God had in creating beings with the power of choice in the first place. How did anyone really know God's way was best? God gave Satan a chance to demonstrate his alternative system. That's why he was given an opportunity to tempt Adam and Eve.

This planet has become a testing ground where the character of Satan and the nature of his kingdom are contrasted with the character of God and the nature of his kingdom. Who is right? Who can we ultimately trust? So deceptive was Lucifer, that it has taken time for the beings of the universe to be fully convinced of how disastrous Satan's alternative actually is. But eventually everyone will see that "the wages of sin is death" and that "the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). Every being in the universe will agree that:

"Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true your ways, king of the ages. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed." Revelation 15:3, 4.

After everyone understands the deadly nature of sin and the destructive nature of Satan's philosophy, God can destroy Satan and sin. He will also have to destroy those who stubbornly resist his grace and cling to Satan's alternative.

God is just as anxious to resolve the problem of sin and suffering as we are to have him do so. But he is waiting for the time when he will do it on a permanent basis, he will preserve our free will and prevent evil from ever appearing again. God has promised to destroy sin forever by purify the heavens and this earth with fire. "in keeping with his promise" we can look "forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of the righteous" (2nd Peter 3:10, 13). Sin will never again infect the universe. Sin's tragic results will stand out clearly that disobedience to God will seem repugnant for eternity. Who makes possible the final destruction of the Devil and sin?

"Since the children have flesh and blood, he (Christ) too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death that is, the devil and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death." Hebrews 2:14, 15.

At the cross the angels and the unfallen worlds saw Satan for what he was a deceiver, a liar, a murderer. There he revealed his true character by compelling men to murder the innocent Son of God. The inhabitants of the entire universe saw how senseless and cruel sin really is. The cross fully unmasked Satan's motives, and when God destroys the Devil and those who persist in sin, all will acknowledge that God is just.

Jesus' death on the cross exposed Satan's real intent before all created beings (John 12:31, 32). The cross also revealed Christ for what he is the Savior of the world. At Golgotha the power of love stood out in stark contrast against the love of power. The cross established beyond and question that it is self-sacrificing love that motivates God in all his dealings with Satan, sin, and sinful men and women.

At the cross Christ's eloquent demonstration of God's unconditional love decisively defeated the Devil. The battle had been over who should rule the world, Christ or Satan. And the cross settled it for all time. It must be Christ above all!

Have you discovered a relationship with the Savior who died to reveal his matchless, unchanging love? How do you feel about the one who came to our world as a human being and died in your place to save you from the results of sin? Will you bow your head just now and thank Jesus, and then ask him to come in and take possession of your life?

LESSON: FOUR

A PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE

After a minister had spoken on the subject, "Why I believe in Jesus," a well-dressed young man paid him a visit in his study and remarked, "Your talk tonight was interesting, but everything you said about Christ came out of your Bible. Tell me, if Jesus ever lived on this earth, why history doesn't tell about him"

"That's a fair question," the minister answered as he turned and took down several books. "But as a matter of fact, history does tell about Jesus Christ." "That I'd like to see for myself," the young man responded.

"Well here is Letter 97 of Book 10 of Letters of Pliny the Younger, Roman proconsul in Bithynia, a province of old Asia Minor. Pliny wrote to the Roman Emperor, Trajan, telling him about events in his province. See, here he is asking counsel on how he should handle a new sect, the Christians. He tells of their rapid growth and of how they sang hymns composed to their leader, Christ. Pliny sent his letter about A.D. 110. The letter by Pliny offers historical evidence of the man, Christ, and of the spread of his faith in the days of his apostles."

Surprised, the young man said, "Tell me more!" As the minister thumbed through another book, he added, "Another historian, contemporary with Pliny, was Tacitus. In his Annals (Book 15, chapter 44) he tells of Nero's hatred for, and persecution of, the Christians at the time of the burning of Rome. Tacitus explains that the term 'Christian' comes from the name 'Christ.'" He mentions that Jesus Christ, the founder of the Christian religion, had been put to death by Pontius Pilate, Procurator of Judea, during the reign of Emperor Tiberius. All these details that Tacitus gives us match exactly the events, names, and places given in the Bible."

"Pastor, I never knew things like that were in secular history!" the visitor exclaimed. The minister added, "I want you to notice that about A.D 180, Celsus wrote a book attacking Christians, indicating that Christianity by that time had become force to reckon with."

"If you are still in doubt, remember that the four Gospel are just as much history as these secular books." When this young man realized that both sacred and secular history agree that Jesus did live as a man on earth, he went away convinced that Jesus Christ was a real, historical figure.

CHRIST EXISTED FROM ETERNITY

Jesus was not merely a good man, he was also God. What claim did Jesus Himself make concerning his divinity? "If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him. Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." John 14:7-9. (Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptural texts in the DISCOVER guides are from the new international version of the Bible {NIV}.)

If you wish to know the answer to the questions, "Who is God? What is he like?" just look at Jesus, who declared, "I and the Father are one." John 10:30. God the Father and Jesus the Son have existed together from eternity (Hebrews 1:8). There never was a time when Jesus was not one with the Father. The Father shares the same love and care for each person that Jesus demonstrated during his human life on earth.

CHRIST, THE HEART OF HISTORY AND PROPHECY

Since Christ's life story is a fulfillment of prophecy, his life story was written before he was born. Old Testament prophecies present a clear outline of Christ's life, death, and resurrection in advance. The New Testament is his story told in fulfillment.

Living from five hundred to fifteen hundred years before Christ' birth, the Old Testament prophets made scores of very specific predictions about the life of the messiah. And at the very beginning of Christ's earthly ministry, as people compared his life with Old Testament prophecies, what did they conclude?

"We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph."

Our Savior appealed to fulfilled prophecies to establish his identity: "And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the [Old Testament] Scriptures concerning himself." Luke 24:25-27. Fulfilled prophecies give convincing evidence that Jesus is the promised Messiah.

CHRIST'S LIFE OF PROPHECY

Let's look at a few of these prophetic passages from the Old Testament and their fulfillment in the New Testament record.

HIS PLACE OF BIRTH

The Old Testament prophecy: "But you BETHLEHEM out of you shall come forth to me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting." Micah 5:2, NKJV.

The New testament Fulfillment:

"Jesus was born in BETHLEHEM in Judea." Matthew 2:1.

HIS VIRGIN BIRTH

The Old Testament prophecy: "the VIRGIN will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel [God with us]." Isaiah 7:14.

The New Testament Fulfillment: "Joseph Son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus [the LORD saves]." Matthew 1:20-23.

HIS LINEAGE FROM THE TRIBE OF JUDAH

The Old Testament Prophecy:

"THE SCEPTER WILL NOT DEPART FROM JUDAH, until he comes to whom it belongs." Genesis 49:10.

The New Testament Fulfillment:

"For it is clear that our LORD DESCENDED FROM JUDAH." Hebrews 7:14.

HIS REJECTION

The Old Testament Prophecy:

"He was despised and REJECTED by men." Isaiah 53:3.

The New Testament Fulfillment:

"He came to that which was his own, but his OWN DID NOT RECEIVE HIM." John 1:11.

HIS BETRAYAL AND THE FEE PAID HIS TRAITOR

The Old Testament Prophecy:

"Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me." Psalm 41:9.

"I told them, 'if you think it best, give me my pay; but if not, keep it.' So they paid me thirty pieces of silver." Zechariah 11:12.

The New Testament Fulfillment:

"Then one of the Twelve the on called Judas Iscariot went to the chief priests and asked, 'What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?' so they counted out for him THIRTY SILVER COINS." Matthew 26:14,15.

HIS DEATH ON A CROSS

The Old Testament Prophecy:

"They have PIECED MY HANDS and my feet." Psalm 22:16.

The New Testament Fulfillment:

"When they came to the place called the skull, there they crucified him." Luke 23:33. (See also John 20:25.)

HIS RESURRECTION

The Old Testament Prophecy:

"Because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy one sees decay." Psalm 16:10.

The New Testament Fulfillment:

"Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not ABANDONED TO THE GRAVE, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact." Acts 2:31, 32.

The evidence is strong that Jesus didn't just happen to fit a few predictions. His biography was indeed written beforehand by supernatural means. Truly, Jesus is the Son of God. After looking at the evidence, we need to make a prayerful decision about who is going to be lord in our lives. If you have not already done so, will you place your life in Jesus' hands?

A GOD-PLANNED LIFE

Jesus lived a God-planned life, one outlined hundreds of years before his birth. "I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me for I always do what pleases him." John 8:28, 29. God planned the human life of Jesus before his birth, and God also has a plan for every human being. He knows how each of us can fulfill our deepest desires an abundant life.

Ray wasn't always so sure he wanted to submit to God's plan. But when he faced a big decision about where to go to college, he decided for the first time in his life to seek divine guidance on the guidance on the subject. He prayed for several days and tried to listen for some answer. After a while he seemed to get very clear reasons on why he should choose Option B: a less expensive, but huge and impersonal university. Soon after starting classes he got acquainted with some wonderful Christians who belonged to Campus Crusade for Christ. His experience with them during the next two years radically changed his life. When Ray looks back today, he notes that every time he has faced a major decision and sought divine guidance, "God opened up a whole new area of my life." How can you know God's plan for your life? God guides in several ways:

THE BIBLE

According to use psalmist, that is life's Guidebook? "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path." Psalm 119:105. God's word renews our minds and gives us insight (Romans 12:2, Psalm 119:99). A regular time of prayerful study in Scripture is the best way to get out priorities strength.

PROVIDENTIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

God also guides us by divinely-directed circumstances. Psalm 23 Pictures him as the Good shepherd. A shepherd leads his sheep through lush valleys as well as through rocky ravines.

DIRECT COMMUNICATION OF GOD TO THE HEART

God also guides us by speaking to our conscience. The spirit can enlighten "the eyes of your heart" (Ephesians 1:18). The more consistently we practice communicating with God, the more he is able to guide us he molds both inner impressions and our reasoning and judgment so we can clearly the next step we need to take.

THE GUIDES MUST HARMONIZE

It's possible, of course, to assume you are living a God-directed life when you are merely following your own inclinations and impulses (Proverbs 16:25). Our feelings must harmonize with Bible teaching. It's not safe to conclude that God is leading us unless all three of the guides harmonize.

Take Jake, for example. He had a lovely wife and two children, but had an affair with another woman. He told his friends: "I've prayed about it and I feel it's God's will."

Jake's emotions and "inner impressions" clearly sent him down the wrong path. He imagined that it was "providential" that he'd met this other woman and didn't step back to look at the Bible commands against adultery. And the Bible, "the law and the testimony," is the authoritative guidebook, the final judge for determining a right course of action (Isaiah 8:20). We must never allow any impression or apparently provincial circumstance lead us away from a biblical principle.

SUBMITTING TO GOD'S PLAN

When the Devil came to tempt Jesus in the wilderness, he suggested, "If you will only forego the painful sacrifices your Father has planned for you, I'll give you the world in the palm of your hand with fame, fortune, and a comfortable lifestyle." Satan even quoted Scripture in an attempt to lead Jesus astray. But each time Jesus fought him off with the words, "it is written" Matthew 4:1-11).

One powerful lesson we can learn from the life of Jesus is submission to the Father's will. Even amid the terrible agony of Gethsemane, he cried out, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will" (Matthew 26:39). After three years of his ministry, living day by day in harmony with the Father's plan, Christ's dying words were: "it is finished" (John 19:30). Jesus was really saying, "My God-planned life is now complete and fulfilled."

As you begin to hear God's voice speaking coherently through his Word, providential circumstances, and direct impressions, you can learn to accept his guidance wholeheartedly. You too can discover the joy of a God-planned and a God-guided life. Sources for the above historical material and a more detailed history appear in the following books: Documents of the Christian Church, selected and edited by Henry Bettenson (London, Oxford University press); Joseph Cullen Ayer, A source Book for Ancient Church History (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931, 1941); Origen: Contra Celsus, translated by Henry Chadwick (Cambridge: University press, 1965); Bruce, The new Testament Documents: Are they Reliable? 5th edition, revised (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans publishing Company, 1960; and R.T. France, The Evidence for Jesus (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity press, 1986). The last two books come in inexpensive paperback editions and should be available through most religious bookstores. If the first three books are not available in your local library, those in the United States can ask the librarian to order them through inter-library loan.

LESSON: FIVE

Bridge to a Satisfying Life

They found his skeleton beside a makeshift shelter on a desolate island in the mid-Atlantic. The anonymous seaman kept a journal which detailed his four-month ordeal. He'd been set ashore on Ascension Island by the Dutch fleet in 1725 for some unmentioned crime. Soon he was reduced to drinking the blood of turtles just to quench his raging thirst. The man's physical suffering was intense, but an even greater pain stands out in his journal: his overwhelming guilt.

He penned tormented words such as: "what pangs do wretched mortals feel who leave the paths of righteousness, pleased to increase the numbers of the damned."

This seaman's greatest isolation on that lonely island came from his sense of separation from God. That is what proved unbearable in the end.

Human beings have been struggling with that isolation of the heart ever since Adam and Eve "hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden" after eating the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3:8). The strange new emotions of shame, guilt, and fear compelled that couple to run away when God came calling. Those feelings are unfortunately quite familiar to us now.

What is it that causes a separation between us and God? "Your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you." Isaiah 59:2. (Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptural texts in the Discover guides are from the New International version of the Bible [NIV].)

This great gulf that isolates sinful beings from God is not his doing. God didn't run from Adam and Eve; they ran from him.

SATISFYING OUR HIDDEN HUNGER

Before sin spoiled the picture, Adam and Eve enjoyed intimacy with their Creator in a beautiful Garden home in Eden. Tragically, they bought Satan's about becoming as wise as God and broke the bond of trust with their maker (Genesis 3).

After being expelled from the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve found life a lot tougher on the outside. Childbearing and tilling the soil now came with blood, sweat, and tears. Their close bond with God broken, they found themselves vulnerable to unsatisfied desires and painful yearnings- the loneliness of sin.

Since Ada and Eve's first act of rebellion, "all" (the entire human race) have fallen into the same sin pattern and are subject to death, sin's ultimate penalty. "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned." Romans 5:12.

We all experience a great hunger of the heart for that which we've lost, a longing for a kind of security which only God can give. We often try to satisfy that hunger by a shopping binge, or a mad race for promotion at work, or by simply drowning out the hunger with alcohol, drugs, or promiscuity.

But all our yearnings are symptoms of loneliness for God. And there is no cure except experiencing his love in our life.

"You will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand." Psalm 16:11. Real satisfaction will only come when that gap between us and God is bridged and we're able to walk over into his presence.

BRIDGING THE CHASM OF SIN AND DEATH

People are not the only ones made lonely by sin. God's heart ached too on the day Adam and Eve turned their backs on him. And he still grieves over human sorrows and tragedies. God is eager to satisfy our hidden longings and to heal our emotional wounds. He wasn't content just to look sympathetically across the chasm that separates us from him. God decided to become a bridge across the chasm of sin and death.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." John 3:16, 17.

God gave his Son, and Jesus gave his life as a sacrifice for sin, paying the death penalty himself. His life, death, and resurrection made it possible to forgive and save sinners without trivializing sin, and gave the universe a demonstration of the true character of Christ and Satan. The bridge of Christ's broken, bleeding body draws people back from the trap of sin. Love spans the chasm, enabling all who place their faith in Christ as Lord and Savior to walk over into eternal life.

SEVEN ESSENTIAL FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT JESUS

These seven facts about Jesus are not true of any other man who has ever lived:

Jesus Came From Heaven to Earth
How long did Jesus claim to have existed?
"Before Abraham was born, I am!" John 8:58.

Jesus notified the world: "I am!" I have always existed and always will. Though Jesus was born of a human mother (Matthew 1:22, 23), He is God- God in human flesh.

Dwight L. Moody, the Billy Graham of the 19th century, once said of the incarnation of Jesus, "it would have been a great sacrifice for Jesus to come and be rocked in a silver cradle, be nursed by an angel, and be fed with a golden spoon. But the Creator of heaven and earth came and took man's flesh, and was born in a stable of poor parents in the worst possible environment."

An angel told Joseph at the time of Jesus' birth:

"She [Mary] will give birth to a Son and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." Mathew 1:21.

Jesus, the Creator of the universe (John 1:1-3, 14), was willing to come to our world to rescue us from sin and death.

JESUS LIVED A SINLESS LIFE

"Jesus the Son of God, has been tempted in every way, just as we are yet was without sin." Hebrews 4:14, 15.

God did more than try to talk us out of a life of sin and into a more satisfying one. By living here as a Man, Jesus made a life free from sin far more attractive than any sermon ever could.

Satan, Christ's adversary, plotted throughout Jesus' earthly life to seduce Him into sin. In the wilderness the Devil unleashed his fiercest assault against his integrity (Matthew 4:1-11). In Gethsemane before his crucifixion, the pressure of temptation reached such intensity, Jesus sweat drops of blood (Luke 22:44).

But Christ stood firm against everything the Devil threw at him" yet without sin." Because Jesus experienced the full range of human problems and temptations, he understands our struggles. He is able "to sympathize with our weaknesses" (Hebrews 4:15).

Why was it necessary for Jesus to live to live a sinless life?

"God made Jesus, who was sinless, to be sin for us; and in place of our sinful life Jesus gives us his sinless life that we might be made sinless in him." 2nd Corinthians 5:21, paraphrased.

Jesus overcame temptation and lived a sinless life so he could pass it on to us in exchange for old life of sin.

"The wages of sin is Death; but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 6:23. Why did Jesus die? "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

All of us have sinned and are subject to eternal death, but Jesus died in our place. He became "sin for us." He paid the death penalty for us. His dying is a gift, and "the Gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" Romans 6:23).

Jesus laid down his perfect, righteous life as a gift of love to us. Love like that is almost beyond human comprehension. And because of his death "we have peace with God" (Romans 5:1).

Jesus Arose From the Dead

Jesus' death on the cross wasn't the end of his remarkable story. He couldn't very well remain dead and be our Savior "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is future; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost." 1st Corinthians 15:17, 18.

Mohammed and Buddha have presented to the world some great

philosophical truths. They have inspired the lives of millions of people, but they have no supernatural power to give life since they still remain in their graves. Because Jesus rose from the tomb the third day after his death, what promise is he able to make to us?

“Because I live, you also will live.” John 14:19. Jesus is alive! Because he has the power over death, he can deliver us from death and offer us life that is both abundant and eternal. He will live in our hearts if we invite him in. the risen Christ is present to meet our needs today.

“Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28:20. Men and women all over the world are sharing stories of how Christ has delivered them from the worst addictions and the deepest emotional traumas.

One of our former students wrote these words of gratitude on one of his answer sheets: “I was an alcoholic. One day while drunk, I saw a card in the gutter advertising your Bible course. I picked it up, filled it out, and received my first true knowledge of Christ. Shortly after taking the Bible course, I offered my heart to God and lost the taste of whiskey.”

When Jesus took possession of this man’s life, a new power gave him the ability to overcome his addiction. Because Christ is the risen Savior, he can save all who will come to him for help.

Jesus Ascended to heaven

Before Jesus returned to the Father after his resurrection (Acts 1:9), He made this promise to his followers:

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; I am going there to prepare a place for you. And I will come back and take you to be with me where I am.” John 14:1-3.

Jesus Ministers as Heavenly priest

Jesus constantly seeks to prepare us for a place in heaven. “He had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted he is able to help those who are being tempted.” Hebrews 2:17-18.

Jesus came into our world to “make atonement for the sins of the people,” and rescue us from the misery of enslavement to sin. He died to save us so he can ultimately eradicate the cause of sin, suffering, and death by destroying the Devil.

Jesus as our high Priest was “made like his brothers in every way.” And he now appears continually in the Father’s presence on our on our behalf as our Mediator.

The same Jesus who blessed the children, rehabilitated the woman caught in adultery, and forgave the dying thief on the cross, is working in heaven right now to minister to our needs, “to help those who are being tempted.”

Jesus will return

Before returning to heaven, what promise did Jesus make?

“If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me I am.” John 14:3.

When Jesus returns, he will deliver us from the sin, sickness, tragedy, and death that plague this planet. And he will welcome us into a new world of eternal happiness and immortal life.

UNFAILING LOVE

The story is told of an arranged marriage in Taiwan between U Long and a young woman named "Golden Flower." When U Long lifted the veil from his bride after the ceremony, he was shocked and disgusted. Her face had been scarred by smallpox.

After that, U Long had as little to do with his wife as possible. She tried her best to make him happy; she worked hard at home, hoping her husband would eventually accept her. But he remained coldly indifferent to all her expressions of affection.

After twelve years of this sham marriage, U Long began to lose vision in both eyes. A doctor told him he would go completely blind if he didn't have a cornea transplant. But the operation was expensive and there was a long waiting list.

Golden Flower began to work long hours in the evening making straw hats for extra money. One day, U Long was informed that someone's cornea had been made available after an accident. He rushed to the hospital to have the operation.

After he had recovered, he grudgingly decided to see his wife so he could thank her for raising the money. When he turned her bowed head so she could look at him, U Long gasped. She stared at him with sightless, blank eyes, the cornea gone. Overcome with emotion, he sank at her feet and sobbed. And then for the first time he whispered her name: Golden Flower.

Jesus longer for a relationship with those who've been indifferent to him for so long. He longs for us to finally whisper his name as our Savior. He was willing to sacrifice not only his eyes but his whole body in order to demonstrate his unfailing love. His love is so powerful that Christ "came into the world to save sinners" (1st Timothy 1:15).

Christ's great sacrifice has created a bridge that spans our indifference that covers our alienation. Have you personally discovered that he wants to draw you over the chasm and into his arms? Will you respond and pray, "Jesus, I love you. Thank you for your incredible sacrifice."

JESUS CHRIST

CAME as God in human flesh.

LIVED a sinless life in our place.

DIED for our sins.

AROSE to deliver us from death.

ASCENDED to prepare a home for us in heaven.

MINISTERS each day as our high priest.

IS COMING SOON to take us to be with him forever.

Come into my heart and save me now save me wholly, save me completely, save me eternally?"

LESSON: SIX **A SECOND CHANCE AT LIFE**

After living most of his life as a Buddhist, an elderly man in Singapore who had become a Christian was asked, "Mr. Lim, what difference do you find between being a Buddhist and being a Christian?"

“That’s easy,” he answered. “Since I’ve found Jesus and my Savior, I have such a peace in my heart.” That’s what happens when we center our lives on Christ.

““You [God] will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.” Isaiah 26:3 NKJV. (Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptural texts in the Discover guides are from the New International Version of the Bible [NIV].)

Living the Christian life results in perfect peace a perfect sense of security and well-being. Those who have made this discovery have found those who have made this discovery have found the only way a second chance life Jesus!

WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE LOST TO BE SAVED

It’s possible for a physically alive person to be having what some call a good time, and still be dead that is, spiritually dead.

“you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the [EVIL] spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.” Ephesians 2:1, 2.

Satan leads a spiritually dead person down a descending spiral of sin and disobedience. But the wonderful truth of the gospel is that God loves such doomed people. He loves them while they are dead in their sins, and offers them a full and free deliverance from their predicament.

“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions [to] show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.” Ephesians 2:4-7.

God loved us when we had nothing lovable about us. His grace created in us a new life in Christ. We can’t ourselves, but God can. When we come to him in faith and submission, he gives us a second chance at life as a free gift.

FROM WHAT DO WE NEED TO BE SAVED?

We need to be saved from sin.” All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Romans 3: 23.

To put it bluntly: we don’t live up to what we know is right. A parent under stress may blow up and wound a child emotionally. A person may become increased at another driver and almost cause an accident. A student may grow resentful and whisper unkind things about another student. A businessman may plan to “forget” about a certain source of income at tax time. “All have sinned”; that’s the human condition.

How does the- Bible define sin?

“Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.” 1st John 3:4. So we need to be saved from sin breaking God’s commandments.

We need to be saved from a broken relationship with God. "Your iniquities have separated you from your God; you sins have hidden his face from you." Isaiah 59:2.

Unforgiving sin cuts off our relationship with God. Christ came to restore trust in God, which Satan had undermined.

We need to be saved from eternal death sin's penalty. "Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned." Romans 5:12.

**We need to be saved from a sinful, unhappy, empty life.
For the sinner, life is a dead-end street.
We need to be saved from a sinful world.
We must be rescued from a world full of sin and its result misery,
heartache, loneliness, war, sickness and death!**

WHO CAN SAVE US?

**Only Jesus can save us.
Jesus can deliver us from sin. "You are to give him the name Jesus,
because he will save his people from their sins." Matthew 1:21.**

A Hindu told a Christian friend, "I find many things in Hinduism not found in Christianity, but there is one thing Christianity is the only world religion offering people a savior.

Jesus can save us from our broken relationship with God. "You were separate from Christ without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ." Ephesians 2:12, 13.

Jesus is the perfect friends to enjoy a relationship with. He loves to bring out the best in us. "Through the blood of Christ" our past life of sin is forgiven, and day-by-day he gives us his acceptance, power over sin, and his perfect life. We know He'll be there to pick us up every time we fall. Our love for him in turn produces a desire to live a way that pleases him.

Jesus can save us from eternal death, sin's penalty. "For the wages of sin is [eternal] death; but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 6:23.

We are lawbreakers sentenced to die. The penalty for sin death. Jesus saves us from eternal death and gives us eternal life.

"God demonstrates his own love for us, in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8.

Because of his unfailing love, Jesus "died for us." And because he died for us and suffered the full results of sin, God can now forgive and accept sinners without trivializing sin.

Jesus can save us from a sinful, unhappy life. "For if a man is Christ he becomes a new person altogether the past is finished and gone, everything has become fresh and new." 2nd Corinthians 5:17, Philips.

We can't save ourselves from sin or change our nature on our nature on our own any more than a lion can decide to become a lamb (Romans 7:18). Sin is simply stronger than our willpower. But Christ is able to "strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being" (Ephesians 3:16). He work to replace our destructive habits with his healthy qualities: love, peace, joy, kindness, self-control (Galatians 5:22, 23). Christ lives his life through us, and we receive spiritual healing, restoration, and a new life.

Harold Hughes had given up hope of ever changing. He'd tried desperately to stop drinking many times. He knew only too well that his battle with the bottle had put his wife and two daughters through ten years of hell. And so he stepped into his bathtub one cold morning and pointed a shotgun muzzle into his mouth. Before pulling the trigger, he decided he'd better explain things to God. That prayer turned into a long, sobbing appeal for help.

And God came through. Harold Hughes made a commitment to Christ and found the spiritual strength to persevere. He quit drinking for good, became a loving, dependable husband and father, and went on to earn a seat in the U.S. senate. Harold Hughes discovered the greatest transforming power in our world Jesus!

**Jesus can save us from a sinful world.
The next four DISCOVER guides will explain how.**

WE ARE SAVED BY TAKING THRE SIMPLE STEPS

Ask Christ to deal with the sin in your life.

What is our part in getting rid of our sinful life? "Repent, then and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out." Acts 3:19.

What leads a person to repent?

"God's kindness leads you toward repentance." Romans 2:4. "Your sorrow led you to repentance." 2nd Corinthians 7:9.

Repentance is simply being sorry for our past life of sin, and then turning away from our sins, making a break with the old habits, practices, and attitudes. It's not sorrow just because we fear punishment, but a response to "God's kindness" that led Jesus to dies in our place for our sinfulness. We reject sin because it hurts God.

When we experience a new life in Christ, we should so far as possible make past wrong right (right (Ezekiel 33:14-16).

What is God's part in getting rid of our old life of sin?

Both repentance and being forgiven are a gift to us from God.

"God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and SAVIOR that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins." Acts 5:31.

And when we repent, a loving savior forgives our sins, cleanses us from sin, and throws them into the depths of the sea.

“if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” 1st John 1:9. (See also Micah 7:18, 19.)

There is no sin so terrible that the Savior who died for our sins on Calvary’s cross can’t forgive. A person who trusts in Jesus need only ask him for his pardon. Christ’s dying for us can’t pardon us our sins helped drive those nails through Christ’s hands and feet. And yet Jesus is more eager than we can imagine for us to accept his gift of pardon and reconciliation.

Word reached a young man who’d run away from home that his mother was dying. The news filled him with remorse over their broken relationship. Hurrying home, he rushed into the room and threw himself on his mother’s bed. In a flood of tears he begged her to forgive him.

She drew him close and whispered, “Son, I would have forgiven you long ago if you’d only asked.” If you have drifted away from God or have not yet come to know him please think about how eager your loving heavenly Father is to welcome you home. He wants more than anything else for you to accept his offer of pardon. Jesus loves you. He died for you. He is always willing to forgive you. So respond to his gracious invitation to repent. Confess your sins. Simply believe that God forgives you, and he does.

**Trust him! Trust his promises.
RECEIVE A NEW LIFE FROM JESUS.**

Your part in receiving a new life from Jesus is to believe that Jesus has really saved you. Accept without question the fact that he has forgiven and cleansed you, taken away your old life of sin, and given you an entirely new and changed life.

“All who believed in his name, he gave the right [power, authority, privilege] to become children of God.” John 1:12.

As a child of God, you have “the right” to receive a new life from Jesus. As we have said, you can’t achieve it on your own it’s a gift from your heavenly Father! Jesus gives such an absolute promise in order to remove our insecurities and doubts.

What is God’s part in giving us a new life?

“Jesus declared, ‘I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born.’” John 3:3. According to Jesus, a believing, repentant sinner is actually born into a new life. It is a miracle that only God can perform. He promises:

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.” Ezekiel 36:26.

Jesus transforms our heart our feelings and behavior and dwells “in us” (Colossians 1:27). This new life is not just a nice, spiritual idea; it’s a hard, solid fact, a resurrection from spiritual death to an entirely new life and existence.

LIVE FOR JESUS EVERY DAY.

The Christian life involves a daily turning away from selfishness, and bonding with Jesus as our loving Friend. We grow in this new life by strengthening our relationship Jesus. This means spending quality time with him, building honest and open communication. God has given us five divine aids for spiritual growth: Bible study, prayer, meditation, fellowship with other Christians, and sharing our experience with others.

Living in Christ doesn't mean we never make mistakes. But when we stumble and sin, we claim Christ's forgiveness, and keep going. We're headed in a certain direction, and we know Christ remains a living presence in our hearts.

THE JOY OF THE SECOND CHANCE

Harold Hughes received many honors during his distinguished career as a U.S. senator, but the one that meant the most to him came shortly after his commitment to Christ.

Harold was studying the Bible alone in his living room one evening when he felt a nudge at his elbow. He looked up. It was his two small daughters, standing quietly in their nightgowns. He stared at them for a moment; they had changed so much, and he had missed so much during his devastating battle with the bottle.

Then Carol, the younger said, "Daddy, we've come to kiss you good-night." The father's eyes blurred. It had been so long since the children had come for his embrace. Now their beautiful clear eyes held no fear. Daddy had come home at last.

Jesus does truly give people a second chance. He takes the most hopeless cases and creates new beginnings.

The savior longs for each one of us to come home at last. Have you accepted Christ loves invitation? Receiving God's forgiveness and cleansing is as simple and profound as opening your arms for a child's embrace.

If you have not yet trusted in Christ as your personal Savior, you can do so right now by praying something like this: "Father, I am sorry for my old life of sin. Thank you for sending your Son to this world to die in my place. Jesus, please forgive my sins and come into my life and save me. I want a second chance at life I want to be born again. Even more, I want to establish a day-by-day relationship with you. Thank you for performing this miracle in me. In Jesus name, Amen."

Make this wonderful discovery: when we do the coming, Jesus does the saving.

HOW WE RECEIVE A NEW LIFE FROM CHRIST

We believe in him and receive him as Savior and Lord.

We establish a relationship with him. (A regular time of prayer and Bible reading is vital.)

Christ works through his Spirit to replace our bad habits with his good qualities.

LESSON: SEVEN

ABOUT YOU'RE FUTURE

Doctors Patricia and David Mazak saw a great deal of heartbreak in their work. As pediatric specialists they dealt with many suffering children. But they were struck by the fact that some kids bounced back from disaster while others were crushed by it. Why? Why, for example, does one child go to drugs, while another goes to college? Why do some abused children grow up to become abusers themselves, while others become good parents?

The Mazaks conducted an extensive survey to find answers to these questions. In their study, one overriding trait kept popping up among those kids who survived trauma and went on to build healthy lives. The secret? "Basic life view of optimism and hope."

Hope made the difference. Hope, more than anything else, helps us beat the odds when they're stacked against us.

Human beings desperately need hope. But how do we get it? Hope is hard to find in our world UNTIL we look at it from the perspective of Bible prophecy. This DISCOVER guide examines a remarkable prophecy that has inspired countless individuals with a vibrant hope.

AN AMAZING BIBLE PROPHECY

About five hundred years before the birth of Christ, God gave the world a startling glimpse into the future through the prophet Daniel. God presented an outline of world history in advance for 2,500 years, from Daniel's time to our own day.

This prophecy originated in a dream God gave Nebuchadnezzar, some 2,500 years ago. The dream deeply shouldn't remember the dream when he woke up! After all of Babylon's wise men failed to help the king recall his dream or interpret it, a young Hebrew exile named Daniels arrived on the scene, claiming that the God of heaven could reveal all mysteries. Standing before the king, Daniel boldly declared:

"You looked, o king, and there before stood a large stature an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. "The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and clay and smashed them. "Then the iron, the, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth." Daniel 2:31-35. (Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptural texts in the DISCOVER guides are from the New International Version of the Bible [NIV].)

This statue, at first glance, may seem to have little to do with finding hope in contemporary times, but hold on.

THE PROPHECY INTERPRETED

After telling a very impressed Nebuchadnezzar exactly what he'd seen in his vision, the prophet Daniel explained:

"This was the dream, and now we will interpret it to the king." Daniel 2:36.

THE HEAD OF GOLD:

What world power did Daniel tell the king the head of gold symbolized?

"You, O king, are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory. You are that head of Gold." Verses 37, 38.

Daniel was saying to the ruler of that world's greatest empire: "Nebuchadnezzar, God is telling you that your empire, Babylon, is represented by the that your empire, Babylon, is represented by the statue's golden head." The chest and arms of silver: from a human perspective Babylon looked like an empire that would last forever. But what does the prophecy say would happen next? "After you, another kingdom will rise, inferior to yours." Verse 39.

In fulfillment of God's prediction, Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom crumbled into ruins when Cyrus, the Persian general, overthrew the Babylonian empire in 539 B.C. So the chest and arms of silver represent Medo-Persia, another mighty empire.

THE BELLY AND THIGHS OF BRONZE:

At does this part of the great metal image represent?

"Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth." Verse 39.

The belly and thighs of bronze of the image symbolize the kingdom of Greece. Alexander the Great conquered the Medes and the Persians, he ruled from 331 to 168 B.C.

THE LEGS OF IRON:

"Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom [said the prophet], strong as iron for iron breaks and smashes everything and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others." Verse 40.

After the death of Alexander, his empire weakened and split into rival factions until finally in 168 B.C., at the battle of Pinna, the "Iron Empire" of Rome crushed Greece.

Caesar Augustus ruled the Roman Empire when Jesus was born about two thousand years ago (Luke 2:1). Christ and his apostles lived during the period represented by the legs of iron. Gibbon, the eighteenth-century historian, no doubt had Daniel's prophecy in mind when he wrote: "The images of gold, or silver, or brass, that might serve to represent the nations and their kings, were successively broken by the iron monarchy of Rome." Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (John D. Morris and Company).

Think for a moment about this prediction from a human point of view. How could Daniel, living in the time of Babylon, have any idea of how many empires would succeed each other hundreds of years in the future? We have a hard time figuring out what the stock market is going to do next week!

And yet Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome followed each other exactly as predicted- like obedient schoolboys in a line. Is God in control of the future? Can we have hope on the basis of his grand plan? The answer is a resounding, yes!

THE FEET AND TOES OF IRON MIXED WITH CLAY:

Would a fifth world power follow Rome?

"Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. As the toes were iron and partly clay, so partly, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle." Daniel 2:41, 42.

The prophet predicted not a fifth World Empire, but a division of the iron monarchy of Rome. Rome would fracture into ten kingdoms, as symbolized by the feet and into ten kingdoms, as symbolized by the feet and toes of the image.

Did this actually happen? It certainly did. During the fourth and fifth centuries of the Christian Era barbaric invaders from the north poured down on the decaying Roman Empire, delivering blow after blow. Finally ten of the tribes gained most of the territory of Western Rome, and ten distinct, independent nations established themselves within the boundaries of Europe. Thus the toes symbolize the modern nations of Europe today.

TEN TOES- TEN MAJOR TRIBES IN THE WESTERN ROMAN EMPIRE

| | |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|
| Anglo-Saxons | {England} |
| Franks | {France} |
| Alamanni | {Germany} |
| Lombards | {Italy} |
| Ostrogoths | {Later destroyed} |
| Visigoths | {Spain} |
| Burgundians | {Switzerland} |
| Vandals | {North Africa, later destroyed} |
| Suevi | {Portugal} |
| Heruli | {Disappeared after a few centuries} |

OUR DAY IN BIBLE PROPHECY

Does Daniel's prophecy predict that efforts would be made to unite these nations of Europe under one ruler?

"and just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay."

Daniel 2:43.

Over and powerful men have tried to unite Europe, but they fall short of the goal every time. Napoleon came nearer than any other man to uniting a divided Europe, but probably thinking of this prophecy, as he fled defeated from the battered of Waterloo, he cried, "God Almighty is too much for me! Kaiser Wilhelm II and Adolf Hitler created the most powerful armed forces of their day. But each failed to unite Europe under their rule. Why? Because God's word was at stake: "The people will be a mixture and will not remain united."

The outcome of two world wars confirm that God holds the future in his hands; he is ultimately in control. That's certainly enough to give us hope, peace of mind, and confidence in his plan for lives.

A LOOK INTO THE FUTURE

Only one part of Daniel's prophecy remains unfulfilled. What is the meaning of the stone that strikes the statue on the feet, grinds it to powder, and becomes a great mountain which fills the whole earth?

"In the time of those kings [the modern nations of Europe], the God of heaven will not set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another; it will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it itself will endure forever." Daniel. 2:44.

"Those kings" could refer only to the kings symbolized by the feet and toes of the statue the rulers of modern Europe, pointing to our day. The stone that is cut out without human hands is to strike the statue and break it into pieces, and will then fill the whole earth (verses 34, 35, 45). Soon Jesus will descend from heaven to "set up a kingdom," his kingdom of happiness and peace. The Christ, the Rock of Ages and the king of kings, will rule the world forever!

Everything in the prediction of Daniel 2 has come to pass except the final fact the striking of the statue by the stone. According to God's timetable, we are now approaching the grand climax, Christ's return to our world. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is about to end the long, bloody struggle of human history and establish his eternal kingdom of love and grace.

THE KING'S DREAM AND YOU

This prophecy reveals the guiding hand of God in the rise and fall of nations. God knows the past, and this Bible prophecy clearly shows that he knows the future as well. If God directs the movements of nations with such precision, surely he can guide each individual's life. Jesus assured us: "Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid" (Matthew 10:30-31). God's gift of faith can become the antidote to all our worries and fears. The hope he inspires can serve as an anchor for our souls (Hebrews 6:19). The sixteenth-century scholar Erasmus related an incident during a sea voyage that stayed with him the rest of his life. His sailing vessel ran aground in a storm. As violent waves smashed against the ship and it began to break up, even the sailors panicked. The passengers were near hysteria. Most shouted for help to their patron saint, sang hymns, or pleaded loudly in prayer.

Erasmus noted one passenger, however, who wrote, "The one who remained most composed was a young woman who was holding a baby whom not shout, weep, or bargain with heaven. She did nothing but pray quietly to herself while clasping the baby tightly on her lap."

This prayer, Erasmus realized, was just a continuation of her regular prayer life. She seemed to entrust herself to God.

As the ship began to sink, this young mother was placed on a plank, given a spar to use as an oar, and sent out into the waves. She had to hold her baby with one hand attempt to row with the other. Few thought she would survive the pounding surf.

But her faith and composure stood her in good stead. The woman and her child were the first to reach shore. Hope in a trustworthy God can make all the difference even when our world seems to be breaking up around us.

We're not out there paddling on our own. A greater hand is guiding us and holding us up. If you will come to Christ in full surrender, he will give you a faith that will see you through every storm. Discover the supernatural peace that Jesus promises:

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." John 14:27.

Do you have that peace? If you do, thank Jesus, you're Savior. If you don't, why not invite him into your life today?

LESSON: EIGHT

WHEN JESUS COMES FOR YOU

After years of mistreatment, Armando validates was an emaciated, crippled shadow of his former self. He was serving a 30-year sentence in one of Castro's prisons for praying in a church on Christmas Day. Prison officials starved, tortured, and humiliated the man, but he refused to give up his faith.

Something kept him going: a promise he'd made to a young woman named Martha. They had met and fallen in love while he was in prison. She was deeply attracted to his passionate faith. Shortly after the couple married in a civil ceremony in the prison courtyard, Martha was forced to immigrate to Miami.

Their separation was very painful. But Armando managed to smuggle out a promise to his beloved. On a tiny piece of discarded paper he scribbled his pledge: "I will come to you. The bayonets in the horizon beyond my back will no longer matter."

This prisoner determined that somehow he and Martha would make their vows in a church before God. Someday their union would be complete. "You are always with me," he told her. Armando's promise kept him going through years of mistreatment that would have destroyed the spirit of most men. And it kept Martha going. She worked tirelessly to bring public attention to her husband's plight. She never gave up hope.

THE PROMISE

At times we may be tempted to wonder, will Christ really descend someday from this blue sky above us for a wonderful reunion? We've been separated for so long. Such a happy ending to the earth's long, tragic history may appear just too good to be true. But there's one thing that can keep hope alive in our hearts. And that's simply Jesus' promise to return. Just before departing from his disciples into heaven, Jesus made this pledge:

"Do not let your heart troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am." John 14:1-3. (Unless otherwise noted, all scriptural texts in the DISCOVER guides are from the new international version of the Bible [NIV]."

Before Jesus ascended to heaven, he assured his followers, "I will come back!" he promised to return and take all who trust in him to the special place he has prepared for us. Scripture speaks of his second coming approximately 2,500 times. The fact that Jesus is coming to the world a second time is as certain as the reality that he lived on this on this earth two thousand years ago.

Long ago God promised that a messiah would come, a deliver who would take on himself our iniquities and provide pardon for human sin. That promise seemed too good to be true to many in the ancient world who were slogging through their lives. But Jesus did come and died on the cross. The promise came true more gloriously than people imagined possible. His promise to return will also come true. We can rely on the one who loves us, to return and gather up those for whom he has paid an infinite price.

Throughout his imprisonment, Armando continued to smuggle poems, messages, and drawings to Martha. And she managed to publish some of these writings. Their eloquence attracted world attention. Governments began pressuring Castro to release prisoners of conscience. The French president intervened and at last in October of 1982 Armando was placed on a plane headed for Paris. He hardly dared believe he was the free even after the plane touched down. But then, after two decades of suffering and longing and waiting, Armando rushed into Martha's arms.

A few months later the happy couple stood in Miami's St. Kieran church and repeated their vows. At last their union was complete. The promise was fulfilled: "I will come to you."

Can you imagine what a wonderful reunion it will be when finally we are able to see Christ face-to-face? His glorious appear will swallow up all our sorrows and frustrations, wipe away all the pain that we've kept hidden in our hearts. Jesus' return will fulfill our deepest longings and most exciting expectations. And we'll embark on an eternity of intimate union with the most wonderful personality in the Universe.

Jesus is coming soon! Are you eager to meet him?

HOW WILL JESUS COME?

Will Jesus come in secret? "See, I [Jesus] have told you ahead of time. So if anyone tells you, "There he is, out in the desert," do not go out; or, "Here he is, in the inner rooms," do not believe it. For as listing that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the son of man." Matthew 24:25-27.

Lightning flashes out very visibly for great distances, so the coming of Jesus will not be some secret or subjective event.

WILL JESUS COME AGAIN AS A REAL PERSON?

"They [Jesus' followers] were looking intently up into the sky as he [Jesus] was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 'Men of Galilee,' they said, 'why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.'" Acts 1:10-11.

On the day of his departure from our world the angels assured the disciples that the "same Jesus" taken up into heaven not someone else would come back in person as king of kings. The same Jesus who healed the sick and opened blind eyes. The same Jesus who spoke gently to the woman taken in adultery. The same Jesus who wiped away mourner's tears and welcomed children into his lap. The same Jesus who died on Calvary's cross, rested in the grave, and resurrected from the dead on the third day.

WILL JESUS COME SO WE CAN SEE HIM?

"Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him." Revelation 1:7 (first part).

All who are alive when Jesus comes again, both the righteous and the wicked, will witness his return. How many did Jesus himself say would view his return?

"At that time the son of man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory." Matthew 24:30. Every living person on our globe will see Jesus return.

Who will accompany Jesus when he comes?

"When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory." Matthew 25:31.

Imagine what it will be like when Jesus returns in his entire splendor surrounded by "all the angels."

Can we predict the exact time of Jesus' return?

"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him." Matthew 24:36, 44. Everyone will see Jesus' glorious arrival, but many will be unprepared for it. Are you personally ready for Jesus to come?

WHAT WILL JESUS DO WHEN HE COMES AGAIN?

Jesus will gather all the saved (the elect).

"And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other." Matthew 24:31.

If you have allowed Jesus to prepare you in heart and life, you will greet him joyfully as your Savior.

Jesus will awaken the righteous dead.

"For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first." 1st Thessalonians 4:16.

Jesus descends from heaven with a shout. His mighty voice is heard around the world. It breaks open graves in every cemetery and resurrects millions of people who have accepted Jesus through the ages. What an exhilarating day that will be!

Jesus will transform all the righteous at his coming not only the righteous dead, but also the righteous living.

"After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever."

Verse 17. To prepare us for eternity, Christ changes our mortal bodies that are subject to death into beautiful immortal bodies.

"Listen, I tell you a mystery: we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality." 1st Corinthians 15:51-53.

When Jesus comes "we will all be changed." Just think: no more arthritis, paralysis, or cancer. Shut down hospitals and closed-up funeral homes. Christ has come!

Jesus will take all the righteous people to heaven.

Jesus himself made the promise, "I will come back and take you to be with me" in my Father's house (see John 14:1-3). Peter speaks of the inheritance of the redeemed "kept in heaven for you" (1st Peter 1:4). We can look forward to exploring the marvels of God's city. The new Jerusalem, and getting to know our heavenly Father.

Jesus will eliminate evil and suffering for all time.

The wicked those who have persistently rejected all of Jesus' offers of mercy actually pass sentence on themselves. As they stare at Jesus' face coming toward them from the clouds, a sudden awareness of their sin proves too painful to bear; they cry to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!" (Revelation 6:16). They prefer death to standing before Jesus' all-seeing gaze.

They know that the voice now thundering from the sky once tenderly imported them to accept divine grace. Those who lost themselves in the mad rush after money or pleasure or position now realize they've neglected the only really worthwhile thing in life.

It is a crushing revelation. After all, not one of them needed to be lost. God Himself finds "no pleasure in the death of wicked" (Ezekiel 33:11). He is "not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2nd Peter 3:9). Jesus implores us, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). But, incredibly, some turn aside his gracious invitation.

ARE YOU READY FOR JESUS TO COME?

It cost Jesus a great deal to guarantee us a glorious future with him "in my Father's house." It cost him his life!

"Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him." Hebrews 9:28.

The Savior who died on the cross to take away your sins will appear "a second time," and he will "bring salvation to those who are waiting for him." Christ sacrificed himself in order to offer salvation to each of us. But without the second Coming, the cross would be a failure. Christ wants to give us an eternally secure home with him. In order for that to happen, we must allow him to rule in our hearts as Savior and Lord right now.

On the morning of August 16, 1945 a small boy ran through the shantung Compound in North China shouting that he'd spotted a plane in the sky. All the able-bodied internees ran outside and looked up. These men and women had suffered through years of isolation, deprivation, and anxiety, imprisoned by the Japanese as citizens of enemy nations. For many only one thing had kept them spiritually alive: the hope that someday the war would end.

An electric current shot through that crowd of 1500 serving internees as they realized this plane might be coming for them. As the hum of the aircraft grew louder, someone yelled, "Look, there's the AMERICAN FLAG painted on the side!" And then then in an unbelieving daze, voices out, "Look, they're waving at us! They know who we are. They're coming to get us."

At this point the excitement was more than these ragged, weary, homesick survivors could contain. Pandemonium broke loose. People were running in circles, shouting at the top of their lungs, waving their arms and weeping.

Suddenly the crowd gasped and stared in silence. The underside of the plane suddenly opened and men began floating down in parachutes. Their rescuers weren't just coming someday; they were coming today, now to be in their midst!

This crowd surged toward the compound gate. No one paused to think of the machine guns pointed down from towers. After years of frustration and loneliness, they broke through the gate and rushed to where the paratroopers were landing.

Soon our God, our savior, will descend from the clouds to rescue us. The long horror story of man's cruelty to man will finally cease. There will be jubilation on that day, shouts of joy as we finally understand: "He's coming close; I can see the angels blowing their trumpets." The sound gets louder, the cloud of glory brighter, until we can hardly endure it. But we can't stop looking as we realize: "He sees me. He knows who I am." We'll know with indescribable joy: "This is my God. He's coming for me, not someday, but today, right now."

Are you ready to welcome the king in all his glory? If not, please invite Jesus personally into your life just now. Even as the coming of Jesus to our world will solve the world's problems, so his coming into your heart will help you deal with your present daily problems. The great Problem solver can deliver you from the guilt and burden of sin and give you eternal life.

The coming of Jesus into a life can forever change it as dramatically as the coming of Jesus to our world will transform it. You can depend on Jesus. He will prepare you for his coming and give you the wonderful assurance of a life of eternal happiness.

LESSON: NINE

YOUR HOME IN HEAVEN

When Marco polo returned to his hometown of Venice after many years in the Orient, his friends thought his long journeys had driven him mad. He had such incredible tales to tell. Marco had travelled to city full of silver and gold. He'd seen black stones that burned, but no one had ever heard of coal. He'd seen a cloth that refused to catch fire even when thrown into the flames, but no one had ever heard of asbestos.

He talked of huge serpent's ten paces long with jaws wide enough to swallow a man, nuts the size of a man's head and white as milk inside, and a substance spurting from the ground that actually set lamps alight. But no one had ever seen crocodiles, coconuts, or crude oil. They just laughed at such stories. Years later, when Marco lay dying, a devout man at his bedside urged him to recant all the tall tales he'd told. But Marco refused: "It's all true every bit of it. In fact, I have not told half of what I saw."

The Bible writers who give us glimpses of heaven seem to echo Marco Polo's sentiment. In vision they looked on a place so brilliant, so fantastic, that they could describe only a fraction of what they saw. And we face a challenge similar to that of Marco Polo's friends. We must try to imagine the "crocodiles and coconuts" that we've never seen, because the glimpses we do get in the Bible show us that heaven is much more than sitting on clouds and playing on harps.

IS HEAVEN A REAL PLACE?

Jesus is preparing a very real place for us right now in a very real heaven. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me {Jesus}. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:1-3, KJV. (Unless otherwise noted, all scriptural

texts in the Discover guides are from the new international version of the Bible [NIV].)

Jesus is coming to our world a second time to take us to a custom-made mansion in a heavenly city that is glorious beyond our wildest dreams: the New Jerusalem.

After we're lived there for a thousand years, Christ intends to bring his heavenly home descends, fire will purify the entire world. Our renewed planet then becomes the permanent home of the saved. (Revelation 20:7-15. More about this in Guide 22) what does John, who wrote Revelation, picture next?

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.'" Revelation 21:1-3.

After its transformation by fire, who does Jesus promise will occupy the new earth?

"Blessed are the meek: for they will inherit the earth." Matthew 5:5. (See also Revelation 21:7.)

Christ promises to restore his once perfect world to its original Endemic beauty, and the meek "will inherit the earth.

WILL WE HAVE REAL BODIES IN HEAVEN?

When Jesus appeared to his disciples in his resurrected and glorified body, how did he describe it?

"Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself. Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." Luke 24:39.

Jesus had a real body; he invited Thomas to touch him (John 20:27). On this occasion Jesus walked into real house, talked to real people, and ate real food (Luke 24:43).

Heaven isn't inhabited by ghosts, but by real people who enjoy a spiritual life, and who have a "glorious body"

"But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body." Philippians 3:20, 21.

We can assure that our heavenly bodies will be as solid real as Christ's resurrected body will we recognize our family and friends in heaven?

"Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known." 1st Corinthians 13:12.

In heaven we "shall know fully." We'll understand and appreciate one another more deeply than we ever have in this present world.

Jesus' disciples recognized him in his heavenly body, apparently because of his familiar features (Luke 24:34-43). Mary knew him at the tomb because of the familiar sound of his voice when he called her by name (John 20:14-16). The two disciples at Emmaus indemnified him because of certain familiar gestures. When they noticed the way their guest blessed the food, they recognized him as the Lord by his manner {Luke 24:13-35}.

The redeemed are certain to experience thrilling "face-to-face" reunions in heaven. Imagine the joy of recognizing your spouse' special smile or the familiar call of a child you laid to rest long ago, or the endearing gestures of some beloved friend. We'll have an eternity to deepen life's most precious bonds and to develop intimate friendships with the most fascinating personalities in the universe.

WHAT WILL WE DO IN HEAVEN?

We'll have plenty of activities to challenge us in heaven. How about designing your own dream house?

How about designing your own dream house? "Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people. They will build houses and well in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. My chosen ones will long enjoy the works of their hands." Isaiah 65:17-22.

Jesus is already preparing personalized homes for us in the Holy City, the New Jerusalem (John 14:1-3: Revelation 21).

These verses suggest we'll also design and construct other houses perhaps beautiful country estates, landscaping them with heaven's rich variety of plant life. And who knows what high-tech adventures await us in God's advanced civilization? Our present scientific breakthroughs and space odysseys will seem like child's play when we begin exploring in our "Father's house." Do you love the beauty of thundering waterfalls, quiet meadows, teeming rain forests, and delicate blossoms?

"The Lord will surely comfort Zion; he will make her deserts like Eden, her wastelands like the garden of the Lord. Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanks giving and the sound of singing." Isaiah 51:3.

God will transform the earth into a pristine Garden of Eden. No more oil spills or smog or drought; the lakes stay crystal clear, the trees majestic, and the mountainsides unscarred.

Not only will the beauties of the world, but also our capacity to absorb them be greatly intensified. It will seem like that first day outdoors after a very long illness. And the first "twenty minutes of reality" will extend into a magical eternity. Do you enjoy experiencing new things? Learning? Creating?

"There, immortal minds will contemplate with never failing delight the wonders of creative power, the mysteries of redeeming love. Every faculty will be developed, every capacity increased. The acquirement of knowledge will not weary the mind or exhaust the energies. There the grandest enterprises may be carried forward, the loftiest aspirations reached, the highest ambitions realized; and still there will arise new heights to surmount, new wonders to admire, new truths to comprehend, fresh objects to call forth the powers of mind and soul and body. All the treasures of the universe will be open to the study of God's redeemed." Ellen G. white, the Great Controversy (Nampa, Idaho; pacific press publishing Association, 1950).

WILL EVIL EVER THREATEN HEAVEN AGAIN?

"Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life." Revelation 21:27.

God is going to completely eliminate sin and its terrible results; they will never appear again. When Jesus appears, "we shall be like him" (1st John 3:2). Instead of resisting impulses to kill, steal, lie, or rape, we'll pursue heavenly graces.

"{God} will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death of mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." Revelation 21:4.

Even the ultimate enemy, death, will vanish. In heaven's land of eternal youth the redeemed are immortal" (1st Corinthians 15:53); no inhabitant will ever suffer the ravages of old age. Heaven not only destroys the results of sin, it also reverses them. Imagine what it will be like for those who've struggled with lifelong handicaps:

"Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer and the mute tongue shout for joy." Isaiah 35:5, 6.

WHAT IS HEAVEN'S GREATEST TRILL?

Imagine seeing the Lord of the universe face-to-face.

"Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God."

God almighty promises to be our companion and tutor. What a joy to sit at his feet!

Think what a musician might give to be able to spend a few moments with Beethoven or Mozart. Imagine how much a physicist would treasure the chance to sit down with Albert Einstein, or how much it would mean for a painter to talk with Michelangelo or Rembrandt.

Just think, the redeemed will have an infinitely greater privilege. They will converse with the Author of all music, science, and art. They will be on intimate terms with the greatest mind and deepest Heart in the universe. And this relationship will overflow into worship.

"From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me," says the Lord." Isaiah 66:23.

In the center of the heavenly city stands the great white throne of God. Encircled by an emerald rainbow, how face shines like a blazing sun. Below his feet a glassy sea extends in all directions. On this crystal surface reflecting God's glory, the redeemed gather to pour out their exultant praise.

"And the ransomed of the Lord will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away." Isaiah 35:10.

Here is someone whose goodness never misses a beat. His faithfulness and patience and compassion just keep rolling on. Praise his holy name!

WE MUST BE THERE!

Jesus longs for that face-to-face meeting. That's why he was willing to rescue you from sin at such great cost. You must personally take advantage of this gift. You must make a commitment to Christ as Lord and Savior. You need the pardon that is offered from the cross, because:

"Nothing impure will ever enter [The New Jerusalem], nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. "Revelation 21:27.

Jesus delivers us from sin, not in sin. We must come to him through his power in us and be separated from the impure and the unholy. Jesus is our password into his soon-coming kingdom.

And that kingdom can have its beginning right now in your heart. When Christ delivers us from sin, he creates a little heaven within. He can help us deal with the worry, anger, lust, fear, and guilt that plague us. The hope of heaven isn't an escape from life's problems; it helps create more heaven on earth. A recently conducted poll showed that "those who believe in life after death lead happier lives and trust people more than those who don't."

Nothing will have a more dramatic impact on your life right now than a trusting relationship with Jesus Christ. Listen to how Peter describes the impact of a living faith:

"Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and Glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls." 1st Peter 1:8, 9.

All of this and heaven too. Have you discovered the kind of abundant life Christ wants you to experience? Please don't turn away from his gracious invitation.

"The [Holy] Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life." Revelation 22:17.

Jesus is with you now, speaking to your heart as you read these lines. He invites you to "Come!" "Come!" "Come!"

He couldn't be more eager, more insistent. If you have not yet done so, this moment above all others is your opportunity to explore his offer.

Why not tell him that you accept his gracious gift and want to spend eternity with him? Tell him that you love him. Thank him for all he has done for you and all he is still planning for you. If there is something between you and God, ask him to make you willing to remove it. Today, while you hear his voice, while your heart is still responsive, give yourself to him without reserve.

LESSON: TEN

HOW SOON WILL JESUS RETURN?

Most of us have an almost instinctive urge to peek into the future. We want to know what lies beyond the horizon. But accurate predictions remain terribly elusive.

_ We have difficult enough time forecasting tomorrow's weather! There is someone, however, whose prophecies have proven remarkably accurate. Jesus Christ, through his word, can take us into the future; he's a reliable guide. In this lesson we're going to look at what he had to say about his second coming. After all, who could know more about the end of the world than the one who created it in the beginning?

SIGNS THAT CHRIST WILL RETURN IN OUR DAY

After Jesus assured his disciples that he would come to our world a second time (Matthew 23:39), what question did they ask him? "Tell us, 'they said, 'when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?'" Matthew 24:3. (Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptural texts in the discover guides are from the New International Version of the Bible [NIV].)

Jesus answered clearly and positively. In chapter 24 of Matthew and chapter 21 Luke, he personally gave several "signs," or evidences, by which we can know when his coming is near. Other Bible prophecies help fill out the picture, detailing world conditions just before Christ's return. As we'll see, these prophecies are being fulfilled before our very eyes; they indicate that Christ's coming back to earth is near at hand.

Let's look at ten signposts of Bible prophecy along the highway to heaven, and examine the questions that a modern-day traveler might ask as he reads them.

Signpost 1-Anguish! Terror! Perplexity!

Over nineteen hundred years ago gave a prophetic decryption of contemporary life that sounds as if it could have been taken from the evening news:

"There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in ANGUISH and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time they will see the son man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." Luke 21:25-28.

No more accurate description of today's world could be penned than: "men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world." Stockpiled weapons are capable of destroying the entire planet.

What if some terrorist gets a nuclear warhead? Jesus gives us a basis for hope in a calamitous age. The current crisis of global "anguish and perplexity" only reinforces the truth that Christ's coming really is "drawing near." People today often moan in frustration, "Look what the world has come to!" But the student of Bible prophecy can exclaim with hopeful voice, "Look who is coming to our world."

Signpost 2 World Calamities.

How do natural disasters fit into last-day?

"There will be great Earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and greet signs from heaven. When you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near." Luke 21:11, 31.

Think about famines for a moment. Images of starving kids with distended bellies persist on the news. Isn't it rather amazing that a world which can

send men to the moon, cannot feed its entire people? Jesus knew that famines would persist, that selfish human nature would grow worse toward the end of time.

But what about earthquakes? According to the world Almanac of 1999, century after century of the Christian era there has been a striking increase in major earthquakes: 18th century 6 major earthquakes, 19th century 7, 20th century more than 100. So the evidence grows more dramatic as we get nearer and nearer to our present day.

These figures confirm Jesus' prophecy. Famines and major earthquakes are reaching a crescendo "the kingdom of God is near!" will our 21st century bring hundreds more major earthquakes, or the coming of the king of Kings?

Signpost 3 Accumulating wealth

What is meaning of wealth slipping into the hands of fewer while more and more fall into poverty? "You have hoarded wealth in the last days." James 5:3. Despite all our economic insights, the rich keep getting richer and the poor poorer. The multi-million dollar fortunes are another signpost that shows us "the Lord's coming is near" (verse 8).

Signpost 4 Civil Unrest.

Why have discontent and unrest among employees raised so dramatically? "Look! Wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters {Workers} have reached the ears of the lord Almighty. Be patient and stand firm, because the lord's coming is near." Jesus 5:4, 8.

After predicting an unparalleled piling up of wealth in our day, James foresaw civil unrest arising from discounted worker. The tension between the "haves" and the "have-not's" continues to increase. Another sign that "the Lord's coming is near."

Signpost 5 Moral Decay.

Why does the moral fiber of society seem to be shredding?

"But mark this: there will be terrible times in the last days. People money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God having a form of godliness but denying its power evil men and impostors will go from Bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived." 2nd Timothy 3:1-5, 13.

Could anyone think of a more accurate description of our world? Point a camera in any direction these days and you'll catch a picture of arrogant materialism. You'll capture a shocking epidemic of child abuse and molestation. You'll get countless scenes of youth out of control, kinds in their early teens killing and maiming at random. All these things form a gallery of pictures loudly proclaiming that Jesus' coming is very near.

Signpost 6 spread of the occult.

Why are we seeing an explosion of interest in the occult?
"For false Christ's and false prophets will appear and perform great signs miracles to deceive even the elect if that were possible." Matthew 24:24.

These passages predict that the time of the end will feature all kinds of miracles and signs, a counterfeit manifestation of the supernatural. Witches and warlocks appear on talk shows. New Agers are everywhere, selling magic crystals and channeling departed spirits. Counterfeit signs and wonders are booming. All this makes it even clearer that just as Jesus predicated, we are living in the time of 'the coming of the Son of Man' (verse 27).

Signpost 7 an Awakened World.

What is the meaning of the awakening to world-consciousness of Africa, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and the nations of the Far East?

{ 'Let the nations be roused; swing the sickle, for the harvest is ripe so great is their wickedness!' multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the lord is near in the valley of decision." Joel 3:12-14.

Today in Asia and Africa, Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, and Middle Eastern countries, we are witnessing perhaps the most widespread awakening of individual nations in all of recorded history, 'for the day of the Lord is near.'

Signpost 8 Peace plans and war reparations.

We live in a strange world. Everyone agrees that we should give peace a chance. We talk peace; yet pent up hostilities, some centuries old, and flare into open conflict. The prophets Micah and Joel predicted that at the very time the nations talk about their desire for peace (Micah 4:1-3), distrust for their neighbors compels them to prepare for war (Joel 3:9-13). Long ago the Bible pictured our present peace war dilemma, and only when Jesus comes.

Signpost 9 Modern progress.

Why, after centuries of human history have transportation and communication brought the world so close together? "Until the time of the end, many will go here and there to increase knowledge." Daniel 12:4.

Daniel here indicates that knowledge of his prophecies would increase "in" {KJV}, or "until the time of the end." But this prediction also seems to point straight to our computerized information age. Knowledge of all kinds has increased at lightning speed these past few years. There have been more changes in the past fifty years than the previous two thousand.

"Many will go here and there to increase knowledge." Before 1850, people moved around by horse and buggy, pretty much as they had from the beginning of time. Now we break the sound barrier and span the globe in everything from Concorde airplanes to space shuttles. Increased travel and the recent flood of inventions give further evidence that we're living in "the time of the end."

Signpost 10 Gospel to the entire world.

Jesus predicated that just before his coming the gospel would reach the whole world: "and this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." Matthew 24:14.

For decades almost half the globe was locked behind an iron curtain, shut away from the Good News. But then almost overnight Eastern Europe slipped from the iron grip of communism. The Berlin wall came crashing down, and the mighty Soviet Empire fell apart. Suddenly roughly half the planet was opening its arms to the gospel.

The gospel is truly going to the "whole world" as never before. A satellite the Christian message is simultaneously being broadcast to almost every nation. We are living in the very day Jesus spoke of when he declared: "This gospel will be preached in the whole world" and "then the end will come."

HOW SOON WILL JESUS COME?

After describing the events that were to characterize the time just preceding his second coming, Jesus concludes his remarks by saying, "I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened." Matthew 24:34.

The conclusion is obvious the generation portrayed by these signposts of prophecy will see Jesus return to earth a second time. It won't be long until he'll sweep away sin and suffering, and establish his everlasting kingdom. Jesus cautions, "No one knows that day or hour" (verse 36). And Jesus continues:

"You also must be ready, because the Son of man will come at an hour when you do not expect him." Matthew 24:44.

JESUS, THE WORLD'S ONLY HOPE

Christ is the last, best hope for world because only he can deal with the very thing that is destroying it sin. Jesus died on Calvary to make possible the defeat of evil deliverance for all who respond to his offer of salvation.

"He who does as that is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work." 1st John 3:8.

Our savior craved a his out of our crumbling world by sacrificing his own flesh and look and the same Jesus, who will someday cure all the world's ills by destroying sin, offers right now to erase guilt of sin from your life.

You don't have to wait for the second coming to find release from guanos, and from anxiety and destructive behavior. Jesus is quite willing to give you his kind of peace this very moment.

While attending a religious meeting a young woman felt strangely moved by the gospel presentation. As she heard the story of a soon coming savior unfold, sense. Decided that she'd been looking for love, happiness, and peace in all the wrong places. Jesus had to be the evangelism and his associate went to see her, she poured out the story of a bitter and broken life.

She'd sunk to the bottom as an alcoholic. And was supporting herself through prostitution. After describing her problems, she sobbed out. "You were really speaking to me last night." But the voice that had reached her heart was the voice of God. And he was speaking tenderly. She decided to lay it all on the line. She invited Christ to come into her heart as savior and Lord, and fastened onto the hope of his soon return.

In the weeks that followed, she began to notice that her many fears and insecurities, which she always tried to drown in drink, now found release as she spent time communicating with Jesus. He began to deliver her from the compulsions that had been wrecking her life.

She had done a lot of things she wasn't proud of. But Christ's grace and forgiveness proved stronger than her shame. The experience of the thief on the cross meant a lot to her. In his last, desperate hours he turned to the innocent Sufferer beside him and asked, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Luke 23:42)

Jesus immediately answered by promising the thief a place with a place with him in paradise {verse 43}. The same Jesus, who graciously offered forgiveness to that dying thief, now offers you salvation, complete pardon, and peace of mind.

Discover it for yourself today.

You too can pray with dying thief: "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And Jesus will answer, "I will come again, and you will be with me in paradise."

LESSON: ELEVEN MYSTERIOUS POWER IN MY LIFE

In 1929 Frank Morris boarded a ship bound for Switzerland. He'd looked forward to this voyage for some time. But it turned into a humiliating experience. A steward put in charge of his care locked Frank in his cabin each night. After a quick break fast Frank could exercise a bit, but felt foolish being led around the deck, like an animal on a leash. Then the steward deposited.

Frank in a steamer chair. Whenever he met a friendly passenger who invited him for a stroll, the steward objected, saying he had to keep an eye on him. Frank was an adult, with the normal curiosities steward assumed he couldn't take care of himself. Frank was treated like a parcel that had to be lugged around.

But in Switzerland Frank's life dramatically changed. While there he learned about dogs which had been trained to guide the blind. Bringing a German shepherd named Buddy back to the United States; Frank started Seeing Eye, now a worldwide organization.

Now, with Buddy at his side, Frank could go anywhere, anytime, with anyone. He felt free at last. During one demonstration to a group of reporters at a busy cross street in New York City, Buddy guided his master expertly from one lane to other while cars whizzed past. Because he trusted Buddy, Frank made it across with. The sighted reporters had a much more difficult time; one actually took a cab to get to the other side.

In the next few pages we're going to learn about the Holy Spirit, a Guide who wants us to place our lives in his hands. All of us are handicapped by the really most important. Life rushes by us at such a frantic pace that we often find ourselves just coping instead of going anywhere. Still, we're hesitant to trust our lives completely to this Guide. But the discovery that awaits each of us is this: we'll find real freedom and power by depending on the Holy Spirit to guide us through life.

CHRIST'S REPRESENTATIVE IN THE WORLD

WHEN Christ was about to ascend into heaven, he promised his disciples a priceless gift:

"But I tell you the truth: it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he, the spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you." John 16:7, 13, 14. {Unless otherwise noted, all scriptural texts in the Discover guides are from the new international version of the Bible "NIV".}

In the divine plan, Jesus needed to return to heaven as our representative before God's throne and "appear for us in God's presence" (Hebrews 9:24). While our crucified Lord represents us in heaven, we also have the Holy Spirit as our **COUNSELOR** and **GUIDE** right here on earth. He is Jesus' direct representative.

While here Jesus ministered within the confines of a human body, and couldn't be present everywhere. But the Holy Spirit has no such limitations: he can serve as a personal Counselor and Guide to countless individuals in many places at the same time. Christ meets our needs through the Holy Spirit.

WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

Most of us can relate to God the Father if we imagine the most caring, nurturing parent we have ever known. And we can picture Jesus the Son, because he lived among us as a person.

But the Holy Spirit is harder to picture and relate to. We have no easy human comparisons. The Bible, however, does give us specific information about the Holy Spirit:

A Personality. Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as a person, a member of the Godhead, along with God the Father and God the Son:

"Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Matthew 28:19. The Spirit has personal characteristics: a mind (Romans 8:27); wisdom (1st Corinthians 2:10); feelings of love toward us (Romans 15:30); feelings of grief when we sin (Ephesians 4:30); the ability to teach us (Nehemiah 9:20); and power to guide us. Involvement in Creation. The Holy Spirit participated in the forming of our world with the Father and the Son.

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Genesis 1:1, 2, KJV.

THE ACTIVITIES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Changing the human heart.

In his encounter with Nicodemus, Jesus emphasized the role of the Holy Spirit in changing the human heart:

"I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit." John 3:5.

To be "born of the Spirit" means that the Spirit gives us a new beginning. It's more than a matter of modifying our behavior a bit. The Spirit changes us from the inside out, fulfilling the promise: "I will give you a new heart" (Ezekiel 36:26).

Making us aware of wrongdoing and giving us a desire for holiness:

"When he [the Holy Spirit] comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment." John 16:8.

When you hear the dramatic story of someone turning from an immoral lifestyle to God and becoming a faithful spouse and nurturing parent, remember that every step toward wholeness came as a result of the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

Guiding us in our Christian life.

Christ speaks to us directly through the "still small voice" of the Spirit.

"Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it.'" Isaiah 30:21.

Through satellite transmission, our TVs regularly bring images and faces from a continent away into our living room. The Holy spirit functions a little like God's satellite, bringing the presence of Christ from heaven to earth, making him close when we need him most (John 14:15-20).

Aiding our prayer life.

"We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express in accordance with God's will." Romans 8:26, 27. When we are struggling to find the words, the Spirit is praying in our behalf. When we are so discouraged we can only groan toward God, the Spirit amplifies our faint cry for help into a powerful prayer before the very throne of God where Jesus is now ministering. Developing Christian qualities and character.

The Spirit makes spiritually barren individuals as fertile as a tress bearing fruit:

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." Galatians 5:22-23. Having the fruit of the Spirit demonstrates that we are grafted into the true vine, Jesus (John 15:5). Jesus can actually live his abundant life through us by the power of the Spirit.

Preparing us as witnesses.

Jesus promises:

"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth." Acts 1:8. All who are willing can be made witness by the Spirit. We may not have all the answers, but the Spirit can give us a story to tell that moves hearts and minds. The apostles had trouble communicating before Pentecost, but after the Spirit came they proclaimed Christ with such power that they "turned the world upside down" (acts 17:6, KJV).

THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

Scripture makes a distinction between God's gift of the Holy Spirit to every believer for victorious Christian living, and the various gifts of the Spirit provided to believers for effective ministry in different ways. "When he [Christ] ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men." It was he who gave some to be Apostles, some to be prophets, some to be Evangelists, and some to be pesters and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service." Ephesians 4:8, 11-12.

Each Christian does not receive all the gifts, some may receive more gifts than others; the Spirit "gives them to each one, Just as he determines" (1st Corinthians 12:11). The Spirit equips each believer for his or her special role in God's plan. God knows when and where to provide the gifts that will best bless his people and his church.

Another list of spiritual gifts found in 1st Corinthians 12:8-10 includes wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, prophecy, speaking in different kinds of tongues [languages, margin], and the interpretation of languages {verses 8-10}. Paul urges us to "eagerly desire the greater gifts," then adds, "and now I will show you the most excellent way." (1st Corinthians 12:31). The love chapter (1st Corinthians 13) that follows this verse emphasizes that "the most excellent way" is the way of love. And love is the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22).

Our concern should be to seek the fruit of the Spirit and then let the Spirit distribute his gifts to us as "he determines" (1st Corinthians 12:11).

THE FULLNESS OF THE SPIRIT AT PENTECOST

On the Day of Pentecost, the Spirit was poured out in unlimited measure, fulfilling Jesus' promise: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth." Acts 1:8.

At Pentecost the Spirit enabled the apostles to communicate the gospel clearly in the languages of people "from every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:3-6). Some Bible students compare the coming of the Spirit to the failing of the early autumn and the late spring rains of Palestine {Joel 2:23}. The Spirit falling at Pentecost was like "early rain" of autumn which caused the seeds sprout and provided vital nourishment for the Christian church in its infancy.

THE LATTER RAIN OF THE SPIRIT

Bible prophecy tells of a day coming when the Spirit of God will be poured out like a shower on the church, entering the church's members as witnesses (Joel 2:28, 29). Centuries have now passed and the story of salvation has spread over a large part of the earth. It's now time for the "latter rain" to ripen the grain, making it ready to harvest. As history moves to a climax just before Christ's second coming, God will prepare every sincere believer for heaven through a great outpouring of his Spirit?

Are you now experiencing the "early rain?" The is preparing the church for the "latter rain" for the Spirit? Are you living a Spirit-filled life? As you are empowered by the Spirit, will you let God use you to communicate the news of his incredible love and soon return?

CONDITIONS FOR RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT

At Pentecost the Holy Spirit moved those who heard the gospel to cry out, "Brothers, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). "Peter replied, 'repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.' Acts 2:38." Repentance turning away from a sinful way of life and turning to Christ is a condition for receiving the gift of the spirit. To have the Spirit poured out on us, we must first repent and commit our lives to Christ. Jesus also emphasized the willingness to follow him and obey him as a condition for receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit (John 14:15-17).

THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE

Before leaving the world, Jesus instructed his followers:

"Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised. For John Baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." Acts 1:4, 5. Over and Scripture indicates that the Christian is to be "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:4; 4:8, 4:31; 6:5; 7:55; 9:17; 13:9, 13:52; 19:6). The Holy Spirit makes the life of a Christian fulfilling and beautiful because a Spirit-filled life achieves Christ's ideal for us. While describing the Spirit-filled Christian life, Paul offered this prayer for every believer:

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask of or imagine, According to his power that is at work with us.” Ephesians 3:16, 17, 20.

Like Frank Morris with his faithful guide dog Buddy, we can, with the Holy Spirit guide inside us, do immeasurably more than we could before. With new desires and new abilities we are enabled to move forward confidently instead of just trying to cope with life’s problems. This Spirit-filled experience is renewed each day through prayer and Bible study.

Prayer keeps us in close contact with Christ, and studying the Word of God keeps us focused on his resources. They break down any barrier between us and Christ that might prevent him from pouring out his priceless Gift of the Spirit. This is how we grow and replace bad habits and attitudes with healthy qualities.

Romans 8 give an exciting description of the Spirit-filled life. Read it when you can, and note how many times Paul points to the “Spirit” as the power behind the Christian life. Have you made the wonderful discovery of the Spirit-filled life? Are you conscious of the presence of the Spirit in your life? Are you experiencing his life-giving power? Open up your life to the greatest power in the universe.

LESSON: TWELVE AN EVER-PRESENT SAVIOR

Then a Scottish lad named Peter got lost in a grassy wasteland on an inky black night, God called him by name: “Peter!” when the heavenly voice called out again, Peter stopped in his tracks, looked down, and discovered he was a step away from plunging into an abandoned limestone quarry.

Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we could each hear God calling us by name? Wouldn’t it be great if he were that close a companion if we could actually sit down together and have a long chat about our struggles and dreams?

UNLIMITED ACCESS TO JESUS CHRIST.

Believe it or not, we can come nearer to Jesus now than we could if he actually lived here with us as a visible person. Having Christ in the flesh in our town would be wonderful of course, but think of the enormous crowds pressing for a closer look. Think of the demands on his time. We would do well to get a few minutes of direct conversation in a lifetime.

Christ wishes to cultivate a personal relationship with every one of us. That’s one reason why he left this earth for a special ministry in heaven that would allow him to come near to each of us every day. Because Jesus is not limited to one place like he was when he was here on earth, through the Holy Spirit he is now near to guide the life of every willing person individually. What encouraging promise did Jesus give just before he ascended to heaven?

**“I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28:20. (Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptural texts in the discover guides are from the New International version of the Bible [NIV].)
What is Christ doing in heaven that makes it possible for him to be “with you always”?**

"Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." Hebrews 4:14-16.

Note the assurances of having Jesus as our personal representative in heaven: "Tempted in every way, just as we are." "Sympathize with our weaknesses." "Help us in our time of need." With Jesus as our high Priest we're no longer cut off from a distant heaven; Christ can usher us into the very presence of God. No wonder we're urged to "approach the throne of grace with confidence."

What place does Jesus occupy in heaven?

"But when this priest [Jesus] had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God." Hebrews 10:12.

The living Christ someone who understands is our personal representative on the throne "at the right hand of God."

How did the life of Jesus prepare him to be our priest?

"For this reason he had to be made like his Brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted." Hebrews 2:17, 18.

Our "brother" who shares our humanity and was "tempted" like we are, is now our high priest at the Father's right hand. "Made like" us, he knows what we're going through. He's been hungry, thirsty, tempted, and exhausted. He's felt the need for sympathy and understanding. But above all, Jesus is qualified to be our high Priest because he died to "make atonement" for our sins. He paid the price for our sins by dying in our place. This is the Gospel, the Good News for all human beings everywhere and for all time. One of our Bible School directors shares this experience:

"When our youngest daughter was three, she caught her finger in a folding chair, splintering the bone. As we rushed her to a doctor, her loud cries of pain really tore at our hearts. And they touched our five-year-old in a special way. I'll never forget her words after the doctor had cared for her sister's injury. She sobbed, 'Oh, Daddy, I wish it could have been my finger!'"

When all humanity were crushed by sin and condemned to die eternally, Jesus said, "Oh, Father, I wish it could have been me." And the Father gave Jesus his wish at the cross. Our Savior has experienced every agony we have suffered and more!

THE GOSPEL IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

When the people of Israel camped at the foot of Mount Sinai, God instructed Moses to build a portable sanctuary for worship "according to the pattern shown you {Moses} on the mountain" [Exodus 25:40]. Nearly 500 years later, King Solomon's great stone temple replaced the portable sanctuary. And the temple was built on precisely the same plan as the designable sanctuary.

When God gave Moses the directions for building the sanctuary, what specific purpose did he have in mind?

"Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them." Exodus 25:8.

Sin caused a tragic separation between human beings and their Creator. The sanctuary was God's way of showing how he can again live among us. The sanctuary, and later the temple, became the center of religious life and worship in old Testament times. Each morning and evening the people could gather around the sanctuary and establish contact with God in prayer (Luke 1:9, 10), claiming God's promise: "I will meet with you" (Exodus 30:6).

The Old Testament teaches the same gospel of salvation as does the New Testament. Both portray Jesus dying for us and ministering to us as our high priest in the heavenly sanctuary.

JESUS' MINISTRY FOR US REVEALED IN THE SANCTUARY

The sanctuary and its services reveal what Jesus is doing now in the temple in heaven, and what he is doing now on earth to enrich and guide each of us in our daily lives. Since the earthly sanctuary was patterned after the temple in heaven, it reflects the heavenly sanctuary where Christ now ministers. Exodus 25-40 describes the services and ceremonies of the wilderness sanctuary in great detail. A brief summary of the sanctuary furnishings appears in the New Testament:

"Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. In its first room were the lampstand, the table and the consecrated bread; this was called the Holy place. Behind the second curtain was a room called the most Holy Place, which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered Ark of the Covenant? This ark contained the stone tablets of the covenant [on which God wrote the Ten Commandments (Deuteronomy 10:1-5)].

Above the ark were the cherubim of Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover [mercy seat]. Hebrews 9:1-5."

The sanctuary had two rooms, the Holy place and the Most Holy place. A courtyard was laid out in front of the sanctuary. In the court stood the brass altar on which the priests offered sacrifices, and the laver in which they washed. The sacrifices offered on the brass altar symbolized Jesus, who through his death on the cross became "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). When the repentant sinner came to the altar with his sacrifice and confessed his sins, he received forgiveness and cleansing. In the same way, the sinner today obtains forgiveness and cleansing through the blood of Jesus (1st John 1:9).

In the first room, or Holy place, the seven-branched lampstand burned continually, representing Jesus as the never-failing "light of the world" (John 8:12). The table of consecrated bread symbolized his satisfying our physical and spiritual hunger as the ever-present "Bread of Life" (John 6:35). The golden altar of incense represented Jesus' prayer ministry for us in the very presence of God (Revelation 8:3, 4).

The second room, or most Holy place, contained the gold-covered Ark of the Covenant. It symbolized the throne of God. Its atonement cover, or mercy seat,

represented the throne of God. Its atonement cover, or mercy seat, represented the intercession of Christ, our High Priest, interceding on behalf of sinful human beings who have broken God's moral law. The two tablets of stone on which God wrote the Ten Commandments were kept below the mercy seat. Golden cherubim of glory hovered over the mercy seat on each end of the ark. A glorious light shone between these two cherubim, a symbol of the presence of God himself.

A curtain hid the place from the view of the people as the priests ministered to them in the courtyard. A second curtain front of the most Holy place blocked this inner room from the priests who entered the sanctuary's first room. When Jesus died on the cross, what happened to the curtain?

1. "At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom." Matthew 27:51.
2. The most Holy place was exposed when Jesus died. After the death of Jesus no curtain can come between a holy God and a sincere believer; Jesus, our high priest, ushers us into the very presence of God (Hebrews 10:19-22). We have access to the throne room of heaven because Jesus is our high priest at God's right hand. Jesus enables us to come into God's presence into the Father's heart of love. So "let us draw near."

A REVELATION OF CHRIST DYING TO SAVE US

Just as the earthly sanctuary served as a miniature reproduction of the heavenly temple where Jesus now ministers for us, the services carried on in the earthly sanctuary were "a copy and shadow of what is heaven" (Hebrews 8:5). But there is a striking difference: the priests who served in the earthly temple could not themselves forgive sin, but at the cross Jesus "appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Hebrews 9:26).

The Old Testament book of Leviticus describes in detail the services carried on in the sanctuary. The ceremonial rituals were divided into two parts: the daily services and the yearly services. (Guide 13 deals with the yearly services.)

In the daily services, the priests offered sacrifices for the individual and for the entire congregation.

When a person sinned, he would bring an unblemished animal as a sin offering, "lay his hand on the head of the sin offering and slaughter it at the place of the but offering" (Leviticus 4:29).

The guilt of the sinner must be transferred to the guiltless animal by confession of sin and the laying on of hands. This symbolized Christ taking on our gait at Calvary; the sinless One became "sin for us" (2nd Corinthians 5:21). The sacrificial animal had to be killed and its blood shed because it pointed forward to the supreme penalty that Christ suffered on the cross.

WHY THE BLOOD?

"Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Hebrews 9:22). What happened in the Old Testament sanctuary pointed forward to Christ's one great saving act?

Having died for our sins, he entered the holy places "once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption" for us (Verse 12). When Jesus' blood was shed on the cross for our sins, "the curtain of the temple [in Jerusalem] was torn two from top to bottom" (Matthew 27:51). Because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, animal sacrifices were no longer necessary. When Jesus spilled his blood from the cross, he was offering up his perfectly obedient life as a substitute for our failures. When the Father and Son were torn at Calvary, the Father turned away in anguish and the Son died of a broken heart. God the Son stepped into history to take on himself the full results of sin and to demonstrate how tragic wrongdoing really is. He could not forgive sinners without trivializing sin. Christ made "peace through his blood, shed on the cross" (Colossians 1:20).

A REVELATION OF JESUS LIVING TO SAVE US

What is Jesus' day-by-day work in the heavenly temple?

"Therefore he is able to save completely {forever, margin} those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them." Hebrews 7:25.

Jesus now "lives" to present his blood, his sacrifice, on our behalf. He is now working diligently to save every human being from the tragedy of sin. Some mistakenly assume that, as our intercessor, Jesus is in heaven begging a reluctant God to forgive us. In fact, it is God who joyfully accepts his Son's sacrifice on our behalf.

As our high priest in heaven, Christ also pleads with humanity. He works to help the indifferent take a second look at grace, to help despairing sinners grasp hope in the gospel, and to help believers find more riches in the word of God and more power in prayer. Jesus is molding our lives in harmony with God's commandments and helping us develop characters that will stand the test of time.

God laid down his life for every person who has ever lived in this world. And now, as high priest or mediator, He always lives" to lead people to accept his death for their sins. Although he reconciled the whole fallen world to himself on the cross, he still can't save us unless we accept his grace. People will not be lost because they are sinners, but because they refuse to accept the pardon Jesus offers.

Sin destroyed the intimate relationship Adam and Eve once enjoyed with God. But Jesus, as the Lamb of God, died to free all humanity from sin and restore this lost friendship. Have you discovered him as your high priest, the one who ever lives to keep that relationship close and vibrant?

Christ's sacrificial death is utterly unique. Christ's heavenly ministry is incomparable. Only Christ brings God close beside us. Only Christ makes it possible for the divine Spirit to actually dwell in our hearts. He emptied himself in order to make us full. He deserves a similar commitment from us. Let's accept him fully as the Savior and master of our lives.

LESSON: THIRTEEN FROM GUILTY SINNER TO FORGIVEN SAINT

There were no fingerprints. No weapon was ever discovered. No one saw the murderer enter the office of the doctor. No one even heard the shots ring out. But the doctor was found sprawled behind his desk. Five bullets had pierced his shirt.

It seemed the perfect crime. The police at first could find no clues. But then they noticed a tiny wire attached to a pencil holder on the doctor's desk. The wire led to a

tape recorder in a desk drawer. The pencil holder, the doctor used to record his conversations with the patients he was counseling. The investigators quickly rewound the tape and, to their amazement, began to listen to a replay of the actual crime.

A man named Anthony had entered the office and began a heated argument with the doctor. Shots rang out. The tape ended with the terrible moans of the doctor, dying on the carpet. Every awful detail had been recorded. The murderer thought his crime would forever remain a secret. He'd been so careful to leave no clues. But the tape told the whole story.

In this guide we're going to learn about God's final judgment when human beings are "judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books" (Revelation 20:12). For those who have not accepted Christ as their Savior, it will be bad news. But the judgment is wonderfully good news for who has found security in Christ.

HOW YOU CAN FACE THE JUDGMENT UNFRAID.

Who will judge the world? "The Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son." John 5:22. (Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptural texts in the Discover guides are from new International Version of the Bible 'NIV'.)

How did the cross prepare Christ to become our Judge?

"God presented him [Jesus] as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus." Romans 3:25, 26.

Christ's death as our substitute enables him to act as both a just judge and a gracious Justifier who can forgive the repentant sinner. When the watching universe asks the question, "How can an impartial judge declare a person not guilty?" Christ can answer by pointing to the scars in his hands. He has received the just penalty for our sins in his own body.

The books of heaven preserve a record of every individual life, and these records are utilized in the judgment (Revelation 20:12). That's the bad news for those who imagine their secret sins and crimes will never return to haunt them. But there is wonderfully good news for all who've sincerely accepted Christ as their Advocate in heaven: "The blood of Jesus purifies us from all sin" (1st John 1:7). What does Jesus offer in exchange for our life of sin?

God made him [Christ] who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." 2nd Corinthians 5:21.

Our life of sin is exchanged for Christ's perfect life of righteousness. Because of Jesus' sinless life and death, God can forgive us and treat us as if we'd never sinned. What qualifies Jesus to be our Advocate and judge?

CHRIST CAME ON TIME

At his baptism, Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit:

"As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.'" Matthew 3:16, 17.

Following Christ's anointing by the Holy Spirit at his baptism, the disciples announced:

"We have found the messiah' [the Jesus Christ]." John 1:41.
The disciples knew that the Hebrew word "the anointed one." Luke, a follower of Jesus, record the date of Jesus' anointing as the messiah as the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caser (Luke 3:1). To us that would be the year A.D.27.

More than 500 years before Jesus come the prophet Daniel predicted that Jesus would be anointed as the messiah in A.D. 27.

"From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, will be seven 'sevens' [weeks in Hebrews] and sixty-two 'seven' [weeks]." Daniel 9:25.

Seven weeks and sixty-two weeks total sixty-nine weeks or 483 day days (7*69=483 days). In symbolic Bible prophecy each day equals one year (Ezekiel 4:6; Numbers 14:34), so the 483 days equal 483 years. Daniel predicted that a command would go forth to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, and exactly 483 years after his command, the Messiah at the would appear.

Did Jesus appear as the Messiah at the appointed time? Artaxerxes issued the decree to rebuild Jerusalem in 457 B.C. (Ezra 7:7-26). The 483 years, then, ended in A.D. 27. (457 B.C. + A.D. 27=484.) The decree went forth during the year 457 and Christ was anointed during A.D. 27, making them both partial yes the correct time would be 483 years.)

At the very time appointed, in A.D.27, Jesus appeared with message: "The time has come" (Mark 1:15. The accurate fulfillment of this Bible prophecy is impressive confirmation that Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the Messiah, God in human flesh. How long was Jesus to confirm the promise?

"He will confirm a covenant {a promise} with many for one 'seven' (week, in Hebrew)." Daniel 9:27, first part.

When we apply the year- day principle, this 'week' would be seven years. So, for seven years from A.D. 27 to A.D 34 Jesus would "confirm a covenant," or promise, he had made to Adam and Eve shortly after they sinned. God made a covenant, a promise, that he would save the human race from sin through the death of someone he would send to die for our sins (Genesis 3:15).

What was to happen in the middle of this seventieth week?

"In the middle of the 'seven' (week, in Hebrew) he will put an end to sacrifice and offering." Daniel 9:27, last part.

Jesus was crucified in A.D. 31, in "the middle of the week." At the moment of Christ's death, God to bottom" (Matthew 27:51). The sacrificial offering about to be slain (a symbol of Jesus "the Lamb of God") escaped from the Priest's hands. This was a sign that God no longer wanted humanity to offer animal sacrifices. Fulfilling prophecy down to the letter, Jesus "Put an end to" any need for further sacrifices to be offered. Since Christ's death, people gain access to God not through animal sacrifices and human priests, but through the Messiah, the Lamb of God and our high Priest.

THE ASSURANCE OF SINS FORGIVEN

According to Daniel's prophecy, why did Jesus die?

"The Anointed One will be cut off but not for himself." Daniel 9:26, margin.

At his death on the cross, Jesus "Cut off." He died, "but not for himself," not to pay a penalty for his own sin, but to pay the penalty for sins of the entire world. How can we know that God has forgiven all our sins?"

"Righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. All have sinned and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ. Though faith in his blood." Romans 3:22-25.

The key points in these verses are: we "all have sinned," but because of God's "grace," all "are justified" who have "faith" in the cleansing power of Christ's "blood." When we are justified, God declares us not guilty, taking away the guilt of our past sins. And God declares us righteous; "righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ." All of us, who are worn out by the struggle to be good enough, to measure up on our own, can find real rest in Christ's gracious acceptance. He promises, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). All of us, who are burdened by scars from the past by an aching sense of inadequacy and the past and by an aching sense of inadequacy and shame, can find peace and wholeness in Christ.

THE TIME FOR THE JUDGEMENT TO BEGIN

In the eighth chapter of Daniel an angel showed the prophet a great panorama of the future. Daniel saw

A ram, a he-goat, and out of one of the horns of the he-goat, "another horn which started small and grew in power" (Daniel 9:8, 9); symbols representing me do- Persia Greece, and Rome (Daniel 8:1-12, 20-26).

{ 'Understand the vision: seventy 'sevens' {weeks, in Hebrews} are decreed {cut off, in Hebrew} for your people and holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness. Daniel 9:22-24. }

The 2,300 days are, of course, 2,300 years, each day standing for a year (Ezekiel 4:6). Seventy weeks, or 490 years, constituted the first section of the longer period of 2,300 years. Both time periods started in 457 B.C. When Persia issued the decree "to restore and rebuild Jerusalem." Subtracting 490 years from the 2,300 years, leaves 1,810. Adding 1,810 years to A.D. 34, when the 490 years ended, brings us to A.D. 1844.

THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY CLEANSED A JUDGMENT

The angel told Daniel that in 1844, at the end of the 2,300 years, "the sanctuary will be cleansed" (Daniel 8:14, KJV).

But what does that mean? Since A.D. 70 when the Romans destroyed the temple at Jerusalem, God's people have had no temple on earth. So the sanctuary to be cleansed, beginning in 1844, has to be the heavenly sanctuary of which the earthly temple was a replica.

Now, what does the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary mean? Ancient Israel called the day for cleansing the earthly sanctuary Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. It was really a Day of Judgment.

As we discovered in Guide 12, Christ's activity for us in the sanctuary has two phases: they daily sacrifices focus on the parent's ministry in the first room of the sanctuary, the Holy Place. The yearly sacrifice concentrates on the high priest's ministry in the first focus on the priest's ministry in the first room the most Holy place (Leviticus 16).

In the earthly sanctuary, as people confessed their sins day by day, the blood of slaughtered animal was sprinkled on the corner of the altar, then transferred to the Holy place (Leviticus 4 and 6). Thus, in symbol, day after day the confessed sins were brought into the sanctuary and laid up there.

The each year, on the Day of Atonement, the sanctuary was cleansed from all sins confessed during the past year (Leviticus 16). To effect this cleansing, the high priest made a special sacrifice of a consecrated goat. He then carried its blood into the most Holy place and sprinkled this cleansing blood before the atonement cover to show that the blood of Jesus, the coming ray the penalty for sin.

The high priest then symbolically removed the confessed sins from the sanctuary and placed them on the head of another goat, which was led out into the out into the wilderness to die (Leviticus 16:20-22).

What the high priest did symbolically once a year, Jesus does once for all time as our high priest (Hebrews 9:6-12). In the heat Judgment day he removes from the sanctuary the confessed sins of all who have accepted him as their savior. If we have confessed our sins, he will forever blot out the record of our sins at that time (Acts 3:19. This ministry is the work of Judgment that Jesus began in 1844.

In 1844 when the hour of God's judgment began in heaven, a Judgment hour message began to be preached throughout the world (Revelation 14:6-7). A future discovers guide will deal with this message.

FACING YOUR LIFE RECORD IN THE JUDGMENT

Since 1844 Christ, as judge as judge, has been investigating the record of each person who has ever lived to confirm who will be among the saved when Jesus comes. As our Judge, Jesus "Wipes out" all of the sins of the righteous from this life's record in heaven (Acts 3: 19).

When your name comes up in judgment, it will be easy to face your life record if you've accepted Christ as your Substitute. And when the judgment of the righteous is finished, Jesus returns to earth to reward them (Revelation 22:12, 14.

Are you ready for Jesus Christ to come? Or is there something you've been hiding from him? Do you have an open and honest relationship with the one who promises: "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness?" 1John 1:9.

Confession simply means agreeing to face our sins, accept God's forgiveness, and acknowledge our need of his power and grace. While visiting a prison in Potsdam,

king Frederick William I listened to a number of pleas for pardon. All the inmates swore that prejudiced judges, perjured witnesses, or unscrupulous lawyers were responsible for their imprisonment.

From cell to cell the same story of wronged innocence continued. But at one cell the inmate had nothing to say. Surprised, Frederick joked, "I suppose you are innocent too." "No your Majesty," the man answered, "I am guilty and richly deserve all that I get." The king turned to the guard and called out loudly, "Come and release this rascal quickly, before he corrupts this fine lot of innocent people."

How do we prepare for the Judgment? How do we get ready for Christ to come? Simply by an honest confession of the truth: I richly deserve the penalty of death for my sins, but another has taken my place and given me a wonderful pardon. Make a commitment right now that whatever happens, you'll keep your relationship with Christ eye-to-eye honest and heart-to-heart sincere.

LESSON: FOURTEEN THE SECRET OF ANSWERED PRAYER

Anatoly Leviton, a Russian writer and historian, spent years in the Siberian Gulag where petitions where petitions to God must have seemed frozen to the ground. But he came back quite spiritually fit. "The greatest miracle of all is prayer," he wrote. "I have only to turn mentally to God and at once I feel a force that pours into me from somewhere, into my soul, my whole being.

What is it? Where would I, an insignificant old man and tired of life, get this strength which renews and saves me, elevating me above the earth? It comes from outside me and there is no force in the world which could ever resist it." In this guide we will see how prayer can help us build a stronger relation with God and a robust Christ life.

CONVERSION WITH GOD

How can we be sure God hears us when we pray? "Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29:12, 13. {Unless otherwise noted, all scriptural texts in the Discover guides are from the new international version of the Bible (NIV).}

What assurance did Jesus give that he will hear and answer our prayers?

"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." Luke 11:9.

Prayer is a two-way conversation. That's what Jesus promises:

"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me." Revelation 3:20.

How is it possible to sit down and have a nice evening of dinner conversation with Christ? First, by telling him everything that's on our hearts in prayer. Second, by listening carefully. As we meditate in prayer, God can speak to us directly. And as we read the word of God devotionally, God will speak to us through its pages.

Prayer can become a way life for the Christian. "Prayer continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Jesus Christ." 1st Thessalonians 5:16-18.

How can we "can we "pray continually?" Do we have to stay on our knees all the time of course not? But we are to live so closely in touch with Jesus that we feel free to speak to him anytime, anywhere.

"In the crowds of the street, in the midst of a business engagement, we send up a petition to God and plead for divine guidance. We should have the door of the heart open continually and our invitation going up that Jesus may come and abide as a heavenly guest in the soul." Steps to Christ. One of the ways to develop this of intimate relationship is to learn to meditate as we pray.

"May my meditation be pleasing to him, as I rejoice in the Lord?" Psalm 104:34.

Don't just rush through a list of requests when you prayer. Wait. Listen. A little prayerful reflection can greatly enrich your relationship with God.

"Come near to God and he will come near to you. James4:8."

The closer we come to Jesus, the more we're able to experience his presence. So keep within speaking distance of Jesus, and don't worry about saying the right words.

Just talk honestly and openly. Talk about everything. He's gone through the agony of death itself in order to become your intimate Friend.

HOW TO PRAY

When we engage in prayer, we may wish to follow the outline of the Lord's the model prayer Jesus taught his disciples in response to their request: "Teach us to pray."

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, you will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not temptation, but deliverer us from the evil one, for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever AMEN." Matthew 6:9-13, Margin.

According to the pattern Jesus provides in his prayer, we are to come to God as our heavenly father. Ask that his will take care in our hearts just as his will prevails in all of heaven. We seek him for our physical needs, for forgiveness, and for a forgiving attitude. Remember that our ability to resist sin comes from god. Christ's prayer concludes with expressions of praise. On another occasion Jesus instructed his disciples to pray to the father "in my name" (John 16:23) that is to pray in harmony with Jesus' principles. That's why Christians usually close their prayers with the words: "in Jesus' name, Amen." Amen is a Hebrew word that means "Let it be so."

Although the Lord's prayer gives guidelines on what to pray for and how to formulate a prayer, our communication with God works best as a spontaneous composition of the heart.

We can pray about everything. God invites us to pray about forgiveness for our sins (1st John 1:9), increased faith (Mark 9:24), the necessities of life (Matthew 6:11), healing from suffering and disease (James 5:15), and the outpouring of the Spirit (Zechariah 10:1). Jesus assures us that we can take all our needs and cares to him; nothing is too small to pray about.

“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.” 1st Peter 5:7.

Our savior is interested in every detail of our lives. His heart warms when our hearts reach out to him in love and faith.

PRIVATE PRAYER

Most of us have things we hesitate sharing with our closest friends. So God invites us to unburden ourselves in private prayer: one on one with him. It's not that he needs any information. The Almighty knows our secret fears, hidden motives, and buried resentments better than we do ourselves. But we need to open up our hearts to the one who knows us intimately and loves us infinitely. Healing can begin when Jesus can touch our wounds. When we pray, Jesus, our high Priest, is near to help us:

“We have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” Hebrews 4:15, 16.

Do you feel anxious, stressed-out, and guilty? Lay it out before the Lord. He can then supply our every need. Should we have a special for private prayer?

“When you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who will reward you,” Matthew 6:6.

In addition to praying when walking in the street, working on the job, or enjoying a social gathering, every Christian should have a time set aside each day for personal prayer and Bible study. Make your daily appointment with God at the time when your daily appointment with God at the time when you feel most alert and concentrate the best.

PUBLIC PRAYER

Joining with others in prayer creates a special bond and invites God's power in a special way.

“For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.” Matthew 18:20.

One of the greatest things we can do as a family is to develop a prayer life together. Show your children that we can take our needs to him directly. They'll get excited about God as they see him respond to prayer in the practical details of life. Make family worship a happy, relaxed time of sharing.

SEVEN SECRETS OF ANSWERED PRAYER

When Moses prayed, the Red sea parted. When Elijah prayed, fire came down from heaven. When Daniel prayed, an angel shut the mouths of ravenous lions.

The Bible presents us with many exciting accounts of answered prayer. And it recommends prayer as the way to tap into the mighty power of God.

Jesus promises: "You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it." John 14:14. Yet some prayers seem to go unheeded. Why? Here are seven principles that will help you pray more effectively:

Keep close to Christ.

"If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you." John 15:7.

When we make our relationship with God a priority and keep in touch with him, we'll be listening and looking for answers to our prayers that, otherwise, might go undetected.

Keep trusting God.

"If you BELIEVE, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer." Matthew 21:22.

To believe, or have faith, means that we're really looking to our heavenly Father to supply our need. If you're troubled by a lack of faith remember that our Savior performed a miracle for the man who pled in desperation:

"I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" Mark 9:24.

Just concentrate on exercising the faith you do have; don't worry about the faith you DON'T have.

Surrender calmly to God's will.

"This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us." 1st John 5:14.

Remember that God wants to teach us, as well as give us things, through prayer. So sometimes he says, "NO"; sometimes he turns us in another direction. Prayer is a means of getting more and more in touch with God's will. We need to be sensitive to God's responses and learn from them. Keeping track of specific requests and what happens as a result is a great help.

The Holy Spirit will help you zero in on the right mark: "The Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will" (Romans 8:27). Remember that our will would always coincide with God's will if we could see as he does.

Wait patiently on God.

"I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry." Psalm 40:1. The main point here is to keep your focus on God, keep your focus on God, and keep your focus on his solution. And don't ask God for support one minute and then try to drown your troubles in pleasure-seeking the next. Wait patiently on the Lord; we badly need that discipline.

Don't hand on to any sin.

"If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened." Psalm 66:18. Known sin short-circuits the power of God in our lives: it separates us from God (Isaiah 59:1-2). You can't hang onto sin with one hand reach out for divine help with the other. Sincere confession and repentance solves the problem. If we're not

willing to allow God to free us from evil thoughts, words, and deeds, our prayers won't be effective.

"When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures." James 4:3.

God isn't going to answer "Yes" to selfish prayers. Keep your ears open to God's law, his will, and he will keep his ears open to your petitions. "If anyone turns a deaf ear to the law, even his prayers are detestable." Proverbs 28:9.

Feel the need of God.

God responds to those who ask for his presence and power in their lives.

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." Matthew 5:6.

Persist in Prayer.

Jesus illustrated the need to persist in our petitions by telling the story of a very persistent widow who kept coming to a judge with her request. At last the Judge said exasperation, "Because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice." Then Jesus concluded: "will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?" (Luke 18:5-7).

Discuss all your needs, hopes, and dreams with God. Ask for particular blessings, for help in time of need. Keep seeking, and keep listening, until you learn something from God's response.

ANGELS MINISTER TO THE NEEDS OF THOSE WHO PRAY

The psalmist rejoiced that through the ministry of the angel of the Lord his prayers were answered:

"I sought the Lord, he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them." Psalm 34:4-7.

When we pray, God sends angels to answer our prayers (Hebrews 1:14). Each Christian has an accompanying guardian angel:

"See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their Angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven." Matthew 18:10.
Because of our prayers: **"The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, present your requests to God the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, Philippians 2:5-7"**

THE CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE

The Bible describes a distant Christian lifestyle. According to Ephesians 4:22-24, the Christian is to "put off" the old lifestyle that resulted from "deceitful desires," and "put on" the new lifestyle is "created to be like God." In this scripture and in Lessons 6 we discovered that at the new birth we are "re-created" to be a different kind of person we are "re-created" to be a different kind of person in Christ.

This guide and the six Lessons which follow showcase the Christian lifestyle; they reveal the secrets of a happy Christian life. They will help you build a stronger relationship with Christ that will result in a distinct Christian lifestyle. So fix your eyes on Jesus today and you can be part of that final victory celebration when Christ's peace reigns unchallenged.

LESSON: FIFTEEN

THE SECRET TO HAPPINESS

In 1943, Japanese occupation forces ordered hundreds of American and European “enemy nations” to an internment camp in China’s shantung province. They had to endure months of boredom, frustration, overcrowding, and fear. Personalities clashed, tempers flared. Petty squabbles multiplied.

But one man was described by an internet as “without a doubt the person most in demand and most respected and loved in camp” Eric Liddell, a missionary from Scotland.

A Russian prostitute in camp would later recall that Liddell was the only man who’d ever done anything for her without wanting to be repaid in kind. When she first came into camp, alone and snubbed, he put up some shelves for her. Another internee recalled, “He had a gentle, humorous way of soothing ruffled tempers.” At an angry meeting of the internees, everybody was demanding that someone else do something about the restless teenagers who were getting into trouble. Liddell came up with a solution. He organized sports, crafts, and classes for the kids, and began spending his evenings with them.

Liddell had won fame and glory at the 1924 Olympics, taking a gold medal in the 400 meters race. But in that cramped compound he showed himself a winner in the Christian race as well, earning the admiration of the most worldly internees.

What made him so special? You could have discovered his secret at 6 a.m. each morning. That’s when he secret down at a past sleeping companions, settled down at a table, and lit a small lamp to illuminate his notebook and Bible. Eric Liddell sought grace and strength each day in the riches of God’s Word.

THE GUIDEBOOK TO THE CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE

The Bible was written as a lesson book for the Christian. It is full of stories of real people like us who have experienced the same challenges we face every day. Getting to know these Bible characters their joys and sorrows, their joys and sorrows, their problems and opportunities helps us mature as Christians and opportunities helps us mature as Christians.

The psalmist David pictures our daily dependence on the word of God by comparing it to a flashlight [torchlight]:

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.” Psalm 119:105. (Unless otherwise noted, all scriptural texts in the Discover Lessons are the New International version of the Bible “NIV”)

The illumination we get each day from the Bible makes clear the qualities we need in our lives and the principles of spiritual growth. Above all, the Bible presents us with Jesus, the Light of the world. Life only makes sense when Jesus is shining on it.

A TRANSFORMING FRIENDSHIP

Christ wants the Bible to be as real to you as a personal letter from a close friend. "I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you." John 15:15.

Jesus wants the very best for us. His word brings us into God's inner circle: those he confides in and personally instructs.

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace." John 16:33.
In order to experience this peace, this secure relationship with Christ, we need to read the letters he sends us. That's what the Bible is: correspondence from heaven.
Don't leave those letters unopened.

The transforming message you need is in the word. Here is one typical testimony about the Bible's impact: "I needed help, and I found it in Jesus. Every want was supplied, the hunger of my soul was satisfied; the Bible is to me the revelation of Christ. I believe in Jesus because he is to me a divine Savior. I believe the Bible because I have found it to be the voice of God to my soul."

GUIDELINES FOR LIVING IN THE BIBLE AND THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

A brief look at the Ten Commandments will help us understand why they and the Bible are an indispensable basis for right living.

The Commandments naturally fall into two divisions. The first four define our relationship to God, and the last six define our relationship to God, and the last six define our relationship to other people. They are found in Exodus 20:3-17.

The first two commandments outline our relationship to God and to his worship.
"You shall have no other gods before me." "You shall not make for yourself an idol.
You shall not bow down to them or worship them."

The 3rd and 4th commandments sketch our relationship to God's name and to his holy day.

"You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God."

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God."

Commandments 5 and 7 safeguard family bonds.

"Honor your father and your mother."

"You shall not commit adultery."

Commandments 6, 8, 9, and 10 protect us in social relationships.

"You shall not murder."

"You shall not steal."

"You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor."

"You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

The Ten Commandments define our relationship both to God and to other people.
They are the guideposts of a Christian lifestyle.

WHAT JESUS SAID ABOUT THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

One day as Jesus was teaching, an enthusiastic young man hurried up to him and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" (Matthew 19:16). Christ could see that he was wrestling with a money problem and advised him to get rid of his possessions and "obey Ten Commandments" (verse 17).

The young man tried to sidestep Christ's diagnosis of his problem by asking which Commandments he was talking about. Jesus listed several of the Ten Commandments (Verses 18, 19). Finally, the "rich young ruler" turned and walked away sadly (verses 20-22). He could give mental assent to the Ten Commandments, but he couldn't obey the spirit of the law by abandoning his selfish way of life.

The Ten Commandments show us the boundaries within which healthy relationships, with God and each other, can grow. Jesus pointed to obedience as the way to real joy:

"If you OBEY MY COMMANDS, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete." John 15:10, 11.

LESSON TO A HAPPY LIFE

The book of Ecclesiastes is a report of Solomon's search for happiness. He records his quest for happiness in the riches of the world: magnificent houses, productive vineyards, beautiful gardens, and orchards of luscious fruit. He multiplied servants. He found himself surrounded with every material thing a person could desire. But happiness eluded him, and he wrote:

"When I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind." Ecclesiastes 2:11. Solomon then turned to searching out the pleasures of this world in hope of finding happiness. He was taken in by wine, women and song. His conclusion:

"Meaningless! Meaningless! Everything is meaningless!" Ecclesiastes 12:8. Solomon had once tasted and seen that the Lord is good. As he compared his early life of obedience to God with his reckless chase for happiness in the things of sin, his verdict:

"Here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." Ecclesiastes 12:13.

Solomon felt he could find a shortcut to happiness in a wild life. Toward the close of his life, he was man enough to admit his error. To save others from the same error, he wrote, "He that keeps the law, happy is he." Proverbs 29:18, KJV.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS AND INDISPENSABLE NEW TESTAMENT LESSON In the New testament, James testified"

"For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. For he who said, 'Do not commit adultery,' also said, 'Do not murder.' If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker. Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom." James 2:10-12.

Charles Spurgeon, the Baptist preacher of the past century, declared: "The law of God is divine law holy, heavenly, and perfect. There is not a concommensurable that its perfection is proof of its divinity." John Wesley, one of the founders of the Methodist church, wrote this about the enduring nature of the law: "The moral law contained in Ten Commandments. He {Christ} did not take away. Every part of this law must remain in force upon all mankind and in all ages."

Billy Graham, the world's most respected evangelical evangelist, regards the Ten Commandments so highly that he has written an entire book about their importance to the Christian.

POWER TO OBEY

The Bible and the Ten Commandments are an unchangeable, indispensable, perfect guide to happy living. Yet hearts are still in conflict. One woman expressed it like this: "I believe the Ten Commandments are binding, I am certain that keeping them leads to happiness. I have tried my very best to keep them, but I just can't do it. I'm beginning to believe that no one else can."

The tendency of the natural person is to try to live a life of obedience to God's commands. But in answer to such trying, over and over again from within the blackened heart of a person comes the frustrated response, "I can't obey!" why? Because:

"The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so." Romans 8:7. What is the purpose the Ten Commandments law? "Through the law we become conscious of sin." Romans 3:20.

The function of the law is to lead us to utter realization that we are hopelessly lost sinners in need of a savior.

"The law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith." Galatians 3:24.

Jesus is the answer! Once we are at Jesus' feet in absolute helplessness, by faith we can receive forgiveness for our sins and power from him to obey his Commandments.

LOVING OBEDIENCE TO THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

Jesus tells us that obedience is the result of love:

"If you love me, you will obey what I command." John 14:15.

If we love God, we will obey the first four Commandments which define our relationship to God; and if we love people, we will obey the last six which define our relationship with others. The person who tramples on the Ten Commandments sins:

"Everyone who sins breaks the law, in fact, sin is lawlessness." 1 John 3:4. But thank God, we have a savior who came to this world and died, was resurrected, and now lives for one purpose: "But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins."

Our Savior forgives and removes our sinfulness (1 John 1:9). He then promises to give us his love to love with the great antidote to a life of selfishness and sin:

"God Has Poured out His Love in Our Hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us." Romans 5:5.

GOD'S GRADE AND OBEDIENCE TO THE LAW

Salvation is a gift. We cannot earn it. We can only accept it by faith. We receive justification (right standing with God) as a gift, solely through faith because of God's grace "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith and this from yourselves, it is the gift of God not by works, so that no one can boast." Ephesians 2:8.

We cannot keep the Commandments by our own works by trying. We cannot keep the Commandments to be saved. But when we come to Jesus in faith and

submission and are saved, his love fills our hearts. As a result of this divine grace and acceptance, we desire to follow him and obey him through the power of his love in our hearts (Romans 5:5).

Paul stresses the futility of human effort and indicates that that we are not under the law was a way of salvation, but “under grace.” “Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!” Romans 6:15.

Why? Because a heart motivated by love produces a life of loving obedience! (Romans 13:10). To love Christ is to obey him:

“Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one loves me.” John 14:21.

Eric Liddell demonstrated that, even in the worst of circumstances; the believer who is plugged into God’s power can live a contented, obedient life. Liddell demonstrated a winsome grace in a time of stress and fear. His love relationship with Christ energized him with the Holy Spirit, and enabled him to meet “the righteous requirements of the law” (Romans 8:1-4).

A love relationship with the crucified and risen savior can produce that quality of life. Have discovered this secret for yourself? Jesus’ love for you caused him to give his life for your sin. He offers to empower all your relationships with his love and to “equip you with everything good for doing his will” (Hebrews 13:21).

LESSON: SIXTEEN

THE SECRET TO HEAVENLY REST

Just a few years ago some were predicting we would soon have more leisure time than we’d know what to do with. There were good reasons for those confident predictions. In the cities of the world computers were crunching through month-long tasks in fractions of a second. And robots had begun to handle the grueling jobs of heavy industry.

But after the computers have been whirring and the automation automating, we’re more out of breath than ever. People are running out of time these days. Above all, families are running out of time. Husbands and wives find it hard to schedule “quality time” with the kids, much less with each other.

One study in a small community showed that the average time per day that fathers spent alone with their very young sons was 37 seconds! Families are out of time and out of touch. How can we slow down enough to get in touch again?

THE REMEDY FOR HIGH-TENSION LIVING

Jesus understands the problems of families under stress and he wants us to understand that spiritual rest is part of the quality of life:

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, Matthew 11:28, 29. (Unless otherwise noted, all Spiral texts in the discover guides are from the New International Version of the Bible {NIV}.)

THE Bible suggests we experience this kind of rest two ways: coming to Christ on both a daily and a weekly basis.

A DAILY LINK WITH JESUS

Crowds constantly clamored for Jesus' attention. And yet Christ communicated a peaceful, tranquil spirit to everyone around him. How? He invested time each day communing with his heavenly Father. He depended on his Father continually for resources to meet life's challenges (John 6:57).

If we are to live the serene, steady life that he did, we must continually depend on Jesus let him word and Spirit fill us and shape us. The best way to counter the forces burring us out as individuals and tearing us apart as families is to invest quality with Christ. He tells us: "Remain in me, and I will remain in you apart from me you can do nothing." John 15:4, 5.

One of the greatest needs of our time is for people to tap the spiritual resources available through forming a day-by day relationship with Jesus. One very important point that needs to be emphasized about our relationship with Christ is his finished work on the cross. True rest, real, real security, can only exist because of the great accomplishment Jesus referred to when he cried out as he was dying: "It is finished" (John 19:30). In other words, his work of redeeming us was completed.

"But now he (Christ) has appeared once for all to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself." Hebrews 9:26.

When Jesus died, he did "away with sin." That's why it's said that the believer who has confessed his or her sins can "rest" in the finished work of Christ. We're accepted.

Guilt lies behind much of the frantic pace of our lives today. But Jesus solved the guilt problem once and for all at the cross. Jesus' cry, "It is finished," sealed his promise of "I will give you rest" as an established fact. Christ completed the work of redeeming us at canary (Titus 2:14), then he rested in the tomb over the Sabbath, and rose from the grave the tomb over the Sabbath, and rose from the grave Sunday morning as the Victor sin and death. The Christian can have no greater assurance than to rest in the finished work of Christ.

Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful." Hebrews 10:22, 23.

Because he "who promised is faithful," we can enter into the salvation-rest Jesus had promised. The stability, peace, and rest we experience in Jesus every day is a rest not of anything we do, but of what he did at the cross.

We can rest in Christ because our salvation is assured. That assurance motivates us to spend time with Christ each day, feeding on his word and berating in the atmosphere of heaven through prayer. A rendezvous with Jesus help us turn a stressed-out lifestyle into a peaceful and purposeful life.

A WEEKLY LINK WITH JESUS

After Christ created the he world the world in six days (Colossians 1:16-17), he provided Sabbath-rest. It is a weekly opportunity for us to cultivate our connection with him.

"God saw all there was evening, and there was morning the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in their entire vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he RESTED from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it Holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done." Genesis 1:31-2:3.

As their Creator, Jesus "rested" on the first Sabbath with Adam and Eve, and he "blessed" the Sabbath day "made it holy." God established a seven-day weekly cycle, not for his own benefit, but for Adam and Eve and for us today. Because he cared so much for the people he had made, he planned that every seventh day throughout their lives should be dedicated to seeking his presence. Each Sabbath, as he called it, was to be a day of both physical rest and spiritual refreshment. The entrance rest more acute.

The same Savior who promised Adam and Eve "rest," about two thousand years later gave law to Moses on mount Sinai (1 Corinthians 10:1-4). Jesus chose to place the Sabbath-rest commandment at the very heart of the Ten Commandment at the very heart of the Ten Commandments. The fourth Commandment reads:

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, or your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it Holy." Exodus 20:8-11.

God established the Sabbath as a day to "remember" the Lord who "made the heavens and the earth." Sabbath-rest each week links us with the Creator who blessed this day and set it apart. When Jesus lived on earth, he took advantage of every opportunity to sustain his union with Father. He benefited from Sabbath-rest by worshiping on Sabbath, as Luke tells us:

"He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom." Luke 4:16.

If the divine-human day, we human beings certainly need it more. When Jesus swept aside the legal restrictions the Jews had placed on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:1-12), he pointed out that God had made it to benefit people:

"He said to them, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath." Mark 2:27, 28."

Jesus highlighted the importance of the Sabbath even in his death. He died on Friday, "the preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin" (Luke 23:54). At that moment he declared, "It is finished," that is, his work of coming to this world and dying as substitute for the human race was complete (John 19:30; 4:34; 5:30). Then to celebrate his finished mission, Jesus rested in the tomb over the Sabbath. Just as Christ completed his work of creation the sixth day and then rested on the seventh day, so through dying on the cross he completed his work of redemption on the sixth day, and then rested on the seventh.

On Sunday morning Jesus came out from the tomb, a victorious savior (Luke 24:1-7). Speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem, which took place nearly forty years after his death, he charged them:

"Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath." Matthew 24:20.

Our Savior wanted his disciples and their converts to continue the practices he had taught them (John 15:15, 16). He wanted them to experience both salvation-rest and Sabbath-rest.

They did not disappoint him. The disciples continued to observe the Sabbath after Christ's death (see Luke 23:54-56; acts 13:14; 16:13; 17:2; 18:1-4).

The beloved apostle William Simiyu kept up his weekly link with Christ on the Sabbath day. In his later years he wrote, "On the lord's day I was in the spirit" (Revelation 1:10). According to Jesus, "the Lord's day" is the Sabbath, "for the Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath" (Mathew 12:8).

On the Sabbath we celebrate the Lord's two greatest accomplishments our behalf: creating us and saving us. This Sabbath experience will continue in heaven:

{ 'as the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me,' declares the Lord, 'from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me,' says the Lord." Isaiah 66:22, 23.

THE BENEFITS OF SABBATH-REST

People today are trampling over other in their frantic life. Individuals are burning out. Families are falling apart under the strain. But God presents the Sabbath as a much better way to live the good life. Let's look at some of the specific benefits of Sabbath-rest:

1. The Sabbath is a memorial of creation, and by keeping it holy, we erect a memorial to our Creator its sacred hours offer a wonderful opportunity to get in touch with our roots in God's created world. When was the last time you or your family took time to really soak in the quiet beauty of a forest path or rocky stream? The Sabbath gives us time to spend with Jesus and catch glimpses of the wonders he has made for us.
2. On Sabbath we experience the joy of worship and fellowship with other Christians. There's a benefit from praising God with others as a group of worshipers. The Sabbath gives us that special time of coming together as a church body to recharge our spiritual batteries.
3. The Sabbath provides occasions to perform thoughtful acts of kindness. Has a neighbor been sick during the week when you had no time to visit? When a friend needed a sympathetic ear after her husband's death, did the pressure of daily living deprive her of your loving attention? Jesus advised: "It is lawful to do well on the Sabbath" (Mathew 12:12).
4. The Sabbath is a day to strengthen family ties. When Christ commanded, "On (the Sabbath) you shall not do any work" (Exodus 20:10). He couldn't have given a better prescription to workaholic

dads and stressed-out moms. The Sabbath is a giant STOP sign for families. Stop letting the most urgent things crowd out the most important things. The Sabbath is one day when we can replace pressure with prayer, labor with laughter, busy schedules with quiet reflection. Sabbath-rest provides the entire family with time to link up with Christ and tap into his spiritual energy.

5. The Sabbath is a time when Jesus comes especially near. Every relationship needs quality time, and our relationship with Christ is no exception. Devoting a whole day to Christ each week is a great way to keep our friendship with him fresh and exciting. The Sabbath gives us extra time for Bible study and prayer, extra time to simply be alone with Christ in a quiet place and listen.
6. Jesus “blessed the seventh day and made it holy” with the promise of his presence (Genesis 2:3). You can understand why it is important to observe Saturday, the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath, because it is the day Christ set apart at creation to communicate with us in a special way.
7. When Jesus created the Sabbath it almost seems that he had our generation in mind. It’s exactly what we need in our stress-filled environment: a day that is truly a complete break from everything else. A day to worship God, gets in touch with creation again, and concentrates on relationships instead of things.

A FORETASTE OF HEAVENLY REST

We can sum up the benefits of linking up with Just through a daily and a weekly encounter in one word rest. The word “Sabbath” comes from a Hebrew word that means rest, so it’s not surprising that the Scripture calls the seventh day “a Sabbath of rest” (Leviticus 23:3).

“[God] has spoken about the seventh day in these words: “And on the Seventh day God rested from all his work.” There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest.” Hebrews 4:4-11.

Experiencing “Sabbath-rest” gives us a weekly foretaste of the joy we will experience in the perfect rest of heaven. This rest isn’t just inactivity; it refers to the sense of security, peace and we-being that lie at the root of the truly abundant life. This kind of spiritual rest can be appreciated only through experience.

The testimony of those who have experienced salvation-rest and Sabbath-rest is universal: “If you enter into the rest of Jesus through a daily and weekly connection with him, you will discover the greatest joy in life.” Would you like to thank Jesus for his gift of rest? Would you like to thank him for the promise of salvation-rest each day to meet the challenges of life and for the promise of Sabbath-rest each week to cement your relationship with him? If you have never done so, would you like to accept the salvation he offers?

Would you like to tell him you desire to keep his Sabbath each week? Would you like to say, “Yes Lord? I desire to find delight in the day you have established.” Why not make that commitment right now? {You may be wondering: who changed the Sabbath from Saturday, the seventh day of the week to Sunday, the first day of the week? When was the change made? Did God authorize the change? These questions will be answered in Lesson.}

LESSON: SEVENTEEN

THE SECRET OF GROWTH THROUGH SHARING

Larry was enjoying pleasant conversation, Japanese tea, and rice crackers at Mr. Komori's house when the other guests began taking out their Bibles. They all looked at him expectantly. "Could you please give us or study now?" Mr. Komori asked.

Larry almost choked on his tea. He'd thought this get-together was just to have fun. And now he couldn't think of a thing to say. Larry had actually taught many Bible classes at the Christian English language school in Japan where he worked. But they were all well-planned. He could give out information on the Bible with ease. But to just talk about God spontaneously that was different.

Larry had heard all the Bible stories since childhood. But they meant very little to him on a personal basis. He'd been doing things he knew were wrong in God's eyes. How could he talk to others about a God he himself didn't really know?

Now, sitting there on the sofa, surrounded by expectant people, his charade was about to collapse. In that moment of fear, a verse flashed into his mind about the Holy spirit giving us words to say when we are brought before people to give witness (Luke 12:12). He uttered a desperate prayer for help and latched onto the most familiar story he could think of: the prodigal Son.

As he described how much God loves even those who wander away from him, Larry found himself speaking straight from the heart. His words were sinking in. For the first time in his life Larry realized how much God loved him. That night Larry knelt by his bed and committed his life to a God who'd finally become real. Sharing God's love had made it much more than just a familiar abstraction. It was now a fact that overwhelmed him.

JESUS CHALLENGES US TO GLORY BY SHARING

The disciples had spent three and a half years taking in Christ's words and actions, and finally his death and resurrection. As Jesus was about to return to heaven, he commissioned the disciples to be his personal representatives:

"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses. To the ends of the earth." Acts 1:8 (Unless otherwise noted, all scriptural texts in the Discover guides are from the New International Version of the Bible [NIV].)

When Christ's followers gave their hearts unreservedly to him at Pentecost, the risen Christ transformed their lives through the power of the Spirit. They became witnesses, not only to Christ's bodily resurrection and ascension, but also to his resurrection power that had changed their lives. As Christians we too are witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus because we have experienced his renewing power in our own lives.

"But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgression not by works but by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ in order that he might show the incomparable riches of his Grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus." Ephesians 2:4-7.

We have been made alive with Christ, so we can “show the incomparable riches of his grace.” And he asks us take the good news of what he can do in a human life to all the world, the promises to go with us as we do so (Matthew 28:19-20).

H.N.S. Richards, the founder of the voice of prophecy radio ministry, once testified: “I have seen the change in the hearts of people who have heard the gospel of Christ. I have traveled in lands where the name of God and of Christ was never known until his church took the gospel there. I have seen these people changed from filth to cleanliness, from disease to health, from constant fear of evil spirit to joy in Christian living. I have seen the change in the status of woman hood. I know that ‘the Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation’ (Romans 1:16).

I know that when the church proclaims the gospel message, changes take place in human hearts and in human homes, and they are visible in the lives of who respond to its apostle.” God has given to us weak human beings a special part to play in this exciting work, because sharing is a vital part of our growth. In order for our faith to remain healthy, it must be expressed. As Larry discovered so dramatically, sharing our faith helps us experience it more fully, and causes us to grow.

WE SHARE CHRIST BY THE WAY WE LIVE

A young man who’d grown up in an abusive home once observed: “I looked at my parents who by their example gave me a distorted image of God; I never had the example of someone with skin on who loves me.” People around us desperately need someone who will give a healthy picture of God. They need someone “with skin on” who will demonstrate godly qualities. Our most powerful sermon is often simply the way we live. Before a person cares how much you know, they must know much you care. Peter urges us:

“Live such good lives among the pagans [non-Christians] that they may see your good deeds and glorify God because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.” 1st Peter 2:12, 21.

Since “Christ suffered” for us at Calvary, we have an example of sacrificial love very close at hand. That love, reproduced in us as loving acts to others, can become a powerful force drawing unbelievers into the arms of Christ.

WE SHARE CHRIST BECAUSE OF THE WAY WE THINK

When the Devil ambushed Jesus in the wilderness with his appeals to appetite, pride, and presumption, Jesus fought back successfully by quoting from Scripture (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10).

Christ was preparing because he had filled his mind with Bible truths. That’s where the battle is won or lost in our minds. “For as {a person} thicket in his heart, so is he.” Proverbs 23:7, KJV.

Growing Christians think heavenward. They concentrate on the healthy qualities they are trying to acquire.

“Rejoice in the Lord always, in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is lovely, and whatever is

admirable if anything is excellent or praiseworthy think about such things. And the God of peace will be with you.” Philippians 4:4-9.

What we feed our minds makes all the difference. Garbage in, garbage out. God’s word in, God’s life out.

WE SHARE CHRIST BY THE WAY WE LOOK

As a represented of Christ, the Christian will be modest even about how he or she looks, avoiding all kinds of extremes.

“If any they do not believe the word, they may be won over when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Your beauty should not con from outward adornment, as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of you inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet Spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight. For this is the way {those} that put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful.” 1st Peter 3:1-5.

Simplicity in dress and adornment has always marked genuine Christ-likes. Ideally, others should be attracted to us as Christians not the statement we bout fashion, but by the statement our lives make about Jesus.

WE SHARE CHRIST BY THE WAY WE ACT

The historian Edward Gibbon tells us that that when Galerius sacked the camp of the Persians, a shining leather bag filled with pearls fell into the hands of a looting soldier. This man carefully preserved the useful bag, but threw away the precious pearls.

People who cling to the superficial thrills the world can offer up while discarding Jesus, the pearl of Great price are in even worse shape than the looting soldier. It’s not just a fortune that can slip through our hands, but eternal salvation. So scripture warns us:

“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world the cravings of sinful man (appetite), the lust of his eyes (love of the world), and the boasting of what he has and does (pride) comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.” 1st John 2:15-17.

Satan works hard to gold-plate the most destructive sins and the worst habits.

Advertising for alcoholic drinks shows only young, beautiful, hard-working, intensely happy people. We never see anyone who resembles a pathetic figure stumbling out of the liquor store with a paper sack in their hands.

We have to be careful of associations that compromise our Christian principles (2nd Corinthians 6:14). Christ does, of course, want us to keep reaching out to non-Christian friends.

Personal relationships are the primary means through which faith is shared. Just make sure that your associates are not dragging you back into the old way of life. What we take into our lives, even the entertainment we choose, has an impact on our spiritual life. We need to be conscious of what we’re feeding our minds.

“I will set before my eyes no vile thing.” Psalm 101:3.

If we feed our souls on the best, the worst won't be able to drag us down to its level. Holding to higher standards in the things we let into our homes and minds won't narrow our lives. The Christian has more to make him happy than anyone else.

"You will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand." Psalm 16:11.

WE SHARE CHRIST BY THE WAY WE GIVE

As he was about to baptize a new believer, the late pastor H.M.S. Richards noticed that the man still had a well-filled billfold in his pocket. Richards asked if he'd forgotten to leave his money in the dressing room. "My pocketbook and I will be baptized together," the man explained. He had caught the true spirit of Christianity giving to help others.

Christians grow by giving, and that is why "Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive' {Acts 20:35}." What we give to advance God's kingdom retains an eternal value "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But stoke up for yourselves treasures in heaven. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Matthew 6:19-21.

As you give, remember: "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it" (Psalm 24:1), including the silver and gold (Haggai 2:8). We ourselves belong to God, because He created us and because he rescued us from our sins by paying the price for our sins with his blood (1st Corinthians 6:19-20). Everything we own belongs to God, because he gives us "the ability to produce wealth" (Deuteronomy 8:18). How does our crucified and risen Lord invite us to share with him for giving the gospel to others?

"Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, 'how do we rob you?' 'In tithes and offerings. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,' says the Lord almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.' Malachi 3:8-10."

Tithe is a "tenth" of our "increase" (Deuteronomy 14:22, KJV; Genesis 28:22). For the farmer or merchant the increase is income after deducting business expenses. For the employee, it is the total wage. The principle of thing is a moral principle because it involves character. By failing to tithe we "rob" God. The tithe belongs to God and is to be used exclusively for supporting Christ's ministry (1st Corinthians 9:14), and finishing his work on earth so he can return (Matthew 24:14).

When Jesus came to live among us, he gave approval to tithing in New Testament times (Matthew 23:23). How much should we give in offerings? Offerings are a matter of individual decision. Each person "should give what he has decided in his heart to give" (2 Corinthians 9:5-7). You can't outlive God:

"Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap." Luke 6:38.

H.M.S. Richards once related this experience: "A lifelong gambler attended my meetings in Los Angeles, and I shall never forget the time I talked with him alone in the rear of the auditorium. He took a roll of bills from his pocket, \$500, and gave them all to me, saying, 'This is my first tithe.'

"The man was not well, and he had done nothing but gamble for 30 or 40 years, so I said, 'How are you going to live?' "He replied, 'I have only five or six dollars left, but this other belongs to God.' "Then I asked, 'What will you do?' {'I don't know,' he answered, 'but I know that I must pay my tithe to God, and he will take care of me.'

"And God certainly did. The man's repentance was sincere. He went all the way in his consecration and was happy in his Christian life. And God provided for him to the day of his death." God does not promise that all faithful believers will grow rich. But we have the assurance that our maker will supply life's necessities.

Christ gave everything for us. Let's give our hearts completely to him now. Let's share Christ with others by the way we live, think, look, act and give. Why not discover the joy of sharing Christ with others and of growing in his wonderful grace?

LESSON: EIGHTEEN THE SECRET OF A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

Contemporary researchers have taken pains to document a truth which the Bible first established: human beings are an integrated whole. What we often divide into the physical, mental, and spiritual parts of a person are really interrelated and inseparable. In other words, what affects the mind, affects the body. Our spiritual condition has an impact on our physical condition, and vice versa. We are a whole person.

For example, scientific researchers have found in controlled studies that happy, joyful laughter produces measurable changes in a person's immune system. You can actually help your body fight disease better by being happy! These studies show how closely the mind body work together.

Thousands of years ago God's word pointed out this vital connection between the mind and body which has only recently been accepted into medical theory: "A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones. Proverbs 17:22. (Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptural texts in the discover guides are from the New International Version of the Bible "NIV".)

According to the apostle John, how closely related are the mind and body to our spiritual well-being?

"Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well." 3rd John 2. Our Creator wants us to "enjoy good health." The word of God can serve as our fountain of health, as well as our fountain of eternal life. Since physical and mental health and our spiritual well-being go hand-in-hand, Paul makes the following appeal:

"Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." 1st Corinthians 10:31.

The gospel includes both physical and spiritual restoration. A healthful lifestyle can help us be vibrant Christians. Here are eight principles to follow if you really want to live a healthier and more productive life:

PURE AIR

Pure, fresh air is essential to good health. During the day and while sleeping at night, proper ventilation of our home and workplace insures that our blood will always distribute enough oxygen to every part of the body. Taking a morning walk is a great way to oxygenate your body.

The kind of air we breathe is obviously important. Be careful not to subject yourself to fumes, gases or air-borne bacteria from some hidden source. Smoking pollutes the air and is one of today's big killers. Scientific research has established a causal relationship between tobacco and lung cancer, emphysema, and heart disease. The body's addiction to the nicotine in cigarettes makes smoking one of the hardest habits to break. Smoking will kill 12 million people a year by the year 2020 if the present trend continues.

SUNLIGHT

"The benefits of sunlight are many:

"Fifteen to 30 minutes of daily exposure to sunlight in the early morning or late afternoon helps the body synthesize or make its own Vitamin D, an essential nutrient/hormone in the skin. Vitamin D helps blood to produce calcium and phosphorus, which build and repair bone mass.

"Sunlight acts as a disinfectant and a killer of bacteria.

"The sun provides energy by which the plant kingdom can convert carbon dioxide and water into carbohydrates. Without this process animals and humans would starve to death.

"Sunlight also helps a person adjust to night work and relieves depression related to dark days where winter occurs. "A word of caution: Sunlight can also be harmful. Prolonged exposure can burn skin, increase the risk of skin cancer, speed up the aging process, damage the eyes, and cause cataracts." [All quotations in this Guide are from look up and live: A guide to Health, Adult lessons, First quarter 1993, (Nampa, Idaho: pacific press publishing Association). Much of the material in this Guide that is not in quotes is condensed from this same publication.]

REST

The body must have rest in order to repair itself. We must have time for recreation and rest to relieve the tensions of work and family responsibilities. Without their required dosage of rest, people often experience anxiety, depression, and irritability. Such emotional stress can lead to illness were asking for all along.

There's simply no substitute for a good night's sleep.

Recharging our spiritual batteries on a daily basis is also important to physical health. A Christian's daily time of meditation, Bible study, and prayer will heal the body as well as the soul. We also need a regular break from the work cycle, a weekly day of rest, and annual or semi-annual

EXERCISE

Exercise is vital to our health:

Exercise is helps to normalize blood pressure.

Exercise allows more blood to reach all part of the body, keeping the extremities

warm.

Exercise releases both physical and emotional tension, helping you to feel better about life. Exercise, is usually the best cure for worry and stress.

Exercise provides electrical energy to the brain and nerve cells. It promotes health by stimulating the immune system. When the body is kept in tone by proper exercise, the mind thinks more creatively and efficiently.

It can help with your complexion and keep you trim.

Exercise Makes you more energetic, thus delaying both physical and emotional fatigue.

It aids in the brain's production of a chemical that gives you a sense of well-being and increase your tolerance for pain."

If you have not been exercising, start slowly and increase gradually as you gain endurance. It may wise to consult your physician before starting. your goal should be 4 in any type of exercise that is comparable to walking one mile in 5 minutes four or more times a week.

WATER

Since water is essential to every cell in the body, we should drink plenty of it.

By weight the body is about 80 percent water.

The body requires about two and one half quarts of water per day to perform all of its functions. Some of these functions include blood circulation, waste removal, nutrient transport, and digestion.

The average person has between 15 and 40 billion brain cells. Each one of those is 70 to 85 percent water. Sufficient water to supply these cells helps keep you mentally alert and helps prevent depression and irritability.

It is not the water you drink that is important. A cool or tepid daily bath or shower improves circulation, thus energizing the body and mind. A shower or bath can also soothe jangled nerves, which can cause illness by weakening the immune system. Bathing also removes impurities from the skin and can reduce fever."

PROPER DIET

At creation God instructed Eve to eat a diet of nuts, grains, and fruits (Genesis 1:29). After Adam and Eve sinned, Vegetables were added to their diet (Genesis 3:18). After the flood, the Creator added "clean" flesh foods to the diet (Genesis 7:2-3, 9:1-6).

The flesh of animals contains both saturated fat and cholesterol, which increase the risk of high blood pressure, stroke, heart disease, cancer, obesity, diabetes, and other diseases. Today many physicians advise those who eat meat to consume only lean, well-cooked meat and fish and to do so sparingly.

Because people on a vegetarian diet are healthier and live longer, many experts in nutrition and health urge us to consider returning to humanity's original diet of nuts, grains, and fruits with vegetables added. If you'd like to start a vegetarian menu, make, make sure you first understand how to provide a balanced diet without meat. Eat five or six servings a day of a variety of fruits, nuts, grains, legumes, and vegetables. Green and yellow vegetables, along with citrus, are especially important.

Use whole grain cereal flour, and use brown rice instead of white. Your intake of starches and complex carbohydrates should be six or more servings a day. Replace your intake of animal fats (butter, cream, lard, suet, etc.) with vegetable fats. The above diet is adequate without meat if you use dairy products.

Those who choose to eat meat as a part of their diet should eat only the meats that the Bible indicates are "clean," or fit for humans to eat. When God gave people permission to eat meat after the flood (Genesis 7:2-3, Leviticus 11:47), he defined which of the flesh foods were clean, and which were unclean and not fit to eat.

Read in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 15 the list of birds, beasts, and fish God pronounced unfit for food. According to these chapters, clean animals must divide, or split, the hoof and also chew the cud. Clean fish must have both scales and fins. Scavenger birds are forbidden.

Among the unclean animals, swine are especially mentioned and condemned (Deuteronomy 14:8). A high percentage of human bodies autopsied are infected with trichinae. These tiny worms are transmitted to people who eat infected pork.

Another reason may be the devastating effects of saturated fat on the human digestive system.

AVOID HARMFUL THINGS

What warnings does the Bible give about alcoholic beverages?

"Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise."

Proverbs 20:1. "Nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God." 1st Corinthians 6:10.

Alcohol affects the following bodily systems:

The immune system Alcohol decreases the white cells' ability to fight disease, thus increasing the risk of pneumonia, tuberculosis, hepatitis, and several cancers.

The endocrine system Only two or three alcoholic drinks per day increase the risk of miscarriages, stillbirths, and premature births.

The circulatory system The use of alcohol increases the risk of coronary heart disease, reduces blood sugar, and elevates blood fats and blood pressure, thus increasing hypertension.

The digestive system Alcohol irritates the stomach, thereby causing gastric bleeding. Habitual use of alcohol raises the risk of fatty liver, hepatitis, and cirrhosis of the liver." Alcohol is responsible for a large percentage of suicides, auto deaths, child abuse cases, and home violence.

TRUST IN DIVINE POWER

A person haunted by fear or guilt will find it hard to benefit fully from the health practices we've just described. But a person enjoying a positive faith in God will experience the ultimate source of well-being:

"Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit." Psalm 103:2-4.

David Larson, a consultant to the National Institute of Mental Health in the United States, did extensive research on the relationship between religion and health. His study demonstrated a direct connection between a Christian commitment and health. He was surprised to learn: those who stand church live longer than those who don't.

Church-goers have a reduced incidence of heart attack, hardening of the arteries, high blood pressure, and other diseases. Those who have faith in God live more productive lives because they are less likely to be depressed, to become alcoholics, to be jailed as repeat offenders, or to be trapped in an unhappy marriage. Trust in divine power is the keystone to genuine well-being and happy life.

Approximately 50,000 Seventh-day Adventists were studied, primarily in California, over 30 years. Results showed that Adventist men live 8.9 years longer and women 7.5 years longer than the general population. Studies of Adventists in Holland, Norway, and Poland show similar results. Researches attribute the longer life span of Adventists to their following some or all of the eight health principles outlined in this guide. Those who follow these principles not only have a longer life, but also a much better quality of life.

Applying the Bible's perspective to our lives does make a difference in all kinds of practical ways, offering convincing evidence that Christianity is the most practical, reasonable religion in all the world. It changes people their thinking and their actions and creates a new lifestyle.

Because of the close relationship between the mind, the body, and our spiritual life, Christians who live by the word of God will want to follow the principles of a healthful lifestyle as they prepare for Jesus' second coming (1 John 3:1-3). Christ not only wants us to be ready to meet him when he returns, he also wants to improve the quality of our present lives. We can cooperate with him by following God's basic health principles.

Jesus promises to deliver us from every destructive habit through his "Power a work within us" (Ephesians 3:20). If you are attempting to overcome some body-destroying habit such as using tobacco or drinking alcoholic beverages, your best resolutions to quit often turn to ropes of sand. But by tapping God's power that is "at work within" you, God can give you strength to overcome. The word of God promises: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

LESSON: NINETEEN

ENTERING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Here is a thrilling letter from one of our Bible school representatives in Africa: "Five years ago I received a request from the Voice of prophecy to visit a prisoner who was a Bible correspondence school student. I presented the request to the prison authorities, who graciously gave permission. Because the student had a deep desire to study the Bible, I visited him regularly.

"About six months after my initial visit, he asked to be baptized and join the Church. the authorities agreed to provide facilities so the baptism could take place in the

prison. The wardens and other prisoners gathered to witness one of the most moving baptisms I have ever conducted.

“Shortly after this, our brother was released from jail, even though he still had considerable time to serve.

When I asked why, I was told that his life had changed so drastically, and he was such a witness for his Savior and his religion that he could no longer be thought of as a prisoner, nor be treated as such. This man was united with his family and is now a leader in one of our large congregations.”

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF BAPTISM?

When this prisoner became a Christian and his life completely changed, why was it important for him to be baptized? In a conversation with Nicodemus, the community leader who came to Jesus by night, Jesus makes clear the importance and meaning of baptism:

“No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again unless he is born of water and the Spirit.” John 3:3, 5. (Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptural texts in the discover guides are from the New International Version of the Bible [NIV].)

So according to Jesus we must be born “of water and the Spirit.” “Born of the Spirit” signifies entering a new life by undergoing a change of mind and heart.

Because entering the kingdom of God involves a completely new kind of existence, not just an old life patched up, it is called the new birth. Water baptism is the outward symbolic portrayal of this inward change.

Our representative baptized the prisoner as recognition of his commitment to Christ and as a symbol of the transformation the Holy Spirit had begun in his Character.

WHY SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

Our salvation revolves around three of Christ’s great acts:

“Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, he was buried, and he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4.

Christ made salvation possible through his death, burial, and resurrection.

“Don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” Romans 6:3, 4.

Christ died for our sins, was buried, and then rose from the grave to give us a new life of righteousness. By being baptized we actually participate in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Baptism means that we have died to sin with Christ, buried the old life of sin with Christ, and we are rising to “live a new life” in Christ. Christ’s death and resurrection becomes our death and resurrection. God can make us dead to sin, as if we’d been crucified. He can make us alive to the things of the Spirit, as if we’d been resurrected from the dead.

The physical act of baptism graphically represents the water, we’re immersed completely, just as people who have died are lowered into the grave and covered.

This says we are willing to die with Christ and bury our old lifestyle. Baptism is a funeral, a formal farewell to an existence in which sin dominated. Then, we’re lifted

up out of the water by the one baptizing, just like a person being resurrected from the grave.

This says that we're a "new creation," entirely given to the "New life" God gives us. Only immersion can accurately illustrate the true meaning of baptism-death, burial, and rebirth. "Baptism" by sprinkling doesn't adequately symbolize the new birth.

What does it really mean to die with Christ?

"For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with {be rendered powerless, margin} that we should no longer be slaves to sin." Romans 6:66.

Baptism represents outwardly what a person must do inside: surrender everything to Christ. If we hold anything back from God, then we'll likely remain "slaves to sin."

When we surrender power fully to Christ, our sinful desires are "rendered powerless," and our transformation begins. Who is responsible for the change that takes place?

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Galatians 2:20.

When I identify with Christ's crucifixion through baptism, I invite a powerful force into my life "Christ lives in me." In order to put your life fully in Christ's hands, first look at Christ dying on the Cross. Don't look at the sin that's threatening you, don't look at your past record and moan; look to Jesus. Viewing Christ's gracious and courageous death at Calvary, you can express solidarity with him:

"By the power of the cross I claim that I am dead to old habits and responsive to God. I make my stand with Christ. From now on I will 'live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.'" As we tap into the power of Christ death and resurrect we see more and more of his good qualities replacing our old habits:

"If anything is in Christ, he is a new Creation; the old Through baptism we express our desire to look arms with Jesus and live a new and better life "in Christ." Jesus does in us what we could never do for ourselves. We arise from the water "a new" creation"; He gives us the power to live a "new" life.

WHY WAS JESUS BAPTIZED?

At Pentecost, Peter told those who were seeking release from guilt to "repent and be baptized" so Christ can forgive "your sins" (Acts 2:38). Since Jesus never committed a single sin, why did he permit himself to be baptized?

"Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John 3:13, 15.

Jesus was sinless. He didn't need to repent of any sin. He was baptized for another reason: "to fulfill all righteousness." By being baptized, Jesus set a positive example for us weak, sinful human beings. Christ never asks his followers to go anywhere he hasn't been. So when believers are immersed in the waters of baptism, they are following in the steps of the master.

Because Christ died for our sins, he can give us his righteousness.

"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." 2 Corinthians 5:21.

Transformed in God's eyes from sinners into saints, we grow into that "righteous," and thus we live a new life in Christ.

WHY SHOULD I BE IMMERSED?

Christ was immersed at his baptism; he was not sprinkled with water. John baptized him in the Jordan River "because there was plenty of water" (John 3:23). When Jesus was baptized, he went down into the water, and "as soon as Jesus was baptized (immersed, in Greek), he went up out the water" (Matthew 3:16).

When we understand the true meaning of baptism, we have little difficulty recognizing the authentic form of baptism. The very word "baptize" comes from Greek word baptize, and means to dip or immerse (put under).

During John Wesley's visit to America in 1737, a church jury of 34 men tried him on the strange charge of "refusing to baptize Mr. Parker's child, except by dipping." It's evident that the father of Methodism baptized his converts by immersion. The reformer John Calvin stated: "it is certain that immersion was the practice of Christian Religion, BK. 4, Chap. 15, and Second 19.

The history of the early church makes clear that baptism meant immersion.

Dean Stanley, of the Church of England, wrote: "For the first thirteen centuries, the almost universal practice of baptism was that of which we read in the word 'baptize' that those were baptized were plunged, submerged, and immersed into the water." Christian Institutions.

Baptisteries for immersing converts appear in many of the churches which were built between the fourth and fourteenth centuries in Europe and Asia, churches like the cathedral in Pisa, Italy, and St. John's, the largest church in Rome. It was not until the Council of Ravenna early in the fifteenth century that the Catholic Church accepted sprinkling as equally valid with immersion. In questions of church practice, we are not to follow what a man teaches, but what Christ and his apostles teach.

The Bible, however, makes it clear that a person must be taught the way of salvation before baptism (Matthew 28:19, 20) that a person must believe in Jesus before being baptized (Acts 8:35-38), and that a person must repent of sin and be forgiven before being baptized (Acts 2:38). A baby is incapable of believing, repentance, or confession, which must precede baptism.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BAPTISM

According to Jesus, baptism is essential for those who wish to enter heaven:

"No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit"
John 3:5.

Jesus gives only one exception. The thief on the cross was "born of the Spirit," even though it was impossible for him to leave the cross and be immersed in water as a sign of his change of heart. And Jesus Promised him that he would be with him in the kingdom (Luke 23:42, 43).

For the thief, being "born of water and of the Spirit" represents the blood of Jesus which was being spilt to cleanse him from his sins. Augustine observed, "There is

one case of deathbed repentance recorded, that of the penitent thief, that none should despair; and only one, that none should presume.” Jesus Himself gave this solemn warning: “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe [and therefore is not baptized] will be condemned.” Mark 16:16.

By dying in our place at Calvary, Jesus made a public demonstration of his love for us. We need to respond with a public, unashamed confession of our commitment to Christ through baptism. Have you begun a new life in Christ? Have you been baptized? If not, why not prepare for baptism in the near future?

BAPTISM IS ONLY THE BEGINNING

Baptism represents our commitment to a Christian lifestyle. But our surrender at baptism doesn’t automatically last a lifetime.

When a child is born, a celebration is in order. After the day of birth is over and the excitement subsides, the baby requires daily feeding, daily bathing, and daily concern for its welfare. It’s much the same with baptism. Paul said of his experience, “I die every day” (1 Corinthians 15:31). By daily turning from selfishness, we become more and more responsive to Christ.

The rite of baptism, like the wedding ceremony, was meant to be the formal confirmation that a wonderful and growing relationship has begun. In order to grow consistently, we need a daily giving of ourselves to Christ, a daily reception of a new life through prayer and Bible study.

A CAUSE FOR REJOICING

Baptism is cause for great rejoicing because those who place their faith in Christ have the assurance of eternal life. “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:16). When we are baptized, we’re on an upward path leading us to eternal joy. Baptism also celebrates a present happiness with Christ.

He promises the priceless gift of the Holy Spirit to those baptized (Acts 2:38). With the Spirit comes “the fruit of the Spirit” “Love,” which fills the life with “patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5:22, 23). Having Jesus living inside us by his Holy Spirit gives a profound sense of certainty. For “the Spirit himself testifies that we are God’s children” (Romans 8:15, 16).

This secure relationship with God brings us many benefits, but it doesn’t guarantee a problem free life. In fact, the doesn’t guarantee a problem free life. In fact, the enemy often tries to throw the most difficulties at those who’ve just made a commitment to Christ. However, when we’re in God’s hands we can know that he will use everything that happens to us, good and bad, to teach us and help us grow (see Romans 8:28).

A young woman made a decision to commit her life to Christ and be baptized, in spite of her husband’s threat of divorce. He wanted no part of her new faith, but she stuck to Jesus and tried to become a more loving wife than ever before. For some time the husband made things difficult at home.

But finally he was won over by an argument he couldn’t answer: her transformed life. This man surrendered his life to Christ and he too was baptized.

Sticking close to Christ through “thick and thin” will make us powerful instruments in his hands. We can commit our lives to him unconditionally because he has already made the ultimate commitment to us when he paid the price for our sins on the cross. What a privilege it is to publicly give him our love and allegiance! If you haven’t yet done so, why not surrender your life to Christ right now. Ask him to create a new life in you by the Holy Spirit, and then be baptized into Christ.

LESSON: TWENTY

THE SECRET OF GROWTH THROUGH FELLOWSHIP

In the early 1960s, Brother Andrew, a man from Holland, smuggled a load of Bibles in his VW across the Romanian border and past communist guards. He checked into a hotel and began praying that God would lead him to the right Christian groups the ones who could best use his copies of the Scriptures.

That weekend Andrew walked up to the hotel clerk and asked where he might find a church.

The clerk looked at him a little strangely and answered, “We don’t have many of those, you know. Besides you couldn’t understand the language.” “Didn’t you know?” Andrew replied, “Christians speak a kind of universal language.” “Oh, what’s that?” “It’s called Agape.” The clerk had never heard of it, but Andrew assured him, “it’s the most beautiful language in the world.”

Andrew was able to locate several church groups in the area and managed to arrange to arrange a meeting with the president and secretary of a certain denomination. Unfortunately, although both Andrew and these men knew several European languages, they found they had none in common. So there they sat staring at each other. Andrew had travelled many dangerous miles with his precious cargo, but there seemed no way of telling whether these men were genuine Christian brothers or government informants.

Finally he spotted a Romanian Bible on a desk in the office. Andrew reached into his pocket and pulled out a Dutch Bible. He turned to 1 Corinthians 16:20 and held the Bible out, pointing to the name of the book, which they could recognize. Instantly their faces lit up. They quickly found the same chapter and verse in their Romanian Bibles and read: “All the brothers here send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

The men beamed back at Andrew. Then one of them looked through his Bible and found proverbs 25:25. Andrew found the verse and read: “Like cold water to a weary soul is good news from a distant land.” These men spent half an hour conversing and sharing just through the words of Scripture. They were so happy in this fellowship that crossed all cultural boundaries that they laughed until tears came to their eyes. Andrew knew he had found his brothers. When he showed them his load of Bibles, the Romanians were over helmed and embraced him again and again.

That evening at the hotel, the clerk approached Andrew and remarked, “Say, I looked up ‘agape’ in the dictionary. There’s no language by that name. That’s just a Greek word for love.” Andrew replied, “That’s it. I was speaking in it all afternoon.” Have you discovered that beautiful language? In this Guide you’ll learn about how Good Can brings all of us into his great circle of love.

THE CHURCH CEATED FOR FELLOWSHIP

Jesus established the church in order to meet the basic human requirement of nurture and support. We all have needs. And that's what the church is all about. It's a place where we come to fellowship and help each other. Scripture reveals a dynamic apostolic church which called men and women into a Joyful fellowship that extended all the way up to the Almighty:

"We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also many have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the father and with his Son, Jesus Crist. We write this to make our joy complete." 1 John 1:3, 4.

(Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptural texts UN DISCOVER guides are from the ne Bible 'NIV'.) A community oh hearts bonded through contact with Jesus and with one another, experience "joy" to the fullest! They're all speaking the same language, the language of love.

Christians become part an extended family. They become brothers and sisters in Christ since all have a kindred spirit. The broader the unity of belief, the stronger the ties among Christians.

The members of the churches established by Jesus' apostles were bound together by their similar beliefs, their love of God, and their desire to serve him and share his grace to the world. This close bond of fellowship was one of the reasons this powerless and persecuted minority turned the world upside down.

THE CHURCH CHRIST ESTABLISHED

Does Christ have a church, or is the whole idea of a religious organization just a human invention? Jesus answers: "On this ROCK I will not build my church, and the gates of hell well not overcome it." Matthew 16:18, margin. Jesus is the anchoring rock, the cornerstone, of his church. What group formed a part of the foundation? "Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ himself as the chief cornerstone." Ephesians 2:20. What did the Lord accomplish when the gospel was preached? "And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved." Acts 2:47 KJV.

When Jesus established the church, he promised the "the gates of hell will not overcome it" (Matthew 16:18), and the Christian church still endures. It has had extremely powerful enemies from Roman emperors to communist dictators but the blood of martyrs has only caused it to grow stronger. When one Christian was burned at the stake or tossed to the lions, several others sprang up to take his or her place. Skeptics have done their best to reason the Christian Church away. But Christian truth competes more eloquently than ever in a scientific, secular age.

One of the church's greatest challenges came soon after its acceptance as the official religion of the Roman Empire. The church grew prosperous and eventually was corrupted. It seemed spiritually dead in the dark Ages. But the lord always preserved a core of courageous and faithful believers who, in the bleak and difficult times, shone bright as stars on a moonless night.

Paul compares Christ's relationship to his church to a husband's tender, protective relationship to his wife (Ephesians 5:23-25). The church is a family, with each member establishing relationships to the other members of the family and contributing to their well-being (Ephesians 2:19).

Paul also represents the church as a living body, with Christ himself as its head (Colossians 1:18). When we are baptized, we testify to our faith in Jesus and become members of the “body,” the church.

“For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body.” (Corinthians 12:13. The book of Revelation pictures the risen Christ walking among the churches, showing his care over them (Revelation 1:20, 12, 13). Christ has never forsaken his people, and he never will.

A CHURCH WITH A PURPOSE

Church attendance is vital for a Christian. We need the support of others to keep our faith alive and growing. The church also plays three other important roles:

The church guards the truth. As the “Pillar and foundation of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15), the church upholds and defends God’s truth before the world. We need the collective wisdom of other believers to help us focus on the essential truths of Scripture.

The church is an example of what God’s grace can do for sinners. The changes that Christ has made in the lives of believers give acclaim to the God who calls “into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9).

God’s people are his witnesses to a needy world. Jesus before he returned to heaven, Jesus promised his disciples:

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1:8.

It is a great privilege for the church to take the message of God’s tremendous love worldwide.

ORGANIZED FOR STRENGTH

The church that Christ established had a definite organization. One could be included in, or excluded from, its membership (Matthew 18:15-18). God’s church appointed leaders and had a world headquarters as well as local meeting places (Acts 8:14; 14:23; 15: 2; 1st Timothy 3:1-13). When they were baptized, believers joined an organized group. (Acts 2:41 and 47).

The church exists for mutual encouragement.

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another and all the more as you see the day {of Christ’s coming] approaching.” Hebrews 10:24, 25.

This is, in a nutshell, what a healthy church group does. Its members build each other up in the faith, they encourage one other. God organized his church to strengthen God’s people and also to serve the world. We can do far more together than we can as isolated individuals. Take just one example: The Holy Seed Church. we carry on an extensive medical work around the world from inner-city health vans to clinics in remote islands off the South Pacific. Our educational institutions have brought tens of thousands of youth to knowledge of a better life in Christ from Loma Linda University, pioneering in heart transplants, to tiny mission schools scattered through the African interior.

We carry on famine and disaster relief through ADRA. Local churches help clothe and feed the poor and homeless at thousands of Community Service Centers. And groups of Adventist believers are sharing the message of salvation in more than 200 countries. Only an organized group of dedicated Christians could have this worldwide impact.

Christ and the apostles compared the church to a body, and pointed out that all parts of the body are needed (1 Corinthians 12:21-28). All body parts are not exactly alike, yet all are important and all must work together in harmony. An eye separated from the body can't see. A hand cut off has no value. Whether we are an eye, a hand, or only a finger, we can't be truly effective for Christ totally on our own. Belonging to a church, being united to the other members of the body, strengthens us as Christians.

THE JOY OF WORSHIP

Deep in our hearts lies a longing to worship God, and that need can wither away unless given expression. How did the psalmist feel when he thought about going to a place of worship?

"I rejoiced with those who said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord.' Psalm 122:1." What part does music have in public worship? "Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs." Psalm 100:2.

The Bible tells us that giving offerings is an appropriate part of divine worship.

"Bring an offering and come into his courts. Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness." Psalm 96:8-9. Prayer is also a vital aspect of public worship.

"Come, let us bow down in worship, and let us kneel before the Lord our maker." Psalm 95:6.

Bible study and preaching are central to New Testament worship. Beginning with Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost, found in Acts 2, and from time of the Protestant Reformers to our day, every great religious revival has been based on biblical preaching. Why? Because "the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword" (Hebrews 4:12-13).

WHAT'S RIGHT WITH THE CHURCH?

Some object that the church is full of imperfect people. What Henry Ward Beecher said is true: "The church is not a gallery for the exhibition of eminent Christians, but a school for the education of imperfect ones."

Since none of us is perfect, the church will never be perfect either. In one of his parables Jesus reminded us that weeds grow among the wheat (Matthew 13:24-30). When we read the New Testament letters of Paul, we discover that the apostolic church had critical problems. And the church today often has serious defects. But please remember that no faulty congregation can ever destroy or disturb the Great Cornerstone of the church Jesus Christ Himself. So in imperfect churches we must keep our primary gaze on the Savior who ministers to us. Despite its faults, the church belongs to him, so focus on Christ.

“Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.” Ephesians 5:25-27.

The church is so important to Jesus that he “gave himself up for her” when he died for each of us individually and for the church collectively. So Church membership should be important to you. Are you a member of Christ’s body?

FINDING A CHURCH

How many true faiths does Jesus have in the world?

“There is one body and one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism.” Ephesians 4:4, 5. Since Christ has only “one faith,” how can we know which one it is? Jesus gives us the key: “If anyone chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.” John 7:17. [See also John 8:31, 32.]

When we make a commitment to do God’s will, he will help us see whether the teaching is from God or is only human tradition. The key ingredient when finding a church is examining its respect for and allegiance to the word of God. Genuine fellowship is built around Scripture, not just around a charismatic leader or a great institution.

Continue making discoveries in these guides, walk in the light as God reveals it to you from the bible, and he will make plain his will for you. A growing Christian is a person who opens heart and to accept the truth as God reveals it forms his word.

LESSON: TWENTY ONE CAN THE MAJORITY BE WRONG?

In Lesson 16 we discovered that experiencing Sabbath rest is an important antidote to today’s stressful living. Since God understands our every need, he established each seventh day for our physical rest and our spiritual refreshment. After creating our world in six days, he “rested” on the seventh day, “blessed” and six days,, he “rested” on the seventh day, “blessed” and “Made it holy (Genesis 2:1-3).

When God gave the Ten Commandments to his people, Israel, he placed The Commandment to observe the seventh-day Sabbath at the heart of his law (Exodus 20:8-11).

According to this commandment, the Sabbath is a memorial of God’s creative power, a day to pause and think about the beauties and wonders of his created works, a day to relax and come close to our Creator, a day to explore in greater depth our relationship with him.

During Jesus’ human life on earth, he too kept the Sabbath Christians (Mark 2:27). Several texts in the book of Acts make it clear that Christ’s disciples worshiped on the Sabbath after his resurrection (Acts 13:14; 16:13; 17:2; 18:1-4, 11).

A PUZZLING QUESTION

This brings us to a subject that many find perplexing. The Christian world has for some time observed two different days. On one hand, most Christians sincerely

observe Sunday, the first day of the week, which they believe to be a memorial of Christ's resurrection. On the other hand large group of Christians, equally sincere, believe that the Bible honors only the seventh-day as the Sabbath and nowhere affirms the sanctity of Sunday.

Does it really make any difference which day we observe as the Sabbath? As sincere and earnest people who want to know the truth, we must always ask ourselves: "what matters to Jesus? What does Jesus desire me to do?"

In coming to a decision about this, several important facts need to be made clear: who changed the Sabbath from Saturday, the seventh day of the week, to Sunday, the first day of the week? Does the Bible authorize such a shift? If so, did God, Christ, or perhaps the apostles make the change?

We'll proceed by looking at all the possibilities.

DID GOD CHANGE THE DAY?

Is there any pronouncement from God that changes the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week? Most Christians accept the Ten Commandments as a valid guide to live by. They are the only message God has ever personally written out for the human race. They are so important, he wrote them on stone with his own finger (Exodus 31:18). In the fourth commandment God instructs us:

"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy." Exodus 20:8-11. (Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptural texts in the discover guides are from the New International Version of the Bible "NIV".)

When God gave the Ten Commandments to his people, he also made it clear that no human being should revise or edit the instruction from his holy lips.

"Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the Lord your God that I give you." Deuteronomy 4:2. God himself pledges not to alter his commands:

"I will not violate my covenant or alter what my lips have uttered." Psalm 89:34. The Bible is clear that God did not change the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week.

DID JESUS CHANGE THE SABBATH?

According to Jesus, the Ten Commandments are not subject to change:

"do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished." Matthew 5:17-18.

In Guide 16 we discovered that it was Jesus' custom to worship in the synagogue on the Sabbath (Luke 4:16). We also discovered that Jesus wanted his disciples to continue experiencing the joys of true Sabbath-keeping (Matthew 24:20). It is clear from Jesus' teaching and example that we still need the Sabbath for rest, relaxation, and spending time with God.

DID THE APOSTLES CHANGE THE SABATH?

Jesus wrote concerning the Ten Commandments: "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. For he who said, 'Do not commit adultery, 'also said, 'Do not murder.' If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker." James 2:10, 11.

Luke, a physician and evangelist in the early church, reports:

"On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, were we expected to find a place of prayer? We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there." Acts 16:13.

The New Testament book of Acts mentions 84 times when the Sabbath was observed by Christ's followers, all of them more the 14 years after the resurrection of Jesus: 2 Sabbaths at Antioch (Acts 13:14, 42, 44); 1 at Philippi (acts 16:13); 3 at Thessalonica (Acts 17:2, 3); 78 Sabbaths at Corinth (Acts 18:4, 11).

John, the last of the twelve apostles to die, kept the Sabbath. He wrote:

'On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit." Revelation 1:10.

According to Jesus, the Lord's Day is the Sabbath:

"The Son Man is Lord of the Sabbath." Matthew 12:8.

A search of the scriptural evidence reveals that the apostles made no attempt to change God's day of rest from the seventh the first day of the week. The New Testament mentions the first day of the week only eight times. In none of these instances is the first day of the week spoken of as a holy day, nor is it even hinted that we should set it aside as a day of worship. A critical examination of the eight texts referring to the first day of the week points out these Sunday events:

The women came to the tomb on the first day of the week (Matthew 28:1).

"When the Sabbath was over" the women resumed their secular activities on the first day of the week (Mark 16:1, 2).

Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene early the first day of the week (Mark 16:9).

Jesus' followers resumed their secular activities on the first day of the week Luke 24:1).

Mary went to the grave of Jesus and found tomb empty on the first day of the week (John 20:1).

The disciples gathered together "For fear of the Jews" (not for worship) on the first day of the week (John 20:19).

Paul asked church members to take account of their funds on the first day of the week, and "set aside a sum of money" for the poor at Jerusalem (1 Corinthians 16:1, 2). The passage does not mention any religious meeting.

In Acts 20:7 Luke speaks of Paul's preaching on the first day of the week at an incidental farewell meeting. Of courage Paul preached every day, and the apostles broke bread daily (Acts 2:46).

None of these scriptures suggest that the apostles intended to stop observing the seventh-day Sabbath. The apostles mentioned no change of the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week. There is clearly no New Testament evidence for a change of the Sabbath from Saturday, the seventh day of the week, to Sunday, the first day of the week. The change came after the days of Jesus and the apostles, so we must turn to history to see when and how the change came about.

WHERE DID SUNDAY COME FROM?

The apostles clearly warn us that some Christians would drift away from the doctrines of New Testament Christianity: "So be on guard!" (Acts 20:29-31). And that is exactly what happened.

Credible historians clearly record how Christians began to stray from apostolic purity. Traditions and doctrines which Paul, Peter, and the other founders of the Christian church had never endorsed gradually crept into the church.

The change from Sabbath observance to Sunday observance took place after the New Testament was completed and the apostles had all died. History records that Christians eventually shifted from worshiping and resting on the seventh day to the first day of the week. But of course believers didn't stop observing the Seventh-day Sabbath on a given weekend and then suddenly begin keeping Sunday as the Lord's Day. The earliest authentic instance of Sunday observance by Christians occurred in Italy, in the middle of the second century after Christ.

For a long time after the many Christians observed both days, while still others kept only the Sabbath. On March 7, A.D. 321, Constantine the Great issued the first civil Sunday law, compelling all the people, except farmers, in the Roman Empire to rest on Sunday. This, with five other civil laws decreed by Constantine concerning Sunday, set the legal precedent for all civil Sunday legislation from that time to the present.

History shows that Sunday worship and observance is a man-made custom. The Bible gives no authority to a man-made custom. The Bible gives no authority for doing away with the Seventh-day Sabbath of the fourth commandment. The prophet Daniel predicted that during the Christian era a deceptive power would attempt to change God's law (Daniel 8:25).

WHO MADE THE CHANGE?

Who officially moved Sabbath from the seventh day to the day of the week? The Holy Seed Church claims to have done so. In an attempt to save the crumbling Roman Empire, well-meaning church leader compromised and attempted to change the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday.

A catechism of The Holy Seed Church reads:

Which is the Sabbath day?

Saturday is the Sabbath day.

Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?

We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because The Holy Seed Church transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday." Peter German, the Convert's Catechism of Catholic doctrine (1957 edition)

The Holy Seed Church proudly announces that human church leaders made the change. "The holy day, the Sabbath, was changed from Saturday to Sunday not from any directs noted in the Scriptures, but from the Church's senses of its own power.

WHAT DO SOME PROTESTANT CHURCHES SAY?

Official documents outlining the beliefs of several protestant denominations agree that the Bible provides no authority for Sunday observance.

"They {The Holy Seed Church} allege the Sabbath changed into Sunday, the Lord's Day, contrary to the Decalogue (The Ten Commandments), neither is there any example more boasted of than the changing of the Sabbath day. Great, say they, is the power and authority of the church, since it dispensed with one of the Ten Commandments."

Methodist theologians Amos Boney and Daniel Steele observed: The Holy Seed Church had totally apostatized it reversed the Fourth Commandment by doing away with the Sabbath of God's word, and instituting Sunday as a holy day." A true history of the Christian and the Christian Church.

WHAT IS THE REAL ISSUE?

This brings us face-to-face with the questions: why do so many Christians observe Sunday without Bible authority? Even more important, which day shall I keep? Shall I follow those say, "I don't think it makes any difference which day I observe as long as long as I keep one day in seven?" Or, shall I count as important the day Jesus, our Creator, established when he created our world, and the day God pointed out in the Ten Commandments: "the Seventh day is the Sabbath?"

The essential issue is that of obedience to Jesus. Our creator set aside the Sabbath as a "holy" day, as a time for us and our families to come closer to him for strength and refreshment. Who shall I obey? Shall I obey Christ, the Son of God, or human tradition in the matter of the day I keep holy? The word of men or the of God.

The prophet Daniel sounds a warning to those who would "try to change the set times an set times and the laws" (Daniel 7:25, NIV) {"Intend to change times and law" (Daniel 7:25, NKJV)}. God is calling his people back to obedience. He invites them to keep the Sabbath as a symbol of loyalty and love to him.

Jesus said, "If you love me, you will obey what I command" (John 14:15). And he promises fullness of joy to those who love him enough to obey his command (John 15:9-11). We have a wonderful Savior. A heart of willing obedience opens the door wide to that love.

In the Garden of Gethsemane Christ submitted completely to the Father's will even though he faced the cross and the sins of the world were crushing out his life. "Take this cup frame," he remained surrendered in his pleading, and added, "Yet not what I will, but what you will" (Mark 14:36). Christ longs for us to experience the fulfillment the truly surrendered life brings. And he also wants us to experience the joy of Sabbath rest. He wants us to trust him enough to obey him in all the details of life. If you answer God's call and obey all of his commandments, you will experience the promise of Jesus that his Joy will "be in you" and "your joy will "be complete" (John 15:11.)

LESSON: TWENTY TWO

IS GOD FAIR?

A boy in the inner city is killed by stray gang bullets as he does his homework at the family table. A young mother in the suburbs finds that her child has contracted AIDS from a contaminated blood transfusion.

The tragedies go on and on in our world. And we long so much for an answer to it all. Where God in a world of is mangles suffering and death? The psalmist assures us that "the earth is full of his unfailing love" (Psalm 33:5).

But if that is true is true, why doesn't he bring an end to suffering and tragedy? The 20th chapter of Revelation shows us how and when God will bring sin and suffering to an end.

THE ONE THOUSAND YEARS UNVEILED

Revelation 20 zeros in on a 1,000-year period that follows the second coming of Christ. The events surrounding this 1,000-year period are the final act in the conflict between Christ and Satan that has been going on since sin entered the universe.

This drama began in heaven when Lucifer became jealous of Christ, started a war with the unfilled angels, was expelled, and fled to our world. The drama continued on earth in the Garden of Eden, then down through the centuries until I reached its first climax when the Devil impelled human beings to crucify Christ. (You may wish to review this sad story in Lesson 3)

The daima will reach its final climax at the close of the 1,000-year period when our sinful world is cleansed and placed under Christ's control. Revelation 20 shows us that the 1,000-year period is separated by two resurrections. Who does God raise from the dead in the first resurrection that takes place at the beginning of the 1,000 years?

"Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years." (Revelation 20:6. (Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptural texts in the discover guides are from the New International Version of the Bible {NIV}.)

The "blessed and holy," those who have accepted Jesus as their Savior, come up in the "first resurrection." If the righteous are to "rein with" Christ during the 1,000 years, they must be resurrected at the beginning of the 1,000 years. Who are raised in the second resurrection at the close of the thousand-year period?

"The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended."
Revelation 20:5.

The "rest of the dead" can refer only to the wicked dead, because the righteous, "the blessed and holy," are resurrected at the beginning of the 1,000 years. So the 1,000-year period is marked off by two resurrections: the resurrection of the righteous at its beginning, and the resurrection of the wicked at its close.

RESURRECTED AT CHRIST'S COMING

The first resurrection, that of the righteous, takes place at the second coming of Christ.

"For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever." 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17.

When Jesus comes to this earth again, he raises "the dead in Christ" and takes them, along with the righteous who are alive, to heaven. Because the wicked still cling to sin, they can't exist in God's presence, and they are destroyed at Christ's coming (Luke 17:26-30). (You may wish to review in Lesson 8 the events surrounding Jesus' return.)

SATAN CHAINED TO EARTH FOR ONE THOUSAND YEARS

When the 1,000 years begin, the righteous have all gone to heaven and the wicked are all dead. What will happen on this world during the 1,000 years?

"And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, which is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended." Revelation 20:1-3.

At Jesus' coming Satan is bound and will remain in chains during the 1,000 years. Where is Satan imprisoned? In the "Abyss," a Greek word that means "Very deep" or "bottomless." In Genesis 1:2 the Greek version of the Old Testament uses the word "Abyss" to describe the earth in its undeveloped state before the days of creation began. So our earth in the Abyss where God imprisons Satan.

Scripture describes Satan as bound by "a great chain." Is this a literal chain? No, it is symbolic, a chain of circumstances. Satan would like very much to continue deceiving people during the 1,000 years. But he can find no righteous people to tempt, because they are all in heaven. And he can find no wicked to lead, because they are all dead, asleep in the dust of the earth. Unable to deceive or tempt anyone, he roams an empty world forced to ponder all the heartaches and tragedy he has caused.

THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE THE WICKED

The thousand-year period is also a time of judgment. But remember that the Judgment consists of four main stages:

The pre-advent judgment of the righteous before Christ's second coming.
The reward of the righteous at the Second Coming.
The judgment of the wicked during the 1,000 years.

The reward of Satan and the wicked at the end of the period. (You may wish to review Lesson 13 that deals with stages 1 and 2 of the Judgment, the investigation and reward of the righteous.). We will now look at stages 3 and 4, the investigation and reward of the wicked.

We've seen that righteous dead who have been resurrected and the righteous who are alive are taken to heaven together at the second coming of Christ. They are at home in heaven during the 1,000 years. What will they be doing? "Do you not know that the saints (the saved) will judge the world? Do you not know that we will judge angels?" 1 Corinthians 6:2-3. "I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to Judge. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years." Revelation 20:4.

During the 1,000 years, the righteous will review the cases of wicked human beings and fallen angels, including their leader, Satan. How fitting for the martyrs, the overcomers, and the battle-scarred adherents of the gospel to examine and understand God's judgment of the wicked.

God has graciously given redeemed human beings the chance to evaluate his dealings with the wicked. We may have a lot of questions, like: "Why isn't my aunt here? She seemed such a good person." When we go over the records and judge the dead "a according to what they had done as recorded the books" (Verse 12), we will see ourselves that in all his dealings with human beings, God has been just and fair with everyone. We'll see how the Holy Spirit offered people chance to yield to God, and the fairness of each sentence will become plain.

SATAN UNCAINED WHEN THE ONE THOUSAND YEARS END

At the close of the 1,000 years, the Bible declares:

"I SAW THE Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband." Revelation 21:6.

This wonderful city has been our home for a thousand years. Now the Holy City with Christ and all the people he's redeemed inside descends from heaven to our world.

What Satan does at the close of the 1,000 years, the Bible declares:

"I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband." Revelation 21:2.

This wonderful city has been our home for a thousand years. Now the Holy City with Christ and all the people he's redeemed inside descends from heaven to our world. What does Satan do at the close of the 1,000 years?

"When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves." Revelation 20:7-9.

The wicked are resurrected in the second resurrection at the close of the 1,000 years [verse 5]. When the righteous descend to earth in the Holy City and the wicked are resurrected, Satan will be "set free for a short time" (Verse 3). He again has the wicked to lead and the righteous as his target.

Not wasting a moment, he immediately begins to organize the wicked into a vast army. Satan gives the command to march against the city. As the wicked take up positions around the New Jerusalem [verse 9], they catch a glimpse of the horror of being lost forever.

THE FINAL JUDGMENT SCENE

Here, for the time, all the human race meets together face-to-face. Jesus lads the redeemed children of God are inside the city. Satan heads the throngs of the wicked who are outside the walls. At this critical moment, God carries out the final stage of judgment and the wicked receive their day in court.

“Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and the dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.” Revelation 20:11, 12.

From the records contained in heaven, Jesus, the righteous Judge, formally unfolds the full story of his dealings with fallen men, women, and angels.

The entire universe looks on with intense interest. Standing before the throne of God, Jesus everyone a comprehensive view of his redemptive work. He reveals that he came to seek and save the lost. He entered our world in human flesh, lived a sinless life amid struggles and temptations, made the ultimate sacrifice on the cross, and served as our Priest in heave. Finally, when Christ sorrowfully steps forward and passes sentence on those who’ve persisted in rejecting his grace, every being in the universe will acknowledge the justice and necessity of this final act of divine judgment.

“We will all stand before God’s judgment seat. It is written: ‘As surely as I live,’ says te Lord, ‘every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.’ Romans 14:10-11.” “Christ Jesus became obedient to death even death on a cross! At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth, and every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Philippians 2:8-11.

Ever since sin began, the Devil has been slandering God’s character, accusing him of being unfair. Now every being in the universe acknowledges that Jesus, the Lamb of God, is worthy of our love and worship.

Not only the saved, but also evil angels and Satan himself will confess that Satan’s way has been wrong and that God’s ways are just and true.

SIN MEETS ITS FINAL END

Even though Satan and the vast throng of wicked people admit that God’s was is right, their hearts are not changed, their characters remain evil. And after judgment is pronounced, the wicked:

“Marched across the breath of the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur. Then death and hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone’s name’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was throw into the lake of fire.” Revelation 20:9-15.

In the final judgment the fires of the eternal God will destroy in and those who stubbornly cling to it. Satan and all the lost perish in this “second death,” an eternal death from which there is no awakening. The heavenly fir completely cleanses the earth of the ravages of sin; God has a clean universe at last, never again to be scarred by evil. The epic struggle between good and evil, between Christ and Satan, is finally over, and Christ reigns.

THE EARTH CLEANSED AND MADE NEW

From the ashes of this final, cleansing holocaust, God will create a new world:

"The I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their yes. There will be no more death or mourning of crying or pain, I am making everything new!' Revelation 21:1-5."

Restored to its original beauty, the earth becomes the home of the redeemed for endless ages. Freed from selfishness, sickness, and suffering, we have a whole universe to explore, wonderful relationships to develop, and an eternity in which to sit at Jesus' feet o listen, learn, and love. (For a full description of that new world, you may wish to again read Lesson 9.)

If you have placed your life in the hands of Jesus, you need never experience the unspeakable horror of those on the outside of the city who realize they are lost forever. No matter what life has brought to you, if you place your life in the hands of Jesus now you can be inside the city with Christ and the redeemed. If you have not done so, give your heart to Jesus now, and he will surround you with his love and forgiveness. This is your opportunity. This is your of salvation.

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| Second Coming of Christ Righteous Taken to Heaven Wicked Slain | Righteous in Heaven Judging the wicked Wicked are Dead on this Desolate earth | New Jerusalem descends to earth with Christ and the Righteous wicked march on new Jerusalem wicked judged and destroyed by fire- A New Earth is made |
| Righteous Dead Raised First resurrection | Satan Bound to a Desolate Earth with no one to tempt The millennium – 1000 years | Wicked Dead Raised Second resurrection |

LESSON: TWENTY THREE WHAT AND WHERE IS HELL?

A senseless shooting occurred when a student marched into hi school and killed several of his classmates. A disgruntled man, who had been fired from his job, entered the place of his former employment and shot his superior. A mother pushed her car into a lake with her two children inside and drowned them.

On at least two continents many thousands have been slaughtered in ethnic cleansing. Centuries old feuds between two or more ethic groups are the reason. Men, women, children, and even babies have been shot, cut up, beat up, and raped.

Punishing these barbaric crimes with the death penalty, even of cold-blooded murders, is condemned by many. Groups against the death penalty protect loudly, calling it an inhumane "Pianistic ritual." They ask, are these killers beyond redemption?

What is the most humane way of executing condemned criminals? The electric chair? Some think an injection with a lethal drug would be the most painless. Others maintain that life would end more quickly by hanging.

But in all this passionate debate over the death penalty, there is one option no one considers. No one suggests that cold-blooded killers, who have cruelly ended another's life, pay with physical agony by being tortured to death. No one, for example, has suggested that these murderers slowly burn to death.

But many sincere Christians do assume that our heavenly Father will do worse than that. The wicked, they say, must be tortured in order to pay for their sins. And what's more, they picture God's execution grounds as a place of endless torment.

Just what does happen to the wicked? How does their fate fit in with God's love justice? Let's look for the Bible answer.

JESUS' FINAL HEARTBREAK

For 6,000 years God has been pleading with men and women: "As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live." Ezekiel 33:11. (Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptural texts in the Discover guides are from the New International Version of the Bible {NIV}.)

The cross revealed how much God wants to rescue fallen humanity. When Jesus cried out on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing," he laid bare his aching heart (Luke 23:34). Soon afterward Jesus yielded up his life and, some believe, died of a broken heart (John 19:30, 34).

But even with this powerful demonstration of divine love, many individuals will still not turn to Jesus. And as long as sin rules in this world, it will continue to multiply human misery. So sin has to be destroyed. How does God plan to put an end to sin?

"The day of the Lord will come. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the events will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be burned up." 2 Peter 3:10, margin.

God must finally cleanse the universe of evil and put end to sin. Those who persist in holding on to sin will eventually be destroyed by his fire that is prepared to destroy the Devil, his angels, his angels, and sin from our world. What a heart breaking time for Jesus as he sees the fire consume the ones he died to save.

WHERE AND WHEN WILL HELL BURN?

Contrary to some popular conceptions, God doesn't have a fire burning now in a place termed "hell" where sinners go at death. Hell happens when this earth is turned into a lake God waits to carry out the sentence on the wicked until the final judgment at the end of the wicked until the final judgment at the end of the 1,000 years (Revelation 20:9-15).

"The Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trial and to hold the unrighteous for punishment until the Day of Judgment." 2 Peter 2:9, margin.

He also cleanses our world with this purifying fire.

"The present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the Day of Judgment and destruction of ungodly men." 2 Peter 3:7.

God never planned for any human being to end his or her life in the fires of hell. But when people refuse to break with Satan and hold on to their sins, they must finally receive the consequences of their choices.

"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.' Matthew 25:41.

According to Jesus, when will hell burn?

"As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of age [world, KJV]. The Son of man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matthew 13:40-42.

The weeds, the evil-doers, aren't burned until the end of the world. Before this sentence is carried out, the whole universe must be assured that God has been fair in his dealings with every human being. As detailed in Lesson 22, in the great controversy going on between Christ and Satan, Satan has been attempting to prove to the universe that the way of sin is the better way; Jesus has been demonstrating that way of obedience is the key to a more satisfying life.

At the close of the 1,000 years, this demonstration will culminate in the judgment of Satan, his angels, and the wicked. After the record books are opened which reveal the part that each person has played in this great drama, God will throw Satan, death, and the grave, along with everyone whose name "was not found written in the book of life into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:14-15). According to the next, Revelation 21:1, after God cleanses the earth from sin with fire, he creates "a new heaven and a new earth."

HOW LONG WILL HELL BURN?

Many believers accept the idea the fires of hell last forever, resulting in eternal torment. Let's look carefully at texts which describe God's treatment of sin and sinners.

"He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power." 2 Thessalonians 1:8, 9.

Please note that "everlasting destruction" is not the same as "everlasting destruction that lasts forever. The effect is everlasting death. Peter spoke of the Day of Judgment and "destruction of ungodly men" (2 Peter 3:7).

According to Jesus, both "soul and body" are destroyed in hell (Matthew 10:28). In his sermon on the mount, Jesus talked about the narrow gate "that leads to life," and the broad road "that leads to destruction" (Matthew 7:13, 14). In John 3:16 Jesus explains that God "gave his one and only Son," that those who believe might not "perish, but have eternal life." Jesus contrasts two fates: everlasting life of

perishing not eternal burning. We must conclude that that hell dell definitely has an ending; it results in the death and destruction of the wicked.

Clear statements throughout Scripture tell us the wicked will be destroyed. "The wicked will be cut off" (Psalm 37:28), they "will perish" (2 Peter 2:12), "they will vanish like smoke" (psalm 37:20). The fire will reduce them to ashes Malachi 4:1-3. "The wages of sin is death," not eternal life in hellfire; "the gift of God is eternal life" (Romans 6:23).

The purpose of the final punishment in hellfire is to rid the universe of sin, not to preserve sin forever. It is extremely hard to imagine that the Christ who wept over the fate of stubborn Jerusalem and who forgave those who put him to death, double able to spend eternity watching over the agonies of the damned.

Hell definitely has an ending. At the close of the 1,000 years, God rains fire down from the skies eliminates the Devil, his angels, and the wicked that persist in holding on to their sins. "Fire" comes "down from heaven" and devours them (Revelation 20:9).

According to Jesus, this fire is "unquenchable" (Matthew 3:12). No fire brigade will be able to put it out until it has done its work of complete destruction.

God Promises that, out of this cleansing fire, he will create "a new earth," in which the "the past troubles will be forgotten;" and "the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more" (Isaiah 65:16-19). What a day that will be! Every cause for heartache will have vanished. God will erase the wounds of sin from every heart, and our happiness will be complete.

"FOREVER" IN SCRIPTURE

In Matthew 25:41 Jesus speaks of "the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels." Does "eternal" here suggest hell is forever? Jude 7 presents Sodom and Gomorrah "as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire." Obviously those cities aren't still burning. But the fire was eternal in the sense that it resulted in permanent destruction.

In 2 Peter 2:6 once more we read of eternal fire. But this scripture also clearly points out that God "condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly." The ungodly of Sodom and Gomorrah are not still in agony; they were reduced to ashes long ago. And yet the fire that burned them is "eternal" in its consequences permanent destruction. Eternal means permanent punishment, not punishing.

Because the book of Revelation uses such vivid, symbolic language, some of its passages have been misunderstood. For example, Revelation 14:11 says of the lost, "the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever." This sounds like endless suffering. But, again, let's let Scripture interpret Scripture.

Exodus 21:6 in the KJV Speaks of servant's having his ear drilled through as a sign that he was to serve his master 'forever." In this case "forever" would be as long as the servant's life would last. Jonah, who spent only three days and three nights in the belly of the whale (Matthew 12:40), reports that he was there "Forever" (Jonah 2:6). No doubt three days in the slimy darkness did seem like forever.

So we must be careful to understand how and when Scripture uses symbolic, poetic language. The smoke ascending forever from the lake of fire is a vivid way of expressing eternal destruction. Revelation 21:8 tells us plainly that that lake which burns with fire and brimstone "is the second death." Hell has an ending. The wicked are consumed; they are destroyed.

WHY MUST THERE BE A HELL AT ALL?

In the beginning God created a perfect a perfect world. But sin came in and brought disaster, decay, and death. If you returned home some evening and found your house ransacked and wrecked, would you leave it that way forever? Of course not.

You would sweep out the dirt and rubbish, clean the place from to bottom, and throw way furniture ruined beyond repair. God will do the same. He will take care of the wreckage and pollution of sin once and for all, creating a new earth in its place.

God's purpose for having this world purified by fire is to prepare the way for a perfect world for the saved to live in.

But God faces a serious problem because sin not only wrecked the serious problem because sin not only wrecked the physical world, it also infected people. Sin damaged our relationship with him and with each other. Humanity continues to be plagued by child abuse, terrorism, pornography, and a thousand other cancers of the soul. God must someday destroy sin, because sin is sin destroying people. God's dilemma in this: how to eliminate the deadly virus of sin from the world and yet not destroy all the People infected by it? His solution was to take on the virus in his own body; he allowed the cancer of sin to destroy him at the cross. As a result:

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9.

God offers his solution to the sin problem freely to everyone. But the sad fact is some in sit on clinging to the disease of sin. And God will not force people to choose his way of eternal life. Those who reject his solution will finally be consumed by the disease. The real reason for hell is this:

"For I called but you did not answer, I spoke but you did not listen. You did evil in my sight and chose what displeases me." Isaiah 65:12.

Cut off from Jesus by their own choices, the wicked will discover that the only alternative is eternal death.

WHAT WILL IT COST TO BE LOST?

Even though the Scriptures do not teach that the fire of hell results in endless suffering, it does give us a glimpse of what a terrible experience nice it is to be lost. The wicked are going to miss out on eternal life. What a horror it will be to realize that the Joy of eternal life with God has slipped through their hands, that they'll never, ever experience the bliss of perfect, loving relationships throughout the ages.

When Christ hung on the cross with the world's sins separating him the Father, he must have felt the agony of the eternally lost. As the wicked look into the black void ahead of them, they see only eternal destruction. They must die with no hope of a second resurrection. At the same time they see how they pushed Christ away time after time when he came near with overtures of love. In the end they fall to their knees and acknowledge God's justice and him love (Philippians 2:10, 11).

No wonder Bible writers urgently press on us the weight of our choices and the claims of Christ.

"We urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. For he says, 'In the time of my favor in vain. For he says, 'In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.' I tell you, now am the time of God's favor, and now am the day of salvation." 2 Corinthians 6:1-2.

I can think of no greater tragedy than someone wasting the priceless sacrifice of Jesus by choosing to be lost. The alternatives facing us are starkly clear: eternal destruction an eternity excluded from the presence of God, or an eternal friendship with Christ that fulfills our deepest? Longings. Which do you choose for yourself? Why not discover your destiny in Christ today.

LESSON: TWENTY FIVE

CAN I FIND GOD'S CHURCH TODAY?

God has frequently given special messages to meet the needs of different generations: a message to help Adam and Eve after sin ruined their world, a message to the world before the cataclysm of the flood, message of Israel when Assyria or Babylon threatened. Jesus came with a special message for his generation, and God has sounded a special message our day. Chapters 12 and 14 of Revelation summarize God's special message that follows, we will take look at that message.

THE CHURCH ESTABLISHED BY JESUS

The life and teachings of Jesus established unity of belief and close fellowship in the apostolic church that he founded. The apostles formed an intimate relationship with the risen Christ. Paul pictured that close bond as a marriage relationship:

"I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him." 2 Corinthians 11:2. {Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptural texts in the Discover guides are from the new international version of the Bible "NIV".}

According to Paul, the Christian church is a pure woman, the bride of Christ, a fitting symbol of Christ's beloved church.

In the Old Testament the same metaphor is used to describe Israel, God's chosen people. God said to Israel: "as a bride you loved me" (Jeremiah 2:2); "I am your husband" (Jeremiah 3:14).

The book of Revelation also speaks of the church as a woman:

"A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head." Revelation 12:1.

The woman is "clothed with sun." This suggests a church shining like the sun, because of being clothed with Christ's glorious Presence. Jesus, "the light of the world" (John 8:12), shines through the members of his church, and they in turn become "the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14).

The woman has "the moon under her feet." The moon represents the reflected light of the gospel in the sacrifices and ceremonies of God's people in the Old Testament. The moon being "under her feet" suggests that the reflected light of the gospel has been superseded by Christ's ministry.

The woman has “a crown of twelve stars on her head.” Stars fittingly represent the twelve apostles, noble men whose testimony about Jesus shines brilliantly to this very day.

Clearly, the description of this woman indicates that John has in mind the transition from God’s people, Israel, in the Old Testament to the Christian church of the New Testament that Jesus established. The sun, moon, and stars emphasize the light-giving ministry of the Christian church in sharing the Good News.

THE DRAMA OF SATAN’S DEFEAT

The entrance of the woman sets the stage for a great drama:

“She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth. Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. His tail swept a third of the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth. She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne.” Revelation 12:2-5.

Three key figures participate in this drama: the woman, already identified as the God’s church. the male child born to this woman “is snatched up to God and to his throne” and will someday rule all nations.” Jesus is the only child ever born in this world that has been taken up to God’s throne and will someday rule all nations.

The dragon representing the Devil, or Satan.

“And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The Great dragon was hurled down that ancient serpent, called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.” Revelation 12:7-9.

The picture becomes clear once we understand the symbols. When the Devil and his angels “lost their place in heaven,” they were “hurled to the earth” when Jesus was born in this world, the devil tried to kill Jesus, the male child, as soon as he was born. He failed, and Jesus was “snatched up” to God’s throne.

Satan then set out to annihilate the Christian church that Christ established. The apostle John, who wrote Revelation, saw glimpses of this great conflict between Christ and Satan raging on this earth. As the battle reaches a climax at Christ’s crucifixion, John hears a voice should from heaven:

“Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.” Revelation 12:10. (Compare John 12:31 and Luke 10:18.)

Jesus won a decisive victory over Satan at the cross. He confirmed the certainty of the plan of “salvation” and provided “power” for resisting the cunning of Satan. “The kingdom of God” was made secure, and the Savior’s “authority” to be our high priest and king was confirmed.

"Now have come the salvation" declares that history's crowning event has arrived. The birth of Christ, the Savior of the world, has taken place (Verse 5). In spite of Satan's fierce temptations, Jesus has lived his sinless life, died and arose the victor over sin and death (verses 10). Satan has been forever defeated (verses 7-9). The cross is magnified in its full power.

The announcement, "now has come the salvation," interests not only John, but the entire universe: "Therefore rejoice you heavens and you who dwell in them¹ but woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short." Revelation 12:12.

All heaven celebrated Jesus' victory. Christ destroyed any claim Satan may have once had to a place in heaven, and a defeated Satan lost forever his claim to our world.

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN CONFLICT WITH SATAN

Before Jesus ascended to heaven he established the Christian Church (symbolized by the woman). His death on the cross gave the Christian church the power to defeat Satan.

"They (the Christian church) overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death." Revelation 12:11.

Christ is now able to give his power, the fruit of his victory, to his church. Jesus decisively triumphed over Satan at the cross, and he now continues to triumph over Satan through his church. Three characteristics mark the triumphant church during the passing centuries of the Christian era:

"They overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb." Jesus was caught up to God's throne so he could make his followers. He can clear the record of our sins, save us through his shed blood (1 John 1:7), and give us power to live a healthy Christian life day by day.

"They did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death." "The blood of the Lamb" made them willing to die for Christ's cause; they did not "shrink from death." God had suffered greatly, so these Christian martyrs were also willing to suffer and die. Even children made the ultimate sacrifice.

A story is told of a Christian mother who was thrown to the lions in a Roman arena because she her ultimate allegiance to Christ and not to the state. Her young daughter, instead of shrinking back in horror, felt a fervent devotion welling up inside. As the lions attacked her mother, she stood and cried, "I too am a Christian." Roman officials arrested her and hurled her to the hungry beasts.

"They overcame him {Satan} by the word of their testimony." Not the words, but the word of their testimony the testimony of their lives, their living witness to the power of Jesus and his gospel. During the darkest hours of the Christian era an army of Christians from the early church fathers to the protestant reformers overcame the worst the Devil could hurl at them, simply by the dynamic witness of their lives.

Revelation 12:11 pictures a victorious church filled with overcomers: apostles, martyrs, reformers, and other faithful Christians. Their kindness, faithfulness, courage, and triumph has thundered down the centuries and moved the world. Since Satan failed to destroy Jesus when he lived on earth, he now seeks to destroy the Christ who lives in his church.

“When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent’s reach. Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent. But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of his mouth.” Revelation 12:13-16.

Just as predicted, during the Dark Ages of the Christian era, Satan sent “a river” of persecution “to sweep” the church “away with the torrent.” Satan wants to destroy Christ’s influence by wiping out his church and uses every trick his evil genius can devise. The dragon represents Satan primarily. But remember that Satan uses human institutions in his role as dragon to attack God’s people.

He used the Roman king Herod in an attempt to murder the Christ child as soon as he was born. He worked through Christ’s jealous religious rivals to stalk and harass the Savior, and finally secure his execution on the cross. But Satan’s apparent victory turned into Christ’s greatest triumph.

Furious over his defeat at the Cross, Satan turned his wrath against the church that Jesus established. During the decades after Christ’s crucifixion, thousands met their death in the Roman Coliseum, city squares, dungeons, and desert hideaways.

At first secular authorities initiated this persecution. But after the death of the apostles a gradual change crept into the church. During the second, third, and fourth centuries, many in the church began to modify the truths Christ and his apostles had taught. Some apostate leaders even began to persecute those Christians who insisted on the purity of New Testament beliefs.

Scalars estimate that about 50 million of the faithful perished. In an effort to drown out the church and destroy it, the Devil sent “a river” of persecution “to sweep her (the church} away with the torrent.” “But the earth helped the woman by swallowing the river” of persecution and false doctrine. During these medieval persecutions, the true church withdrew from the apostate leadership and took refuge in the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days’ (verse 6). This prediction was fulfilled during the 1260 years of persecution from A.D. 538 to 1798 (a day often stands for a year in symbolic Bible prophecy, see Ezekiel 4:6).

During these dark centuries, faithful Bible-believing Christians found refuge wherever they could; for example, in the Walden Sian valleys of western Italy and eastern France, and in the Celtic church of the British Isles.

God’s church in our day

This brings us to our day to the true church of Christ since 1798. As might be expected, the Dragon is still angry with God’s people. The great unseen war

continues. In fact, Satan makes his greatest attack on the church just before Jesus comes "Then the dragon [the devil] was enraged at the woman [God's church] and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus." Revelation 12:17.

This prophecy focuses on our day. Satan is enraged; he wages war on "the rest of" the woman's "offspring" God's present-day people. Notice their identifying marks:

These last-day believers "hold to the testimony of Jesus." Clinging faithfully to the pure doctrines of the word of God, they testify for Jesus through dynamic Christian living.

These last-day Christians are a people of prophecy. Receiving "the testimony of Jesus Christ" enabled John to write the book of Revelation (Revelation 1:1-3). The final group of believers receives a similar gift: direct testimonies from God through an earthly messenger. Their gift of prophecy focuses on God's revelation of their mission and their final destiny.

These last-day Christians are also identified as "those who obey God's commandments." They not only defend the integrity of the Ten Commandments, they also obey them. God's love in their hearts produces joyful obedience (Romans 5:5; 13-10). These last-day Christians follow the example of Christ and the early church in obeying the commandments of God. This greatly provokes the Dragon the Devil. And he wages war with "the rest of" the woman's "offspring" because they bear witness that love for God produces obedient disciples. As Jesus charged:

"If you love me, you will obey what I command." John 14:15.

The lives of these of these last-day Christians show that it's possible to love God with all our hearts and our fellow human beings as ourselves. According to Jesus, these qualities, love for God and love for people, sum up God's Ten Commandments (Matthew 22:35-40).

The fourth of those commandments asks us to observe Saturday, the seventh day of the week, as Sabbath. Since a love for Jesus has imbedded all ten of the commandments in their hearts, these last-day Christians are Sabbath-keepers.

The Sabbath is at the heart of Gog's final message to his people in Revelation, chapters 12, and 14:6-15. All the resources of heaven are arrayed behind the last-day Christians described in these chapters. A living Savior is their constant companion, and the Holy Spirit works to "strengthen them with power in the inner man." The Promise is sure. They will overcome Satan "by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony" (Revelation 12:11).

Do you wish to be one of these last-day Christians who "obey God's command men and "hold to the testimony of Jesus"? Why not make that decision just now?

LESSON: TWENTY SIX

DOES GOD HAVE A SPECIAL MESSAGE FOR OUR DAY?

Ramon Uma Shankar was born a Brahmin. His elders t taught an early age that the God, and that to realize his dimity he practice yoga and

meditation. But as a teenager, Ramon began to wonder if he could really find God through the various idols worshipped in Hindu temples.

Ramon began examining the Bible and the claims of Christ. He had always respected Jesus for his humility, but now Ramon heard that this Jesus claimed to be the unique Son of God. And he noticed that many Christians seemed to have a peace that years of meditation failed to produce. Still, Ramon was determined to find truth in his own Hindu religion.

But then he saw a film on the life of Christ. For the first time he realized that Jesus had experienced suffering and fear as a human being. Previous to this he thought Jesus had somehow used his supernatural powers to escape the pain or crucifixion. But now, he couldn't explain the cross. He wondered: how did this Jesus go through such an ordeal for sinful men?

As Ramon continued to meditate on Christ's death, he was overwhelmed by such a demonstration of love. He decided to give up his coveted Brahmin status and turn his life over up his cover whelmed by such a demonstration of love. He decided to give up his coveted Brahmin status and turn his life over to Jesus, the Savior. In comparison with Christ's sacrificial love, Ramon said, "Everything else just fell to pieces."

This young Rahim in discovered the central truth of Christianity: Jesus, the Savior of the world.

WHICH RELIGION SAVES?

Jesus is the way the only way of salvation.

"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." Acts 4:12. (Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptural texts in the Discover guides are from the New International Version of the Bible [NIV].)

The Bible clearly teaches that we are lost in sin, and thus subject to sin's penalty: death (Romans 2:23). All have sinned (Romans 3:23), so all face death. And Jesus is the One the only One who can rescue us from sin's condemnation.

"Everyone who looks to the son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." John 6:40.

There is only one true religion: "one Lord, one Faith, one baptism." Ephesians 4:5.

DOES GOD HAVE A SPECIAL MESSAGE FOR LAST-DAY CHRISTIANS?

Yes. This three fond message appears in Revelation 14:6-16. The percolation of messages given by these three angels climaxes with the second coming of Christ (Verses 14-16)

The First Angel's Message.

"Then I saw another angel [messenger] flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, 'Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his Judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.' Revelation 14:6, 7."

Though Scripture dramatically portrays these three messages through the symbol of three angels, God's people are the messengers who actually deliver them to the world. They do not proclaim a new gospel, but "the eternal gospel" to the entire world "to every nation, tribe, language and people." "The eternal gospel" of Jesus is the same message of salvation that people in Old Testament times accepted "by faith" (Hebrews 3:16-19; 4:2; 11:1-40); the same teaching that Jesus himself proclaimed; the same gospel the disciples preached to conquer the world for Christ; the same gospel that has thundered down through the centuries of the Christian era.

The simple, saving gospel of Jesus Christ almost vanished from the church for more than a thousand years during the Dark Ages, but the Reformation revived it, and God's people preach it around the world today. The first angel proclaims this same gospel message, but it is given in a new setting a worldwide one for people living just before Jesus comes a second time.

Those who accept this message find themselves called to "fear God and give him glory [reflect his character]." They show the world God's character of dynamic witness. They offer a thrilling relation of what God can do through people filled with the Spirit of Christ.

When are these three angels' messages to be proclaimed throughout the world? When the hour of God's "judgment has come." Lesson 13 explains that Jesus began the work of his pre-advent Judgment in 1844. In that very year, 1844, Jesus inspired people all over the world to begin preaching the message of Revelation 14.

This message calls for us to "worship him who made the heavens, and the earth" (Revelation 14:7). God asks us to "remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy" because "in six days the Lord made heavens and the earth" (Exodus 20:8-11). In 1844 when God was calling people back to worship him as the Creator. At this very time, those preaching the three angels' messages discovered the seventh-day Sabbath of God's word and began to keep it in honor of the Creator of heaven and earth.

The Second angel's Message.

"A second angel followed and said, 'Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries.' Revelation 14:8.

The second angel warns, "fallen is Babylon the Great." Revelation 17 depicts spiritual "Babylon" apostate Christianity as an immoral woman (Verse 5). She stands in contrast to the pure woman of Revelation 12 who represents the true Christian church. The woman who represents Babylon is a fallen woman who "made all nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries." The wine of false doctrine has permeated these adulterated forms of Christianity. The message of the second angel calls God's people to resist the false teachings of an apostate Christianity.

Babylon represents a mixture of many forms of apostate Christianity. She is so dangerous because she distorts the picture of God into caricatures: God as vengeful and demanding, or God as a sentimental grandparent who's too sweet to bother anyone about sin. A healthy church will present a balanced picture of all God's attributes and show how his Justice and mercy combine in the truth that God is love.

God calls people to "come out" of Babylon (Revelation 18:4), to reject unbiblical teachings, and follow Christ's teachings.

The Third Angel's Message. "A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: 'If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fur, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name.' this calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus." Revelation 14:9-12.

The third angel's message divides the entire world into two groups. On one side stand the apostate Christians who "worship the beast and his image and receive his mark on the forehead or on the hand." On the other side stand those who reject the authority of the beast, "the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus." Note the Contrast between the two opposing groups. Those who receive the mark of the beast are compromising worshipers who follow convenient man-made ideas and practices. The "saints" have as their distinguishing traits: "patient endurance," obedience to "God's commandments," and they "remain faithful to Jesus." After these threefold messages have been spread throughout the world, Jesus will come to "harvest" the saved:

"I Looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one 'like a Son of man' with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, 'Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.' So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested." Revelation 14:14-16.

Have you admired a strong, stable Christian, marveled at his or her devotion, patience, and faith, and longed for a similar spiritual experience? God gave his special message for our day in Revelation 14 because it can produce just such an experience. As discussed in Lesson 25, Revelation 12:17 identifies last-day Christians as "those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus." Revelation 14:12 describes this same group as "saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus." Let's summarize the characteristics of last-day Christians.

They "hold to the testimony of Jesus." Even when Satan vents his anger against them, they "remain faithful to Jesus." Their faith is not of their own making, it's a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8). God's last-day church see Christ more and more clearly in his true character and by grace through faith they become living monuments to the power of an indwelling Christ.

They "keep the faith of Jesus of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12, KJV). The faith that Jesus had, the faith that he taught, the faith that he lived, now fills their hearts. They not only have the truth, they "keep" the truth they follow it. To them religion is life, belief is correlated with practice, and faith is coupled with obedience. They live out "the faith of Jesus." They have discovered that the great teachings of the Bible, when applied to daily living, produce a dynamic Christian life. They have found that these great Bible truths awaken a love and devotion to Christ that satisfies every need and longing of the human heart.

They "obey God's commandments" the Ten Commandments, the moral law of God. They want above all else to obey God's every wish, his every command. They show their love to God and love to other people by following all the commandments of God, including the fourth commandment that directs us to worship our Creator by honoring Saturday, the seventh-day Sabbath.

They share the message of “the eternal gospel” throughout the world (Revelation 14:6). The gospel the grave so we can experience a saving relationship with him. Christ’s last-day church has been calling people everywhere to come out of religious confusion and form a relationship with Jesus based solely on Bible truth.

They are driven by a sense of urgency because “the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe” (Revelation 14:15), and millions still haven’t found Christ.

They are consumed by their God-given mission. Because “Babylon the Great” is fallen, they played with those still living in religious confusion, “Come out of her, my people” (Revelation 18:4). They desire to share their wonderful relationship with Christ and their happiness with everyone else.

All this and more unites the hearts of the millions of last-day Christians called out by the three angels’ messages. Their life of joy leads them to join the apostle John in extending this invitation to you: “We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our Fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make your joy complete.” 1 John 1:3, 4, margin.

Through his Spirit and through his church, Jesus invites you also to come and surrender everything to him:

“The Spirit and the bride {church} say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ Whoever is thirsty, let him come: and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.” Revelation 22:17.

THE TWO HARVESTS The three angels’ message culminate when Jesus returns to earth to harvest the saved of all time (Revelation 14:14-16). Jesus gathers all the saved and transports them to his “many mansions” in heaven (John 14:1-3, KJV). He abolishes for all time sin, sickness, misery, and death. The saints begin glorious new lives with him throughout eternity (Revelation 21:1-4).

Jesus will also “harvest” the wicked at his coming. “Another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. Still another angel. Called in a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, ‘Take your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth’s vine, because its grapes are ripe.’ The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God’s wrath. They were trampled in the winepress outside the City, and blood flowed out of the press.” Revelation 14:17-20.

This will be a tragic time of final destruction, a very sorrowful event for Christ because he must destroy those who refuse to be saved. Jesus “is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

When Jesus comes to reap the harvest of earth, in which harvest will you be? Will you stand among the ripened grain with the redeemed of all ages (Revelation 14:13-16)? Or will you be among ripened grapes of wrath with the lost (verses 17-20)?

The issue is clearly set. On the one side, Jesus stands with outstretched nail-pierced hands, urging you to take your stand with the "saints who obey God's commandments and keep the faith of Jesus" (verse 12). On the other side are the voices of mere human beings, urging that obedience to the entire Bible and to all the commandments of God is not important.

The crowd in Pilate's judgment hall once faced a strikingly similar issue. On the one hand was Jesus, the divine-human God-man. On the other hand was Barabbas, a helpless man, unable to help himself or those in the crowd who witnessed that tragic scene. And yet when the commanding words of Pilate rang through the motley crowd, "which of the two shall I release unto you?" the multitude of voices thundered back in angry tones, "Barabbas!"

"What then," asked Pilate, "shall I do with Jesus, the so-called Christ?"

With one voice the crowd shouted, "Let him be crucified!"

And so Jesus, the innocent One, was crucified; and Barabbas, the guilty one, went free. (See Matthew 27:20-26.)

Whom do you choose today, Barabbas or Jesus? Do you choose to follow man-made ideas and teachings that are contrary to the commandments of God and contrary to the eternal gospel of Jesus? Or do you desire to "obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus"? Remember, Jesus is the one who promises to send his holy Spirit to solve your every perplexity, to heal you every heartache, and to satisfy your every longing.

