

Sabbath Sentinel

November–December 2013



The Sabbath Sentinel

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"Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

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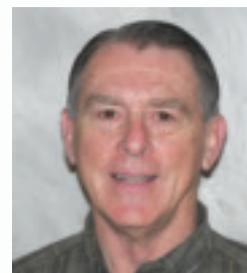
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One Man's Remedy for Boring Sermons



I was approached recently by a close friend and asked to address the subject of the incredibly boring sermons that are often the weekly fare at many Church of God meetings. I admit that at first I was at a loss as to how to address this, but I have come up with several ideas that I would like to present for your criticism and evaluation.

As my wife has pointed out to me many times, we who came out of the old Worldwide Church of God have an intellectual approach to everything related to the Bible. All things are analyzed, scrutinized, and dissected from the point of view of what the words themselves say — not always what the deeper, more spiritual meaning might be. That makes for boring, unengaging sermons.

My friend told me that her grandkids spend all their time during sermons playing games on their iPads.

When our kids were young, we started going to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It was strictly a choice we made because of the many activities they had for youth. One of the things that impressed me a great deal was that the youth were always encouraged to take part in the service. They often led the song service at the beginning and end of services. Many times they presented special music. Sometimes they took up the offering. The point is that they were engaged in the service and always encouraged to participate. We noticed over the years that kids who had strayed away from the church during their late teens and college years, returned to the Adventist church when they got married and started having children of their own. They felt safe bringing up their children within the walls of that church.

I realize that many churches have turned to rock bands and the like to liven up their services and engage the youth, but that's not necessary. And, it's not always the youth who are bored by the unimaginative approach to church services. Many of the adults are tired, bored, and worn out by the lackluster approach that has prevailed for so many years in the COGs (Churches of God). It's time to rethink and reimagine our approach to church, and we don't need rock bands to do it.

I really like the approach of the church we are now attending. It's very simple. We meet for Sabbath school at ten in the morning, sing a few songs, and then dive into our lesson from our quarterly. We have a lot of people sharing many opinions and interpretations. We sometimes bicker with each other and disagree, but our attitude is, "that's how we learn." This may seem chaotic to some people, but the Sabbath school sessions are always lively and engaging. At 12 noon we go downstairs for snacks and coffee, and make our way back upstairs for more songs, prayer service, and a sermon. Sermons never last more than about 30 minutes. We are usually on our way home by 2:15 to 2:30 in the afternoon. Some may think that this is a very long time to be at church, but the important point is that we have lots of fellowship with our brothers and sisters in the faith.

My wife and I enjoy very much going to southern Iowa for the Feast of Tabernacles. (I know that some do not keep the Feasts, and that is fine. That's a matter between you and God — not something for me to judge.) There is a profoundly spiritual atmosphere

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An announcement for all our subscribers living in Canada and Mexico

Due to increases in U.S. postage costs, we can no longer offer free subscriptions. Currently with postage and handling our cost for mailing your subscription is over \$4.00 (US) per issue. We deeply regret this decision. One option that you have to continue your subscription after the one-year trial period is to become a member of the Bible Sabbath Association. The price of a BSA membership is \$25, \$30 for a family membership (US) per year, or \$500 for a lifetime membership. We do not want to lose you as a subscriber. Please consider becoming a member.

When Image Counts

by *Kenneth Westby*



The pursuit of a desirable “image” is as human as skin. We want to project a “look” and have people see us a certain way. Yes, even skin, after a visit to the tattooist and piercing parlor, can become a billboard to project one’s image. Clothing, hair styles, cars, music, habits, speech, can all be modified to fit with the image of the group we admire or seek to mimic. We all strive for an image, usually a flattering one, but for some an image used to shock or get attention.

Gangsta rap fits for those who want a bad boy image with pants on the ground and attitude. Others find that image repulsive preferring the “Joe College” look with buttoned-down attire. Now we have the “gothic” look for those, especially girls, who want to look as if they just climbed out of a coffin. Shops of gothic garb and accessories cater to those living that image. And don’t forget the “metrosexual,” younger narcissistic man, whose image is the cover of GQ magazine and who could be homosexual, straight, or bisexual, but one who takes his looks and pleasures oh so seriously.

What won’t we do to look “cool” to the crowd we want to impress even if the crowd is small...just you and the mirror?

It isn’t only teens who are image obsessed. Once a teen myself back in the 1950s I can remember how kids in high school stratified into various image groups that, to them, set them apart. But it is a curious thing that when we try to be different, or defy and rebel against parents, school, and society we simply copy others who share the same attitude. We copy them in their dress, talk, and actions. When we decide to be different and nonconformists, we end up conforming to the image of other nonconformists.

Yet, most teens in my school of over 3000 students didn’t want to be nonconformists. They wanted to belong. But where they fit, that was the big question. There were cliques. If you were among the “in” group you could travel with that clique—you belonged. There were the sociables or “soches” who seemed to be more privileged, ran for the school offices, knew everybody and were popular. There were the jocks, who, if the school had winning teams were the local heroes and got the best looking girls. There were the “greasers,” the crowd of boys with their girl friend hanger-ons, who were all about cars, smoking, and breaking rules. They greased their hair into ducktails and dressed down and talked tough. By today’s standards these bad boys would seem like the Sunday school choir.

Of course there were the nerds, geeks, intellectuals, and a sea of kids belonging to no group and not stratified into an image. They were just slogging through school minding their own business. Their clothing image was what their parents bought them.

Those who attached to an image group were easy to spot even at a distance. I did hall patrol duty for a year and you can get pretty good at typing people—profil-ing. But I guess we are not supposed to do that.

What was my image? I was among that sea of kids belonging to no group although I felt I didn’t need a group. In that I was more of a nonconformist. I resisted fads. When it seemed all the kids were wearing florescent socks of bright yellows, reds, and greens (they had just been invented and hit the market), I didn’t want any and probably felt superior to the crowd-followers. I had a number of friends that shared my views. I did my work, avoided trouble, had the friends I wanted and was just in a hurry to get out of high school!

Walking in Our Image

There is a young man who lives down the street and seems to always be walking along the road when I drive out to do errands. He wears a long ankle length oil cloth coat like you’ve seen in pictures of men in the Australian Outback. It is dark brown and sometimes he dons a matching big brimmed hat. He dresses this way in summer and the rest of the seasons—rain or shine.

He has put together a look, an image he likes, and maybe that is his idea of the ideal man and the way he wants to appear. It must be hot in that long, heavy coat in summer, but it is his image and he is walking in it. What is going through his mind? I don’t know, but I suspect nothing more than an adolescent vain obsession that he will likely grow out of in time. Are we so obvious as we walk along in our image? The Don Juan, the successful businessman, the career woman with a briefcase, the leader, the smartest one in the room, the sexy number, the loud sport fan, etc.

Leaving teenage, adult image building is even bigger business. Much of advertising is based on feeding the human quest for identity. Car ads convey that their high-priced machine will make your image sexy, commanding, smart, adventurous, and give you style...make you cool.

We want to be our “own person” and have our “own look” and our “unique style” and there are a thousand products out there that will help you do that. Should we

pause for a minute and ask ourselves: “Really, can I buy my image in a bottle or at a car dealership or in a specialty apparel shop?”

We must ponder what an authentically true image is. I could ask myself: “Isn’t image a reflection of who I really am on the inside? Doesn’t my true image reside in my character, spirit, and personality? Do I want to project my true image? Am I pleased with it?”

Our culture is swimming in falseness. Much PR is all about fabricating images for sale be they true or false it matters not. What sells matters. It’s all about packaging. We see the image packaging in politics and religion and we struggle to discern what is true and what is fluff.

A very popular mega church preacher has the image of torn blue jeans and a workman’s shirt for his preaching as he sits on a stool on stage. He wants to convey the image of a regular guy and contrast himself as a better choice than the guy in a tie and coat behind a pulpit. He has packaged a successful image and business plan for growing his church. People are buying it and his church is growing.

Symbol over Substance

I think you will agree that God is more interested in substance than he is in man’s contrived images, the symbols of his power and smartness. Symbols you can buy and wear, but substance is what you really are down inside. Hollywood makeup artists can make almost anyone look attractive, but how do you make the soul attractive? How can makeup and wardrobe departments give virtue and good character to someone? It can’t be done.

Jesus likened the religious image cover-up industry of his day to whitened tombs; painted bright, clean and beautiful on the outside for people to see, but inside they were full of rot and dead men’s bones. He called them “hypocrites!” (Matthew 23:27-28)

I think you will agree that God wants us to be true to ourselves and to others. Not to pretend to be something we are not. He wants us to live without guile and pretense and walk humbly before our God.¹ He wants us to have character that runs all the way through from the outside to the heart; to be truly a son or daughter bearing the image of our heavenly Father. This is what Jesus built his life around.

Jesus Had an Image

From an early age Jesus had an image of who he was to become: He was consumed with his heavenly Father’s business and his Father was his image of the person he would strive to become. He determined to do all things to please him:

...I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me...for I always do what pleases him.²

His image was the Creator God, the Father of all. He knew that God had made mankind with the ultimate

intent that one day all humans would bear the divine image of righteous character and love and so reflect God’s glory.

Jesus had fully assimilated the divine image so that he could say in the closing days of his ministry that he was just like his Father—they were one in spirit, character, and purpose. He invited his disciples to follow him and also take on the divine image and become one with God as he had become one with God.³ That invitation is open to us.

We can make Jesus our Image and internalize his God-centered life. We can ask God to help us think about Him as Jesus thought about Him. We can begin each day by asking ourselves what we can do to please God this day. Jesus did all he did with pleasing God as his purpose. His image was to be a son in whom the Father was pleased.

Jesus also had a human example, a human image to guide his growth Godward. In perhaps the most powerful prophecy concerning Jesus and his ministry found in Torah, we read Moses’s words given to him by Yahweh:

Yahweh your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him...I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him (Deuteronomy 18:15, 18).

The disciple Phillip exclaimed, “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.”⁴

Jesus said, “If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me.”⁵ After Jesus’ resurrection and ascension Peter reminded his temple audience just who this Jesus was: “For Moses said, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you’” (Acts 3:22).

Clearly, Jesus had taken on the image and likeness of God and understood that he had a mission akin to that of Moses. While Moses was to lead God’s chosen to the promised land, Jesus would lead God’s chosen and ultimately all mankind to eternal life and the Kingdom of God. These realities ordered his life and purpose. [For a fascinating study of the many parallels between the ministry of Moses and Jesus write for a full length study paper, “Jesus the Prophet,” produced by Gary Arvidson, a life-long friend and dedicated biblical researcher. It’s free.]

An Image of the Invisible God

Jesus identified God as his Father, and also our Father. After his resurrection he said to Mary Magdalene, “I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God” (John 20:17).

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The Sabbath to Sunday Controversy

By Aubrey L. Duncan



We are involved in a great controversy. It is a battle over God's law that began in heaven and is raging on earth. John the Revelator tells us: "And there was war in heaven: Michael and His angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels...and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven, and the great dragon was cast out, and that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (Revelation 12:7-9). This conflict is a fierce and determined battle for our souls, our minds, and our worship. It is a battle of cosmic proportions involving Christ and Satan. We are the pawns or prizes of this conflict, depending on whose side we choose; either the devil's pawn or Christ's prize. For every true Bible doctrine given to us by God, the devil has a counterfeit. The seventh-day Sabbath is the truth. Sunday sacredness is the counterfeit. The battle for this truth involves all humanity and each has to make a choice.

Of such importance is the Sabbath-day to God that He made its observance the emblem of man's sanctification and evidence of their true loyalty to Him. Moses says to the people of Israel: "Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant, it is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested, and was refreshed" (Exodus 31:16, 17). The patriarchs, prophets, and early church believed this pronouncement.

It wasn't until the supposed conversion to Christianity of Roman Emperor Constantine in the 4th century AD, that the practice of Sunday keeping came into the Christian church. With Constantine's supposed conversion, the amalgamation of corrupt pagan practices with the pure religion of Jesus Christ was established. Not only were the religions of paganism and Christianity joined together; but also the state was joined to the now corrupt faith. Constantine, as head of the Roman state also became head of the new religion. He took upon himself the title of Pontiff Maximus, Supreme Pontiff. Thus, Constantine, by definition, became the first pope of Rome. This title, along with the many other pagan practices, were adapted directly or indirectly from the ancient mystery religion of Babylon. As a result of these and other similar actions, the true Christian faith started on its downward slide into apostasy. Historian William D. Kileen writes: "Rites and ceremonies, of which Paul nor Peter never heard, crept silently into

use, and then claimed the rank of divine institutions. Church officers for whom the primitive disciples could have found no place, and titles which to them would have been altogether unintelligible, began to challenge attention and to be named apostolic" (*The Ancient Church*, page 26).

In 321 AD Constantine enacted his rest-day (Sunday) decree. It reads thus: "On the venerable day of the sun (the sacred day) let the magistrates and people residing in the cities rest, and let all the workshops be closed. In the country, however, persons engaged in agriculture may freely and lawfully continue their pursuits; because it often happens that another day is not suitable for grain sowing or for vine planting; lest by neglecting the proper moment for such operations the bounty of heaven should be lost – Given the 7th day of March AD 321. (*Codex Justinianus-The first Sunday Law of Constantine I*). This decree, which possesses no sanction of the Christian religion, was progressively strengthened by later decrees passed in subsequent church/state councils in 343 A.D., 538 A.D., 578 A.D. and onward.

Noted historian Arthur Weigall enlightens us: "The church made a sacred day of Sunday... largely because it was the weekly Festival of the sun; for it was a definite Christian policy to take over the pagan festivals endeared to the people by tradition and give them Christian significance" (*The Paganism in Our Christianity*, page 145). Walter Woodburn Hyde, another renowned historian, writes of this apostasy: "Remains of the struggle between the religion of Christianity and the religion of Mithraism are found in two institutions adopted from its rival by Christianity in the fourth century, the two Mithraic sacred days: December 25 dies natalis solis" (birthday of the sun) as the birthday of Jesus; and Sunday, the venerable day of the sun, as Constantine called it in his edict of 321 AD" (*Paganism to Christianity in the Roman Empire*, page 60).

Constantine's amalgamated "Christian" organization grew into what is known today as the Roman Catholic church. Here is what that organization, also referred to as the Papacy, says about the attempted change from God's Sabbath, the seventh day, to Sunday, the first day...the "venerable day of the sun." Sunday-keeping Christians need to pay close attention.

"Sunday is a Catholic institution, and its claims to observance can be defended only on Catholic principles...From beginning to end of Scripture there is not a single passage that warrants the transfer of weekly pub-

lic worship from the last day of the week to the first” (*The Catholic Press*, August 1900).

“Protestantism, in discarding the authority of the (Catholic) Church, has no good reasons for its Sunday theory, and ought logically to keep Saturday as the Sabbath” (*American Catholic Quarterly Review*, John Gilmar Shea, January 1883).

The church continues: “It is well to remind the Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, and all other Christians, that the Bible does not support them anywhere in their observance of Sunday. Sunday is an institution of the Roman Catholic Church, and those who observe the day observe a commandment of the Catholic Church” (*Elizabeth, N.J. News*, March 18, 1903).

The catechism, the church’s premier teaching tool instructs the faithful:

Question: “Have you any other way of proving that the (Catholic) Church has power to institute festivals or precepts (to command holy days)?”

Answer: “Had she not such power, she could not have done that in which all modern religionists agree with her: She could not have substituted the observance of Sunday, the first day of the week, for the observance of Saturday, the seventh day, a change for which there is no Scriptural authority” (*A Doctrinal Catechism*, Stephen Keenan, page 176).

Neither the God of creation and the Sabbath, nor any of his holy prophets, and most assuredly, not Jesus Christ, endorsed such a change from the seventh-day Sabbath to the first day of the week, Sunday. Sunday sacredness is totally unbiblical. Anyone who teaches or observes it, knowingly or unknowingly, is going against God’s instructions us to honor Him by keeping His Sabbath-day holy.

But we serve a God of love, mercy, and forgiveness. There is, therefore, still hope in Jesus Christ for those who do not accept God’s Sabbath Truth. The apostle Paul writes concerning the law that it is holy, just, and good. God commanded Holy Sabbath-day. “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Trampling on God’s place is sin. But God offers a way of escape. Luke explains, “And the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commands all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30).

John reminds us of the final battle of the conflict of the ages. He writes from the Mount of Patmos: And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. May the God of the Sabbath help us all to choose His side on the Sabbath controversy?

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Learn more at www.thesabbathtruth.org

The Working of the Holy Spirit in Modern Times



by Lori Godfrey

When the appointed time came for Jesus to leave this earth, he left his disciples a promise. The promise was the Comforter would come! Amidst all uncertainty the disciples had every assurance they needed. They would not be left comfortless. The Comforter would indeed come.

What an amazing concept of God’s love to mankind. Yes, they longed for their Messiah to stay, but Jesus knew his mission on earth was finished. He knew the commandments he had given, and he knew without the Spirit of God the command to preach the gospel in every nation would be impossible. So the Father sent the the Holy Spirit.

The working of the Holy Spirit is just as important today, as it was then. For we know the days are coming to a close when the Son of Man will return in power and great glory. It is the precious Holy Spirit who is working in the hearts of men, bringing them to a place of salvation and a new life in Christ. One cannot be saved without the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.

I sometimes think we have forgotten how important the Spirit of God truly is. Without the Holy Spirit man would fail to exist because it was the Spirit of God that (“...and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters”—Genesis 1:2) not only called a dark and formless world into existence, but also through His Spirit, God created the first man (Adam) from the dust of the earth.

It was by the same Spirit that the Father raised Jesus from the grave so we could be joint heirs with him, having received the free gift of eternal life. And it is also he who helps us with our infirmities when we pray.

At times it may seem as if God has left us to fix the chaos in the world, but rest assured, He hasn’t. His presence is still among us in the form of His Spirit, ever mindful of humanity and our need for a loving God.

Let us remember without His Spirit, we can do nothing. For in him we live, and move, and have our being. We should never take the Spirit of God for granted because it is by His Spirit that we hear His Voice. It is the by the same Spirit we can understand his Word and it is by the Spirit we have life.

LIFE: Boot Camp for Eternity?



Pain is ubiquitous on planet Earth. Almost no one escapes it. Some have more than their fair share. Is there some purpose to all this misery?

By Brian Knowles

Helen Telushkin, mother of rabbi and author Joseph, once said, “The only happy people I know are people I don’t know well,” *Happiness is a Serious Problem* by Dennis Prager, p. 23. The more we know about people, the more we gain insight into their pain — both psychic and physical. Few get through life without experiencing at least some personal pain — some more than others. The amount of suffering we experience depends on a wide range of variables: the nation or culture into which we were born; genes; personal circumstances; accidents and “acts of God”; parents and siblings; authorities; inherited religions and other factors.

To a great extent, life is cause and effect. Things happen for reasons — reasons over which we have more or less control. Sometimes we are our own worst enemies doing harmful and destructive things to ourselves: “Whoever digs a pit may fall into it...” (Ecclesiastes 9:8). In our time, we may call it “shooting ourselves in the foot.” We all do it. We may refer to it as “making bad choices.”

The choices we make have a great deal to do with how our life turns out. We often choose our profession or the kind of work we do. We choose whom we marry, whether or not we have children, and if so, how many. We choose the neighborhood we live in, our friends and associates and even, sometimes, our enemies. We choose the kind of vehicles we drive and how we drive and care for them. All of these choices have an impact on our lives. Different choices would have produced different results.

Each choice is a microcosm of all of the choices made in the world each day. When malevolent tyrants and dictators make choices, people suffer and die:

“When the righteous thrive, the people rejoice; when the wicked rule, the people groan,” (Proverbs 29:2). “Again I looked and saw all the oppression that was taking place under the sun: I saw the tears of the oppressed — and they have no comforter; power was on the side of their oppressors — and they have no comforter,” (Ecclesiastes 4:1).

Today’s politically polarized; conflict-laden, war-torn world is not mainly ruled by the righteous but by murderous, bribe-taking, hate-filled, terrorist-sponsoring, torturing monsters in human form. The United Nations is a cesspool of ungodliness. Israel is frequently the target of unjust resolutions and a gullible United States foots most of the bill for this circus of injustice.

Life, as we experience it, is largely the consequence of free choice.

Free Choice Implications

God gave the first humans free choice (Genesis 2:15-17). When He formed the nation of Israel to be a priest to the nations, he gave it free choice: “This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life....” (Deuteronomy 30:19-20).

From the time of Adam to the present, mankind has been making bad choices and paying the price. The world as we experience it is the result of cause and effect factors as well as time and chance occurrences. Some things we can help, others we can’t.

Very few of us get through life trouble-free. Try this: Think of all the people you know, or to whom you are related. How many of them live a “perfect” life? How many have no health concerns, no financial issues, and no conflicts with employers, family or friends?

Third World Blues

Compared to the third world, we in the civilized West, are relatively well off. Yet, in our own hemisphere, we have the tragedy of Haiti and the deadly drug wars of Mexico, Colombia, and other Latin American nations.

In Haiti, ten percent of all children die before the age of five. The average income in Haiti is \$480/year — compared to \$33,550 in this country. It is estimated that there are some 430,000 orphans in that country. Only 53 percent of Haitians can read and write. Life expectancy for Haitian men is only 50 years. For women, it’s not much better — 53. Haiti has been rated one of the five most corrupt countries. There is only one hospital bed for every 10,000 inhabitants and eight doctors for every 100,000 Haitians. Needless to say, growing up as a Christian in Haiti presents challenges not encountered by most in the U.S.

According to *Fox News Latino* (11/1/2012), there were some 57,449 organized crime related homicides during the Mexican presidency of Felipe Calderon. Calderon’s time in office lasted six years, ending in December of last year. Just recently, the body of a 13-year old drug dealer was found. The boy had been tortured. Is it any wonder that so many Mexicans seek to enter the US, if illegally?

The world is full of refugees fleeing wars and tyranny. Just last year, some 800,000 people were added to the world population of refugees, now estimated by the UN to number more than 42 million. Afghanistan has produced 2.7 million refugees to date, followed closely by Iraq, Somalia, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. These refugees present their host countries with a massive burden in food, housing, food & water, and medical care, (UN figures).

The writer of Ecclesiastes, whoever he was, had a keen insight into life “under the sun.” He wrote, “I also thought, ‘As for men, God tests them so that they may see that they are like animals. Man’s fate is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath; man has no advantage over the animal. Everything is meaningless. All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return’” (Ecclesiastes 3:18-19a).

The word “meaningless” (NIV) is translated from the Hebrew *henel* meaning “vapor, breath” or “futility.” Sooner or later, life ends like a disappearing puff of ephemeral vapor. Then we might ask, what was the point of it all? Why the struggle, the pain and the effort? The answer given by the unknown writer of Ecclesiastes is as good as any: “Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil,” (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

Ultimately, we will be judged for how we lived our life — for the choices we made and the results those choices produced. “...for we will all stand before God’s judgment seat...each of us will give an account of himself to God,” (Romans 14:10, 12 excerpts).

This life is a time of learning, being tested and experiencing what we might call “Boot Camp for eternity.” As we’ve often heard, it isn’t what’s happened to us that counts, but how we’ve handled it. We’ve either overcome, or we’ve been overcome. “To him that overcomes I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne...(Revelation 3:21).

Brian Knowles is a professional artist and writer and is a former magazine editor. Brian is an avid student of the Bible and a frequent contributor to the Association for Christian Development website (www.godward.org).

A TALE OF TWO PROPHETS

R. Herbert

One city — Nineveh. Two prophets, Jonah and Nahum, both talking about the same city, though to read the books written by these two messengers of God, they may well seem like tales of two cities. Jonah and Nahum both prophesied against the great Assyrian metropolis Nineveh — the very heart of the Empire that took Israel captive in 740-720 BC, and repeatedly attacked and threatened Judah. However, the two prophetic books have very different tones and outcomes.

Context

The leading city of the brutal Assyrian Empire, Nineveh was the largest city in the world till it was destroyed by the Babylonians and their allies in 612 BC. Although God allowed Assyria, as the “rod” of His anger, to punish sinful Israel, the Bible shows that God also intended to punish the Assyrians for their own evil. Yet, just as He had repeatedly warned ancient Israel through his prophets, God spoke to the Assyrians by means of the two messengers who are the subject of this article — so that Israel’s captors would themselves have the opportunity to repent.

Nahum and Jonah are both found in the minor prophets section of the Hebrew Bible — the twelve short books which deal with events which occurred mainly toward the end of the Old Testament period. The thematic nature of the Minor Prophets is interesting. Commentators agree that the twelve books may be divided into two groups of six with the first six books having different stresses from those found in the second six. The first six books frequently stress problems, while the second group of six books seem to stress answers. Interestingly, Jonah appears in the first six, Nahum appears in the last six.

Jonah

Jonah is mentioned in 2 Kings 14:25 as living and prophesying during the reign of Jeroboam II (786-746 BC) — just a few years before the final captivity of Israel, but well before the downfall of Nineveh in 612 BC. The story of the book which bears his name is probably one of the best known in the Bible. It has no complex internal structure, but is a simple narrative. When God commands Jonah to go to Nineveh to call on its people to repent, the prophet balks and runs in exactly the opposite direction (Jonah 1:1-2). The account of Jonah trying to flee in a ship headed westward through the Mediterranean, but being caught in a violent storm, thrown overboard and swallowed by a great fish sent by God is one most people know — as is the outcome in which

Jonah, inside the fish, repents and accepts God’s will then is eventually deposited, unharmed, on the sea shore. Finally, God again commands Jonah to preach to Nineveh and this time he obeys — with the result that the people of the city actually repent and are, at least for a time, spared punishment.

Jonah found out that being a servant of God is not like “Mission Impossible” — there is no “Your prophecy, if you accept it ...”, though his mission must have seemed an impossible one. It helps to understand it in more modern terms. If God had told you or me to go to Berlin in Nazi Germany — at the outbreak of the Second World War — and to tell the people there to repent, we might well have felt as Jonah did. In the fish, however, Jonah may have reflected on the fact that the Name “Nineveh” was written with the sign for a fish inside a city wall: meaning “fish city.” Once Jonah realized his options were Jonah inside Fish city — or Jonah inside the fish — he accepted God’s assignment for him. But it is clear that Jonah did not run away from his commission through fear or cowardice. Remember he volunteered to be thrown overboard to an expected certain death. Jonah seems to have not wanted to preach to the Assyrians as he says himself in Chapter 4, because he did not want the Ninevites to repent and avoid punishment. “That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity” (4:2b-3). Jonah found it hard to want this outcome for the enemy. By the end of the story, God has to make it clear to him: “... should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?” (4:11) which is clearly the ultimate message of this book. But the problem in Jonah’s mind doubtless existed in the minds of many of his ancient readers: Should we be concerned about our enemy — especially if we know our enemy is planning to destroy us?

Nahum

In contrast to Jonah, nothing is known of the prophet Nahum outside of “The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite” (Nahum 1:1) which is also “a prophecy concerning Nineveh.” Commentators are divided on the date of the book, but it must be dated after the Assyrian destruction of Thebes in Egypt in 663 BC as this event is mentioned in Nahum 3:8.

Also in contrast to Jonah, Nahum seems to gladly accept his charge to deliver God's message to Nineveh. The book is written in a poetic style in which Nahum prophesies the Assyrians' downfall in great detail — even "getting into" the situation by acting out the part of an Assyrian officer barking orders at his defending troops (3:14, etc.). But the motif of God's punishment "... the LORD will not leave the guilty unpunished" (Nahum 1:3b) is put in perspective from the beginning: "The LORD is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him, but with an overwhelming flood he will make an end of Nineveh...." It seems clear that Nahum understood God's compassion and willingness to extend mercy, just as Jonah did, but Nahum spells out the punishment which is now almost certain. Assyria, whose symbol was the lion, was feared throughout the Ancient Near Eastern region and its messengers carried threats and terror to cities far and wide. Now, Nahum says, "... the sword will devour your young lions. I will leave you no prey on the earth. The voices of your messengers will no longer be heard" (2:13b). The prophet also makes it perfectly clear how Assyria's downfall will be received: "All who hear the news about you clap their hands at your fall, for who has not felt your endless cruelty?" (3:19).

Nahum's message also includes a vital additional aspect which Jonah's did not. In Nahum, God states "Although I have afflicted you, Judah, I will afflict you no more. Now I will break their [the Assyrians'] yoke from your neck and tear your shackles away" (1:12b-13). While Jonah knew that God was willing to extend mercy to the Assyrians if they repented, his prophecy carried no mention of hope for Israel beyond that time. In Nahum, a renaissance is foretold for Judah: "Celebrate your festivals, Judah, and fulfill your vows. No more will the wicked invade you ..." (1:15b). This is the answer to the problem found in Jonah. While God offered Assyria the opportunity of repentance, he also had a plan for the protection of His people if they would also obey. It is as though Nahum understood — at least his message makes clear — what Jonah did not: that God's will takes everything into account. That His willingness to extend mercy to all peoples who will accept that gift — even if they are the enemy — does not in any way diminish what God plans for us. It is as though theologically, Jonah cannot see beyond the problem, but Nahum carries the answer. Perhaps Nahum would have better understood the New Testament command to pray for one's enemies (Matthew 5:44). He might well have realized that praying for our enemies does not mean that their success will harm us.

R. Herbert (a pen name) earned a Ph.D. in ancient Near Eastern archaeology and was trained to read the stories discussed in this article in their original languages. His interest in this material and its relation to the Bible is longstanding. The author also served as an elder in a Sabbath-keeping church for a number of years.

Morning Companion

The Business of Christianity



During the 2000 years of church history, Christianity has battled the temptation of being absorbed by the society around it, and the results have too often been mixed. In Palestine Christianity was a brotherhood. The Greeks turned it into a philosophy. In Rome it became a political system. In America it has become a business.

This piece is not meant to disparage those churches with thousands of members and a Starbucks next to the sanctuary. A look at the community churches in my neighborhood gives lie to the notion that bigness is always bad. Nor is it to celebrate small fellowships as the ideal. Too many small churches have grown small because of dysfunction.

Size is not the question. The question is the mandate to transform society instead of being conformed to it. Christianity in America faces the temptation of measuring itself in the best MBA tradition, which is by the numbers. Budgets and income, membership and attendance are often used as measures of effectiveness, whereas the true effectiveness of a church is better reflected in intangibles which by nature are difficult to quantify. Changed lives do not always translate into dollars and cents.

If you were a visitor from a foreign country and view the public display of American religion on the airwaves, you might notice the frequent appeals for financial support "so that we can keep this program on your station." You would see the almost daily mail solicitations for donations alongside the sometimes massive physical plants that have been built to support some ministries. You would see too large a percentage of the American church engaging in the business of religion, and maybe, just maybe you would think of Paul's warning not to "be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:2 NKJV).

Instead of imbibing the values of this world, the believer needs to transcend them. When we see churches building businesses and investment portfolios, it is time to start asking questions about that church's mission. If a church or ministry refuses to give full financial disclosure, it does not deserve your support. If fundraising campaign is followed by fundraising campaign, question why the need for so much cash.

Money is a necessary commodity in carrying out the work of the church, but we are all susceptible to the spirit of the age. If we are not careful, we will be conformed to this world without our knowing it. The words of Jesus: "Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" (John 2:16-17 NKJV)

—Lenny Cacchio

You can catch all of Lenny's latest commentaries on <http://morningcompanion.blogspot.com> and on the BSA Web site at <http://www.biblesabbath.org/>. Lenny is a member of the BSA board of directors.

Sabbath Keeping Basics

by *Chris DeWeese*



Once we come to the conclusion that the Sabbath is for Christians then come the questions about how to keep it. This article takes a comprehensive look at the scriptures supporting the Sabbath and explains how it is kept in plain terms.

“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy” (Exodus 20:8-11).

The first word to key in on is “holy”. In this context “holy” means to be “set-apart, dedicated, hallowed, or consecrated.” This is a serious word. Think about the fine dishes or silverware that only come out for special occasions. Think about a special suit or dress you have that you only wear to the most important events. This is the same concept in which God has placed the seventh day of the week. It is a very special day that we are to treat specially. The opposite of “holy” is common. In other words, the clothing or silverware you use from day to day are commonly used, not set aside for special purposes. At the extreme opposite of holy is profane, which is something reprehensible that one would not consider using for anything. To keep the Sabbath holy is to treat it as something very special and precious.

The next concept in the commandment is working. We are commanded to work for six days a week. For the vast majority, we use Sunday for our household chores and then work at our secular jobs for five days. The Sabbath starts at sundown on Friday wherever you are. It ends at sunset on Saturday night. The contrast is that for six days a week, we must work, but on the seventh we must not work. Six days are common, one day is holy.

The next concept broadens out the Sabbath about who can work and who cannot. In this respect, the Sabbath is completely comprehensive. God listed out every possible person or thing that could work on Sabbath and made sure that we know it means “nobody.” Not even cattle can work.

The last part is the “why”. There are many reasons for us to keep the Sabbath. Principally, it is because God said so. Other benefits are for the purposes of rest, recuperation, and a de-stressing from the challenges of the world. But the specific reason given in the commandment by the voice of God is because He rested after creating the heavens and the earth on the seventh day of the week. This means that this was done by the Creator of the universe to honor His creation. From the New Testament:

“He (Jesus or Yeshua) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him” (Colossians 1:15, 16).

In case there was any doubt, it was Yeshua and His Father who rested on the universe’s first Sabbath day. To call ourselves Christians, we mean that we emulate Christ or The Messiah. Therefore, why wouldn’t we want to follow His example set forth from Creation? If He rested from his works on Sabbath, who are we to do otherwise?

Now comes the nitty-gritty. What is acceptable to do on Sabbath and what is not. This is an individual’s decision to make. While the Rabbis and clergymen have written extensively on what they deem is legal or not to do on Sabbath, our relationship is with God and His Son, and no Rabbi, Priest, or Pastor is going to stand in our place at the Judgment. Only Yeshua can do that and only Yeshua and His Father know our hearts. It is up to us to study to show ourselves approved.

From the 4th commandment it is clear that we do not work and we do not make anyone or any beast do any work on Sabbath. This requires preparation and planning. We need to plan to keep the Sabbath in advance. Cleaning the dishes, gassing up the car, getting the laundry done, catching up on e-mail, etc., etc. all should be done on Friday before sunset.

Now while the sons of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering wood on the sabbath day. Those who found him gathering wood brought him to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation; and they put him in custody because it had not been declared what should be done to him. Then the LORD said to Moses, “The man shall surely be put to death; all the

congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp." So all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him to death with stones, just as the LORD had commanded Moses" (Numbers 15:32-36).

Ouch. This verse comes to my mind each time I have to do something on Sabbath that I should have done ahead of time. Yes, it happens. We plan and plan, but inevitably something happens once in a great while that requires our attention on Sabbath. We are not perfect and can't remember to do everything. And there are always emergencies, both small and great. This, however, is addressed in the New Testament:

"At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath, and His disciples became hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat. But when the Pharisees saw this, they said to Him, 'Look, Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath.' But He said to them, 'Have you not read what David did when he became hungry, he and his companions, how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat nor for those with him, but for the priests alone? Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are innocent? But I say to you that something greater than the temple is here. But if you had known what this means, "I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT A SACRIFICE," you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath. Departing from there, He went into their synagogue. And a man was there whose hand was withered. And they questioned Jesus, asking, 'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?'—so that they might accuse Him. And He said to them, What man is there among you who has a sheep [or an ox or a son in Luke 14], and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will he not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable then is a man than a sheep! So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath. Then He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand!' He stretched it out, and it was restored to normal, like the other" (Matthew 12:1-13).

Yeshua does not actually say the people working on Sabbath aren't sinning in these scenarios. He even pointed out that David sinned when he ate the consecrated bread. What Yeshua is saying is that emergency situations arise and need to be attended to. If you have an ox or a sheep in the ditch, of course you are going to save that valuable asset on the Sabbath. You will surely not let your son rot in a hole waiting for sunset. Rescuing an ox requires using more than a couple people. But if you have an ox in the ditch each Sabbath, you are not following the commandment to work the other six days. Fill in the ditch or build a fence.

With respect to picking the grain, the disciples were not feasting or making a feast on the Sabbath. They were taking the food and eating it, which is really not

much more than what they would do if they were in a house eating a meal prepared the day before. For the Pharisees to even bring that up is rather petty in my opinion.

With respect to healing on the Sabbath, well, that's a no brainer. Children are born on the Sabbath. Male children are (or were depending on your perspective) circumcised on the Sabbath. The Seventh Day Adventists, strident keepers of the 4th commandment, own several hospitals across the world. Those hospitals are open for emergency procedures and to care for the admitted patients on Sabbath. To not heal someone on the Sabbath would be cruel. The same applies as to not putting out a house fire, to not rescue someone in

Continued on Page 20

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that permeates the crowds at that Feast site. There is a lot of prayer for people who have specific needs, such as healing. There are many classes to attend before the main service, and the people sponsoring the Feast make it a point to involve the youth in Feast activities. The youth lead the singing at the beginning and end of each service, and there are volunteer opportunities for youth and adults in some of the surrounding communities.

Here is my advice; you can take or leave it: Every church service needs to be focused on the positive aspects of being a Christian. One thing I noticed years ago was that often sermons in the COGs tend to be Scripture marathons with little emphasis on digging into the spiritual meaning of the Scriptures themselves. This may be the very worst kind of sermon. Also, church people need to hear something from the New Testament. There is such an emphasis on the Old Testament that over the years people have downgraded the New Testament to the point of making it appear to be of little value to the Sabbatarian Christian. In reality the New Testament gives us the fulfillment of all the Old Testament Scriptures regarding the Messiah. What could be more relevant to any Christian than that? After all, Jesus did not come to make bad men and women good, nor did He come to make immoral people moral. He came to make dead people live.

I should also say that no sermon needs to be more than 45 minutes. The traditional COG sermon of an hour and a half is way too long for people to stay awake, let alone pay attention, and certainly the youth in the audience will be tuned out long before that. You who were in Ambassador or Spokesmen's Club will remember the KISS admonition — Keep It Simple Stupid (can also mean Keep It Short Stupid). When you see people nodding off, that's the time to wrap it up; you have already spoken too long. This doesn't mean that you assume that your audience is stupid. Just don't give unnecessarily complicated messages that will leave the people scratching their heads at the end of your sermon.

The preacher should not assume that those in the audience are at the 801 college level. Sometimes it's best to start at sermon-giving 101 and work up from there. Every sermon should be filled with penetrating questions, examples, and illustrations.

If you are giving sermons regularly at your church, I urge you to stay on your knees before God, and let Him show you what you need to say to your congregation. If you have never done that before, I implore you to start immediately. Remember, the New Testament is your friend. It explains how Christ fulfilled

all the prophecies related to the Messiah. Explain to the people the spiritual application of the Scriptures you are presenting. People need to hear how your sermon will make them better Christians. That's what people really want to know. They are not all that interested in your talent for giving sermons. It's about God and Christ, not you. So, make that the focus of your sermons.

Everyone giving a sermon needs to ask himself, how is what I am talking about relevant to the Christians in the audience who are listening to my message? If you are giving a sermon on Leviticus or Nehemiah, the sermon giver has to keep in mind how what he is saying is going to make those in the audience better Christians. Sometimes the pastor needs to be unpredictable — drawing the suspense out to the end of his sermon. How about injecting some humor into the sermon? That never hurts, and it perks up the listeners. Be creative and stop stringing together Scriptures in a sermon with little or no explanation of how the Scriptures presented impact the listeners as Christians. That's not a sermon. That's a disaster for everyone in the audience who has to sit through it.

One key element in any attempt to reinvent the sermon is whether the pastor himself has a close, personal relationship with Christ. All of these other suggestions will fall flat if the relationship with Christ is not at the top of the pastor's agenda. Many pastors have allowed that relationship to become stale and uninspiring. That will make the pastor's sermons dull, boring, and predictable. Renew your first love for Christ and the Father. "Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate" (Revelation 2:4-6 RSV). As you can see from this passage in Revelation, those who have lost their first love for Christ and the Father must repent and again do the things they did at the beginning of their walk with Christ.

I have given an outline for those who give sermons. I hope to hear from many of our subscribers who have other suggestions for improving sermons. To me the most important element in any of this is the relationship of the pastor with Christ. Everything else is about technique. E-mail me at the address on the inside front cover. You might see some of your suggestions printed in future editions of *The Sabbath Sentinel*.

—Kenneth Ryland

Westby: "When Image Counts" cont. from page 5.

Paul says Jesus is "the image [visible] of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15). Jesus became the visible image bearer of the Holy One. He manifested what a human being bearing the spiritual image of God would be like, how he would love God and love his fellow human beings, what he would speak, what he would do. We know from the record that "he went about doing good" and "glorifying his Father in heaven."

When you are an "image" of something you are not the "something," but are its image. The image is not the same as the thing. Jesus is the image of God, in the form of, or in the likeness of God. Jesus is the unique symbol or manifestation of God. We are also called to follow Jesus in taking on the image of God.

Jesus, the Son of Man

Jesus knew who he was and his favorite self-identity title was the Son of Man (Heb. *ben adam*). This term was always on the lips of Jesus and always with the definite article (the Son of Man), which indicates that it was a known quantity in his day. In fact, it is a term with strong Old Testament (OT) ties including the most famous found in Daniel 7:13-14:

*In my vision at night I looked and there before me was one like a **son of man** coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power....*

Here the "like a son of man" is not used as a title, but a simile to distinguish him from the beasts Daniel is also describing. But this son of man-like human is being exalted, glorified and enthroned beside the Ancient of Days, Yahweh. This passage hovers over the entire ministry of Jesus. Daniel 7 together with Psalm 2, Psalm 110, and Genesis 3:15 and the one we read in Deuteronomy 18 are probably the most important Messianic passages in the OT.

The gospel writers all use the son of man term in connection to Jesus' ministry, his death and resurrection, and his future prophetic activities. The disciples came to understand toward the end of Jesus' mission that not only was Jesus a son of man, much like the prophet Ezekiel (whom God addressed as "son of man" ninety-three times), but that was **the** Son of Man, the archetype, not the type.

Jesus was more than a son of man-type prophet, important though that is, he was **the** prophet that Moses spoke of: "Yahweh your God will raise up for you a prophet like unto me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him." Jesus was the greatest and final prophet of God's Torah.

Jesus Enthroned at God's Right Hand

Did Jesus' image of himself fit his ministry and mission? Was it realistic? Jesus saw his Daniel 7 enthronement coming soon when at his trial he said to High

Priest Caiaphas and the Jewish leaders, "But from now on [lit. *henceforth*], the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God...and coming in the clouds of heaven."⁶ Jesus knew who he was. His image wasn't contrived. His feet were solidly grounded on God's word. He was **the** Son of Man who was soon going into the presence of God.

In the Book of Acts Luke records Jesus ascending to his enthronement in a cloud and then out of sight, but with an angelic affirmation that he would return in like manner. The Daniel 7 vision is clearly in view when describing Jesus' return to earth to rule over the nations with a kingdom that will endure forever and one that he will share with his followers (Luke 3 22:29; see also Daniel 2:44).

Stephen's martyrdom vision confirms that Jesus' words to Caiaphas had been fulfilled: "Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 'Look,' he said, 'I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God'" (Acts 7:55-56).

The prophetic vision of Daniel 7 was fulfilled; Jesus exalted and enthroned at the right hand of God. With what title does Stephen identify Jesus? The same description Daniel used and the same title Jesus chose to summarize his own mission. A title that includes the word "man." Could the picture be any clearer? Jesus's image of himself is perfectly in sync with his godly commission.

The disciples were putting it all together toward the end. They were being allowed time to figure things out for themselves and Jesus wanted it that way. He was content to let his Father slowly open up their minds. They needed, with God's leading, to put the picture together on their own. I think that is how God patiently works with you and me to bring us to ultimate truth and reality.

In Peter's famous confession at Caesarea Philippi (that gorgeous area in northern Israel below snow-capped Mt. Hermon replete with waterfalls and big trees) he answered the big question that was continually on the disciples' minds. Jesus asked them directly: "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

Peter answered: "You are the Christ [Messiah], **the** Son of the living God." Did Peter know that Jesus, the Son of Man, **the** Son of God, was **the** Messiah? Dead right he did! How did Jesus respond to Peter's, clear, unambiguous answer? "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven"⁷. Jesus affirmed that Peter's conclusion was in fact the truth from the Heavenly Father himself.

Jesus' Identity Resolves Crystal Clear

The disciples were concluding that Jesus wasn't just a chosen representative of Adam's race, a son of man, but was **the** Son of Man, the true Adam made in the Image of God. Paul calls the exalted Jesus the Second

Adam or Last Adam, the spiritual Adam, “*the* man from heaven...so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven” (1 Corinthians 15:45, 48-49).

The disciples finally understood Jesus wasn’t just a son of God, but was the Son of God—the firstborn in the Image of God. Later they preached that we can likewise take on the Divine Image, be born of the spirit, enter eternal life, be glorified, and like Jesus, have fellowship in the presence of our Maker, the Father, the One True God⁸.

Finally, after the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), the disciples saw all the evidence of Jesus’ life and works congeal together and they understood who he truly was in the grand cosmic plan of God. Sure he was Jesus of Nazareth, son of Joseph and Mary, their friend and teacher, but now they comprehended that Yahweh had chosen Jesus as his firstborn son and unique spokesman to and savior of mankind—God’s supreme Agent and the future King of God’s Realm. They were excited and motivated to proclaim his gospel far and wide.

Yahweh knew who Jesus was. At his baptism, “A voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’”⁹ How important is that? At the mountain top transfiguration vision a voice thundered from a cloud, echoing Moses’ prophecy: “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!”¹⁰

As we’ve seen, Jesus knew his identity and mission—it became his image. He called himself the Son of Man, acknowledged he was the promised Messiah, and knew who his God was.

“Father, the time has come, glorify your son, that your son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”¹¹

Jesus’ entire life was guided by the image he was committed to internalizing—the image of his heavenly Father. This is what gave him his motivation, strength, restraint, boldness, purpose, faith, love, and power.

What impact to your life would such a commitment to internalizing the image of God make? To be ever conscious that you are a son or daughter of the living God called to become like him and to rule with him in his everlasting kingdom. Bearing that image and purpose would make you a different person would make you someone like Jesus.

When Image Counts

At the onset of this article I discussed our vain attempts to gain a pleasing image for ourselves. It may have been borrowed, copied, or shoddy, but it is our image. How does it look when measured against the image God wants us to make our own?

We should let go the silly attempts to conform to what we think others will admire, but do as Paul ad-

vises: “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—this good, pleasing and perfect will.”¹²

The Image of God is the Ultimate Goal

It has been said by many scholars that Genesis 1:26 could serve as the purpose statement for all of Scripture: “God said, ‘Let us make man in our image in our likeness....’” It is certainly the keynote for all that follows and seems to be finally fulfilled in the last two chapters of Revelation.

Jesus made the divine image his personal image and we see the profound effect that has had upon millions over the centuries. If we are followers of Jesus we must imitate his good works and become like him in mind, character, and love. That means taking on the divine image, God’s nature, as our chosen image. Peter put it this way:

*His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires*¹³

Giving ourselves over to the image of God as our own identity is participating in the divine nature, which not only gives purpose to life now and provides direction to avoid evil, but ultimately it leads to eternal life—to those “great and precious promises” that Peter knew were so very, very real.

End Notes

1. Micah 6:8
2. John 8:27-28
3. John 17:11
4. John 1:45
5. John 5:46, see 6:14; 7:40
6. Luke 22:69; Matthew 26:64
7. Matthew 16:13, 16-17
8. 1 John 3:1-3
9. Matthew 3:17
10. Matthew 17:5
11. John 17:1-3
12. Romans 12:2
13. 2 Peter 1:3-4

Ken Westby is a board member emeritus of the BSA, and founder and director of the Association for Christian Development and the Virtual Church (www.godward.org).

Book Review

A Thousand Shall Fall

By Susi Hasel Mundy

Review by Alice E. Lauria

A Thousand Shall Fall chronicles the Hazel family in Hitler's Germany during World War II. Franz Hazel was a pacifist and taught his family the ways of his faith. He had been a literature evangelist and publishing secretary.

His wife, Helene, was a homemaker and a Seventh-day Adventist. When she refused to join the Nazi party, Herr Doering, a neighbor and party official, became her enemy. He would tell everyone that she was a Jew and harassed her in an effort to get her to join the party.

Nine year old Kurt, the oldest of the Hasel children and his sister, Lotte, were brainwashed daily about Aryan supremacy and Germany's inevitable victory. However, when the younger Gerd, a nickname for Gerhard, took his father's medals to school, Gerd's mother found them in his pocket. This gave Franz an opportunity to explain what German life would be like if Germany won the war.

Gerd and Lotte enjoyed going to the Bird Paradise. The children enjoyed their walks in the open spaces, especially Susi and Lotti. Susi Hasel Mundy has written how this family of Seventh-day Adventists remained faithful to their beliefs and survived.

It was one warm Sabbath after church and after sundown when Franz opened the mail. At age 40 he was being drafted into the army.

A few days later at the recruitment center Franz explained that he was a Seventh-day Adventist and a conscientious objector. He asked to serve as a medic, but was assigned to the engineering unit. That meant the task of building bridges would put him on the front lines.

When he met Captain Hauptmann Brandt, Franz, with his permission, made two requests: one, to be excused from duty on the Sabbath, and two, that he receive a substitute, when possible, for pork products. Captain Brandt was agreeable.

Franz' Lieutenant Gutschalk did not react so calmly. He lectured Franz when his requests were presented. The Lieutenant told him, "Work out whatever you want." When the Lieutenant began to lecture again, he said that he didn't like being "saddled with a religious nut."

However, Franz was later rewarded and promoted for his good moral influence on the men in the entire company.

*(The BSA has the book available on our Web site for \$13 for BSA members. Non-members add \$3 for shipping and handling. Go to this Web address: <http://biblesabbath.org/>. Look for the drop-down menu under **Products/Books**. You may also call our toll-free number: 888-687-5191)*

With this article *The Sabbath Sentinel* continues our series on the various movements within the Sabbath-keeping community

How Were Early American Sabbatarians Viewed?

by Joe Beliefeuille

How were early American Sabbatarians viewed by their fellow Americans? Of course the full, complete answer would involve thousands of interviews with the early colonists/Americans who lived in various states/colonies who were members of various religious denominations or diverse racial/ethnic groups, age groups, genders, or occupations. Since no one from the 1600s and 1700s is still alive today, we must rely on written accounts that have survived the ravages of time. Many historical records by (or about) early American Sabbatarians still exist. Some of them are even “hidden” in plain sight like the autobiography of Benjamin Franklin. From the documents that I have come across, I have narrowed the choices down to five. They do not cover the entire gamut of all possible opinions but they do give five diverse—yet interesting and sometimes, unexpected—viewpoints.

The five opinions are offered by Thomas Mumford (who has the same last name as Stephen Mumford — the first known American Sabbatarian), Ben Franklin (one of the founding fathers of the U.S.), John Tobler, Morgan Edwards, and John Asplund. The format of the rest of this article will be: first, a brief introduction of who the writer was: then, second, their opinion(s) of the early Sabbatarian(s); and finally a bibliography

1. Thomas Mumford (c1625/1630 — 1692) came to Rhode Island in 1655. He married the daughter of the Secretary of the Colony. According to the Mumford Memoirs, by James “Gregory Mumford (page 15), Thomas “...served ... modestly as gentleman and magistrate and he kept the faith [Church of England?] without ostentation, when others were giving themselves over to theological warfare. He begat wholesome sons and daughters and left a name long remembered and honored in the” land.”

Although the Mumford Memoirs is about Thomas Mumford and his descendants, pages 16-19 tell about Stephen Mumford, who is the generally accepted first Sabbath-keeper in America. It is clarified in the book that Stephen and Thomas were not related (even though they had the same last name). Basic information about Stephen Mumford is given: born in London in 1639, was a Baptist preacher, came to America in 1664, married Anne in 1665, had three children [Stephen, John, and Ann), and died in July of 1707. Other sources, don’t always agree with all of these details, like him being a Baptist (Saturday-Sabbath) preacher. Other statements add color or help flesh-out what Stephen Mumford was like: he was “of good repute in the

community” (page 17), was admitted, as a freeman of Newport in 1671 (page 17), and on page 19, he “...settled down to a more regular mode of life...” “...assisted by brethren at home and lands he acquired near Jamestown, Rhode Island.”

2. Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790), one of the founding fathers of the U.S., was a gifted printer, inventor, diplomat, and writer. He “was disillusioned with established Christian religions although, he did regularly attend church services as a youth, On page 95 of W.H. Brands’ book, *The First American*, Ben Franklin is described as wandering from agnosticism “to a pragmatic moralism.” While a teenager he fled from Boston to Philadelphia and “interned” under Samuel Keimer in a printing business, the only Sabbatarian he ever met. Overall Franklin’s opinion of Keimer—who espoused the Saturday Sabbath—was quite low. In brief Franklin was displeased at Keimer’s argumentativeness. He also said that Keimer had “poor personal hygiene.” To use Franklin’s exact words from his autobiography on page 45, Keimer was “... an odd fish, ignorant of common life, fond of rudely opposing received opinions, slovenly to extreme dirtiness, enthusiastic in some points of Religion, and a little Knavish withal.”

3. John (Johannes) Tobler (1696-1765) emigrated from Switzerland to the American colonies in 1737. He settled near Augusta (Georgia) at the Savannah River. In addition to farming, operating, a store, building a fort, and being a justice of the peace,” he wrote an almanac in English. In his writings this hard-working Lutheran described a Sabbatarian family but neglected to give the name of the family.

According to Robbins John Tobler’s *Description of South Carolina* (1753), “on pages 261 and 262, Tobler states, “...The man had supported himself [and his family] for almost two years in the woods with hunting. But he grew tired of this life and tried to settle somewhere [else] ... He ... has ten children, who have not been baptized. He is very zealous in his worship. He reads from the Bible, expounds it, sings, prays, but usually in silence, and this is known as the inner worship of these people. He believes with great certainty in a restoration of all things....”

In *A History of the Lutheran Church In South Carolina*, a selection from John Tobler’s almanac for 1755 is included. On page 72 Tobler states: “... two years ago there, appeared at my place a family from Pennsylvania. I let him and his numerous family stay in one of my houses. But because he wanted to celebrate Saturday and work on Sunday, I could not stand to have him for

long he ... was a devout man and a particularly good singer. He is well versed in the Bible...."

4. Morgan Edwards (1723-1795), a Sunday-observing Baptist minister, visited nearly all the Baptist church groups in the colonies including those that were Saturday Sabbath keepers. His books describe the "local group's history, membership rolls, and — at times some of their doctrines.

In Edwards' *Materials Towards a History of the Baptists* on page 163 [the Crozer manuscript], he describes the Tuckaseeking (GA) group: "This, fraternity had all things in common, and got their neighborhood "chiefly by gathering honey, and beeswax, and hunting deer and beasts "of fur ... their neighbors...[disliked] them on account of their working on Sundays...their neighbors sought opportunities to hurt them, as enemies of God; and hearing one of their preachers (Clayton) advancing in his sermon, "that he who kept a concubine would be no Christian, though the keeper were a king and the concubine a countess. This was construed an unchristianizing of King George the second; and the preacher fined one mark."

5. John Asplund (? – 1807) was born in Sweden, went to England in 1775, and then later to North Carolina. He traveled extensively in America to gather information on Baptist congregations. From 1791–1794 he published *The Annual Register of the Baptist Denomination in North America*.

In the 1790 edition on page 53, Asplund describes "The Sabbatarians or Seventh Day Baptists" in an interesting way. "This society has not any associations or conference [the Seventh Day Baptist church was officially begun in 1801]. They differ in nothing else from the regular Baptists, only that they hold the seventh day for their Sabbath. In other respects, they are very strict people, and upright in their walk."

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How to Become a Winner

"Unto man belong the resolves of the heart; but from the Lord cometh the expression of the tongue." Prov. 16:1, Leeser.

One of the catchiest billboard advertisements I have ever seen pictured a young teen-ager leaning forward with his fists on a car battery, a cocky, chip-on-the-shoulder expression on his face, accompanied by a caption that read: "Want to start something?"

People who start arguments sometimes win them, because people who don't start them often allow them to. Generally those who lose do so because they show their hand from the beginning, giving their adversary, who perhaps did not show his hand, an advantage. So, if you want a better chance to win an argument, don't start it.

The second rule, when someone tries to provoke an argument, is: Don't say a word—not one word. This accomplishes two things: 1) it throws the challenger off balance, and, 2) it gives you time to think—and pray. Most people find this the hardest step to follow, but it can be done. The secret is to resolve before the argument that you are not going to allow yourself to be drawn into it, no matter what, and ask God to help you. He will, if you ask in faith and really mean it.

The third rule is: Let the other person run out of steam. When the other person realizes that you are not responding to his challenges, he will probably repeat them. Next time he pauses, just say, "I'm listening"—and you are listening, not with an air of superiority, but humbly and respectfully. He may have something worth listening to.

After a while the challenger will begin to repeat himself, and eventually he will run out of things to say. At this point a few choice words could deliver a *coup de grace*. But as a Christian this is not your purpose. Your purpose is to win a friend, not an argument. So you say something like: "Well, that is certainly one way to look at it," then you go on calmly to present your point of view. Occasionally, at this juncture, the other person will concede that you have better reasons for believing as you do than he has for believing as he does. By saving his face you make it possible for him to accept gracefully another point of view.

This method of meeting arguments can be used effectively in soul winning. In some instances that I have heard of, whole congregations have been won to our message by this method—including the pastors.

During the course of this day you may meet individuals who will challenge you to an argument. Why not turn such challenges into opportunities for winning souls? Remember: "Unto man belong the resolves of the heart; but from the Lord cometh the expression of the tongue."

Donald Mansell, *New Every Morning*, page 94. Review & Herald Publishing Association. 1981.

physical peril, or to not heed the call to arms on a Sabbath day in defense of your nation or your neighbor. Yeshua says it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath but I regard it as a requirement. Yahweh wants us to be compassionate and empathetic. We must be merciful and ready to serve our neighbors 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Next up is the topic of doing commerce on the Sabbath day, particularly that of eating out. The 4th commandment does not allow for any work to be done on Sabbath. In a perfect world, one that we will experience, nobody will work on Sabbath so there will be no opportunity to buy or sell anything, let alone to temporarily hire a waiter and cook to prepare food for us. In the millennium, no business will be open from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday. We have a specific Scripture that addresses this. The set up is that those who were going to return from the Babylonian captivity had recently done so. They were in the middle of reconstructing Jerusalem when Nehemiah recants the Sabbath being profaned:

"In those days I saw in Judah some who were treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sacks of grain and loading them on donkeys, as well as wine, grapes, figs and all kinds of loads, and they brought them into Jerusalem on the sabbath day. So I admonished them on the day they sold food. Also men of Tyre were living there who imported fish and all kinds of merchandise, and sold them to the sons of Judah on the sabbath, even in Jerusalem. Then I reprimanded the nobles of Judah and said to them, What is this evil thing you are doing, by profaning the sabbath day? Did not your fathers do the same, so that our God brought on us and on this city all this trouble? Yet you are adding to the wrath on Israel by profaning the sabbath. It came about that just as it grew dark at the gates of Jerusalem before the sabbath, I commanded that the doors should be shut and that they should not open them until after the sabbath. Then I stationed some of my servants at the gates so that no load would enter on the sabbath day. Once or twice the traders and merchants of every kind of merchandise spent the night outside Jerusalem. Then I warned them and said to them, Why do you spend the night in front of the wall? If you do so again, I will use force against you. From that time on they did not come on the sabbath. And I commanded the Levites that they should purify themselves and come as gatekeepers to sanctify the sabbath day. For this also remember me, O my God, and have compassion on me according to the greatness of Your lovingkindness" (Nehemiah 13:15-22).

The text here is easy enough to understand. Nehemiah is not introducing new law but rather reinforcing

existing law. I would like to place emphasis on two sentences. The first is that they were selling food specifically. This is unacceptable to God. The second is that Nehemiah would not permit the vendors to sleep outside the wall. He wanted to push the temptation out of the sight of the people. This is a great lesson! We need to get the temptation to sin out of our sight as well!

There is another aspect of the Sabbath that is not covered in Exodus.

"The LORD spoke again to Moses, saying, 'Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, "The LORD'S appointed times which you shall proclaim as holy convocations—My appointed times are these: For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a sabbath of complete rest, a holy convocation. You shall not do any work; it is a sabbath to the LORD in all your dwellings" (Leviticus 23:1-3).

We have already covered what holy means. Convocation means a public meeting or an assembly. This is the same as the word that is translated "church" in the New Testament which is the Greek "*ekklesia*." Here in Leviticus 23, the sabbath command is expanded to include having a called out assembly of believers. To most believers, this means to attend a church service. That church service can take many forms and be anything from a small group meeting in a home to a large group meeting in an official church building. Whatever form it takes, the command includes having an assembly so like minded believers can fellowship, share their testimonies, teach, learn, network, etc.

The Sabbath is an easy commandment to keep with immense value and benefits. It is not meant to be a burden, but a liberating time where the called-out believers can commune with each other and, most importantly, with God. It can even be construed as a weekly glimpse at the future, when the called out believers will commune with the Almighty forever. We are supposed to plan and prepare in advance to set-aside this 24 hour period for a holy purpose, just as God did in the beginning. As you start to observe the Sabbath as the scriptures outline, you will likely find traditions to keep that help enhance the experience for you, your family, and your fellowship. Just remember, we do it all for the glory of God!

Chris is a member of the Church of God, Kansas City. You can follow Chris's blog, which has new material quite often, at the following Web address: <http://firstcenturychristianity.net/>.

Daniel Botkin Presents
**The Parable
of the Ten
Messianic
Virgins**

*Adapted from Matthew 25
Idea suggested by Elisabeth
TylerDawn Rosenquist*

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN SHALL BE
LIKENEED UNTO TEN VIRGINS WAITING
FOR THE COMING OF THE BRIDE-
GROOM. FIVE OF THEM WERE WISE,
AND FIVE WERE FOOLISH.



AND ON YOM TERUAH, THE DAY OF
TRUMPET BLASTS, THE TRUMPET
SOUNDED AND A CRY WAS MADE:

BEHOLD, THE BRIDEGROOM COMETH !
GO YE OUT TO MEET HIM !



AND THE WISE WENT FORTH TO
MEET THE BRIDEGROOM, BUT
THE FOOLISH SAID ONE TO ANOTHER:

NAH, IT CAN'T BE ! WE HAVEN'T SEEN
THE NEW MOON YET ! THAT MUST
HAVE BEEN THUNDER WE HEARD !



THAT'S RIGHT
WE'LL SEE THE
NEW MOON
TOMORROW !

NO WE WON'T
IT'LL BE THE
DAY AFTER
TOMORROW !

REALLY? I
THOUGHT
IT WAS
LAST NIGHT.



ACTUALLY IT'S GONNA BE NEXT
MONTH, 'CAUSE WE CELEBRATED
PASSOVER A MONTH LATER THAN
YOU GUYS DID, ON THE TRUE AVIV
OF GREEN BARLEY SEEN IN ISRAEL !





Mail from our Readers



Dear Sabbath Sentinel,

I enjoyed the article, “Creation, Flood, and Covenant” in the Sept-Oct edition of The Sabbath Sentinel. I have struggled with these questions quite a bit over the last several years, and would like to discuss them further with the one responsible for the article. Can you give me the author’s address please? (You say R. Herbert is a pen name in your footnote at the bottom.) Is the author a member of the BSA or was the article borrowed from another magazine? If you cannot supply me with the author’s name, then referring me to the person responsible for its selection in this month’s magazine would probably be the next best thing.

Please understand, my intent is only to engage in mere dialogue on the topic under discussion. It’s hard to find Sabbath keepers who have the willingness to do so with an open mind.

Thank you,

Mark A. Biggs
Nowell, MI 48843

(Mark: I will not publish your telephone number. I will contact R. Herbert by e-mail and give him your phone number. I’m afraid you might get a raft of calls from people who have no other agenda than to waste your time. The author, R. Herbert, has some very justifiable reasons for concealing his real name.)

—Editor

Dear Sabbath Sentinel Editor,

Thanks for your excellent “editorial” in the Jan-Feb Sentinel. And, if you do not mind, I would like to add some comments, which your editorial did not allow for. These are not meant to disagree, but to add agreements.

First, the comment by Paul, “those who rule over you,” in no way points to an ordained ministry. In fact, even a short study of New Testament teachings will show that he was referring to the “rule of Roman Instituted systems.” Any number of Scriptures who that each “called out one,” is responsible for his or her own salvation. With, of course, the hope that there would be other believers to help.

Paul himself told the Corinthians, “Not that I have authority over you.” It seems that when Paul did use authority, it was in the line of correcting the misuse of the Gospel message. His attitude was that of John Mark, when he talks about “Diotrophes, who love to have preeminence.” Both Paul and John Mark said that they would put those who would disobey “Church rules,” in their place.

The second comment regards the “priesthood” claims that the ordained ministries use. They mostly claim that they are representing our “new” High Priest (replacing the Aaronic priesthood), Jesus Christ. Thus making the claim that they exercise “authority over the congregations,” in Christ’s stead.

—Ray Daly, Lincoln, North Dakota

(Ray: you have given us food for thought.)

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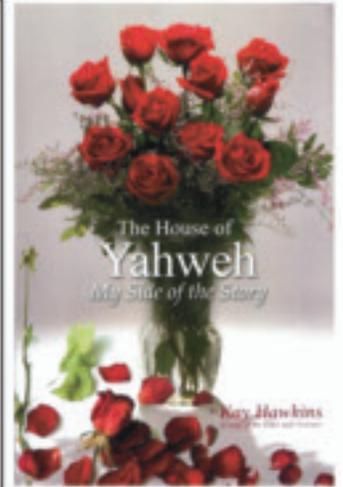
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