



Our Firm Platform

The Truth for Our Times

To proclaim the Third Angel's Message to the World

July 2017

What is Sin?

Part 2

by Dennis Priebe

Is it really true that guilt is the result of one's personal choice and not a result of our birth as children of Adam? Can we substantiate from the Bible that sin and guilt come from choice, not from the fact we are born into the human family beset with the inherent results of sin? Let's look at the biblical evidence.

In Romans 7:7-9, Paul speaks about the law and our relationship to it. Paul says, "I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. ... For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Here Paul says that we know what sin is because the law tells us, and if we did not know about the law we would really not have any knowledge or understanding of sin. He even goes so far as to say that without the law, sin is dead. Thus we sin when we know what God's will is. We sin when we understand and choose against God.

In John 15:22, 24, Jesus, speaking to His disciples just before His death, says, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin". "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father."

Because of what people now knew about Jesus and what He had done, they were responsible for the way they related to Him. Because of His coming and their knowledge, they were guilty if they rejected Him.

In John 9:41, Jesus is responding to some of the criticisms of the Pharisees, and He says, "If ye were blind, ye should have

no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth". That is, if you were truly blind, if you really didn't know, you wouldn't be guilty of sin. But you say, we see; therefore you are guilty of sin.

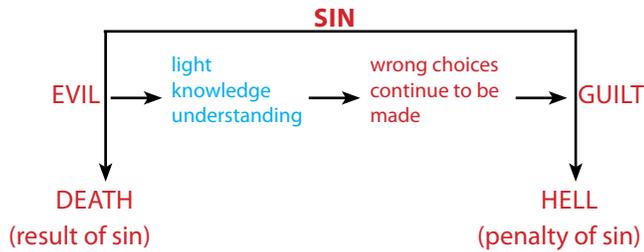
Doesn't it seem clear that sin and guilt are tied closely to knowledge and understanding and light? Perhaps the distinguishing factor between the two columns we used earlier (which helped to differentiate evil from guilt) is the biblical term light. What changes evil into guilt is light or knowledge or understanding—and the choices made upon the basis of that new light or understanding.

Because of His coming and their knowledge, they were guilty if they rejected Him.

In the book of James, this problem is illuminated. James 4:17 says, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." To the one who knows what is right and fails to do it, to that person, it is sin. Once again knowledge and guilt are tied closely together. James 1:15 says, "When lust [desire] hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death". Here we see a development from lust, or desire, to actual sin. Sin is not necessarily within the desire itself. Sin is what is produced by that desire. Sin is the result of yielding to that desire.

In the Old Testament, Ezekiel 18:2-4 refers to a proverb by the children of Israel. "What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more

Next page please



to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine; the soul that sinneth, it shall die." In verse 20, Ezekiel reemphasizes this biblical principle: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son." Individual responsibility for individual choices— individual freedom of choice.

Now what does God do about those who are doing wrong ignorantly, who are out of harmony with the will of God? How does He handle such situations? Paul says in Acts 17:30: "The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." In times of ignorance, men are doing evil things. They are doing things which are out of harmony with the will of God. They are breaking God's law and God's will. How does God handle that problem? What does He do about that? According to this verse, He "winks at," or overlooks, the times of ignorance. He does not forgive, but He overlooks. But whenever light and knowledge come, evil then becomes guilt. And for that sin done in the face of knowledge, the sinner must repent and seek forgiveness.

In times of ignorance, men are doing evil things. They are breaking God's law and God's will. How does God handle that problem?

Our Lord's statement in Matthew 11:21-24 is made a little clearer with this understanding: "If the mighty works, which were done in you [Bethsaida], had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. ... If the mighty works, which have been done in thee [Capernaum], had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee."

Now in terms of quantity of evil works, I am sure that

Sodom far outstripped Capernaum. But the condemnation was heavier upon Capernaum. Why? Capernaum had more light. They had the privilege of accepting Jesus Himself. Of course Sodom had done evil things, but many of those evil things had been done in lesser light. They did not understand God's way, and Lot was not a very good representative of the way of God for them. Because of their ignorance they were not as guilty as were the people of Capernaum, who had rejected greater light. So Capernaum was more guilty than Sodom, because they had more light; their choices were based on a more complete knowledge. Psalm 87:4-6 suggests that the Lord will take note of where a man is born, of where a man is brought up. He will make judgments on the basis of where a man is, what background he has had, how much understanding he has had of God's will.

Ellen White makes some important statements on the subject of sin and guilt. "It is inevitable that children should suffer from the consequences of parental wrongdoing, but they are not punished for the parents' guilt, except as they participate in their sins. ... By inheritance and example the sons become partakers of the father's sin. Wrong tendencies, perverted appetites, and debased morals, as well as physical disease and degeneracy, are transmitted as a legacy from father to son, to the third and fourth generation." (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 306).

Because of their ignorance they were not as guilty as were the people who had rejected greater light.

Please note what is transmitted as a result of Adam's sin. Wrong tendencies, perverted appetites, even debased morals, as well as physical disease and degeneracy. These are all part of what we receive from our parents and our ancestors. But let us note also that very important statement that children "are not punished for the parents' guilt, except as they participate in their sins." This is rather conclusive evidence for the doctrine that sin and guilt arise out of choice in the face of sufficient knowledge regarding right and wrong.

"We shall not be held accountable for the light that has not reached our perception, but for that which we have resisted and refused. A man could not apprehend the truth which had never been presented to him, and therefore could not be condemned for light he had never had" (*Ellen G. White*

Next page please

As a result of Adam's sin, wrong tendencies, perverted appetites, debased morals, physical disease and degeneracy are passed on to the next generation.

Comments, S.D.A. Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 1145). Personal guilt is charged only on the basis of light and knowledge. We are not condemned because we do things which are evil or wrong

unless we understand to some degree that such things are wrong. "None will be condemned for not heeding light and knowledge that they never had" (*Ibid.*). It seems clear that she is basing condemnation upon understanding, upon willful decisions. "Light makes manifest and reproves the errors that were concealed in darkness; and as light comes, the life and character of men must change correspondingly, to be in harmony with it. Sins that were once sins of ignorance, because of the blindness of the mind, can no more be indulged in without incurring guilt." (*Gospel Workers*, p. 162). Once we know that our acts are wrong, we become guilty if we keep on indulging in those sins. But before we knew, we were not guilty. After we understand, we are guilty. Guilt is thus tied to choice and to knowledge.

"There were still many among the Jews who were ignorant of the character and the work of Christ [after the time of Jesus, just before the destruction of Jerusalem]. And the children had not enjoyed the opportunities or received the light which their parents had spurned. ... The children were not condemned for the sins of the parents; but when, with a knowledge of all the light given to their parents, the children rejected the additional light granted to themselves, they became partakers of the parents' sins, and filled up the measure of their iniquity." (*The Great Controversy*, pp. 27, 28). Because of personal involvement and personal understanding, guilt was imputed.

"The sin of evil-speaking begins with the *cherishing* of evil thoughts. ... An impure thought *tolerated*, an unholy desire *cherished*, and the soul is contaminated, its integrity compromised." (*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p.177; emphasis supplied). Please note the difference. It is the toleration of the impure thought, it is the cherishing of the unholy desire that constitutes sin and contamination. It is not the thought or the desire itself. It is not right to say that there is sin in the desire to sin if that desire is instantly repulsed. "Every unholy thought must be instantly repelled." "No man can be forced to transgress. His own consent must first be gained; the soul must

purpose the sinful act before passion can dominate over reason or iniquity triumph over conscience. Temptation, however strong, is never an excuse for sin" (*Ibid.*, emphasis supplied). The inclinations of the natural heart are not sin in themselves until they are cherished, until they are wanted; in consenting to evil thoughts we cross the boundary between evil and guilt. The inclination is evil, but we are not guilty for that inclination til we choose to act upon it.

"If light come, and that light is set aside or rejected, then comes condemnation and the frown of God; but before the light comes, there is no sin, for there is no light for them to reject" (*Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 116). Thus, it seems very clear that sin is tied closely to knowledge and to understanding.

"There are thoughts and feelings suggested and aroused by Satan that annoy even the best of men; but if they are not cherished, if they are repulsed as hateful, the soul is not contaminated with guilt, and no other is defiled by their influence" (*Review and Herald*, March 27, 1888). Those thoughts and feelings, if not cherished, will not contaminate with guilt. The thoughts and feelings are wrong. They are there because of the evil in the world and because of a nature we have that's fallen. But they are not contaminating unless we choose to cherish them or to act them out.

Temptation, however strong, is never an excuse for sin. The inclinations of the natural heart are not sin in themselves until they are cherished, until they are wanted; ...

In *Counsels on Health*, page 81, Ellen White notes that using tobacco injures the body, but God is merciful to those who use it in ignorance. Only after light comes to them are they considered guilty for their use of tobacco. Now, tobacco will have its negative effects. It may even lead to cancer, but until light comes, guilt is not imputed. Contracting cancer does mean, necessarily, that the person is guilty and has sinned against the light of truth.

In conclusion, I believe that guilt resides only within those higher faculties responsible for choosing evil, not in the lower faculties which suffer the effects of natural law and are a part of the earth's cycle of sin. Guilt cannot reside in an amoral natural world but only in man who is responsible for the perversions of moral law. Guilt does not attach itself to man's animal faculties,

Next page please

but to those moral faculties involved in exercising the power of choice.

Sin, at its root, is self-love. Thus sin is determined by motive rather than by acts. It is the choice to put self first, whatever form that takes. Sin is the choice to separate from God by putting self first. It is the choice to cherish evil. It is the choice to remain ignorant of God's will. It is the choice to be careless of one's abilities and responsibilities.

At the foundation of the theological divisions among Adventists on the question of righteousness by faith lie differing beliefs on the nature of sin and guilt. The real debate is over the nature of sin. This question must be clearly answered: Why are we guilty and for what must we be forgiven?

The answer we give to this question directly affects our perception of the way Christ came to this earth. What nature did Christ take? What powers did He use? How did He overcome sin? These questions will receive different answers, depending on one's conclusions regarding the nature of sin.

Guilt resides only within those higher faculties responsible for choosing evil, not in the lower faculties which suffer the effects of natural law and are a part of the earth's cycle of sin.

Songs of Jesus

by Vance Ferrell [excerpted]

While living and working here on earth amid worldly people, Christ sang sweet songs of God's love and majesty, and chased away the darkness. Soon others would be singing with him!

"The childhood of Jesus, spent in poverty, had been uncorrupted by the artificial habits of a corrupt age. Working at the carpenter's bench, bearing the burdens of home life, learning the lessons of obedience and toil, He found recreation amidst the scenes of nature, gathering knowledge as He sought to understand nature's mysteries. He studied the word of God, and His hours of greatest happiness were found when He could turn aside from the scene of His labors to go into the fields, to meditate in the quiet valleys, to hold communion with God on the mountainside or amid the trees of the forest. The early morning often found Him in some secluded place, meditating, searching the Scriptures, or in prayer. With the voice of singing He welcomed the morning light. With songs of thanksgiving He cheered His hours of labor and brought heaven's gladness to the toilworn and disheartened. —*Ministry of Healing* page 52.1.

Some of the songs He sang were taught him by his mother.

"When Christ was a child ... He was tempted to sin, but He

did not yield to temptation. As He grew older He was tempted, but the songs His mother had taught Him to sing came into His mind, and He would lift His voice in praise. And before His companions were aware of it, they would be singing with Him. God wants us to use every facility which Heaven has provided for resisting the enemy." —Manuscript 65, 1901.

Jesus was an earnest worker, yet He brought dedicated praise to God into his work. This is a lesson for us

"With a song, Jesus in His earthly life met temptation. Often when sharp, stinging words were spoken, often when the atmosphere about Him was heavy with gloom, with dissatisfaction, distrust, or oppressive fear, was heard His song of faith and holy cheer." —*Education* page 166.1.

As He worked in the carpenter shop, passed through the streets of Nazareth, and worshiped alone amid the groves at the top of the hill above that little town, Christ sang to His beloved Father.

"The early morning often found Him in some secluded place, meditating, searching the Scriptures, or in prayer. With the voice of singing He welcomed the morning light. With songs of thanksgiving He cheered His hours of labor, and brought heaven's gladness to the toil-worn and disheartened." —*The Ministry of Healing*, page 52 (1905).

"Jesus carried into His labor cheerfulness and tact. It

Next page please

requires much patience and spirituality to bring Bible religion into the home life and into the workshop, to bear the strain of worldly business, and yet keep the eye single to the glory of God. This is where Christ was a helper. He was never so full of worldly care as to have no time or thought for heavenly things. Often He expressed the gladness of His heart by singing psalms and heavenly songs. Often the dwellers in Nazareth heard His voice raised in praise and thanksgiving to God. He held communion with heaven in song; and as His companions complained of weariness from labor, they were cheered by the sweet melody from His lips. His praise seemed to banish the evil angels, and, like incense, fill the place with fragrance. The minds of His hearers were carried away from their earthly exile, to the heavenly home." —*The Desire of Ages*, pages 73, 74.

Let us now view some of the actual songs that Christ sang while here on earth. In one Spirit of Prophecy passage, we are told of three Bible chapters that Christ used for His songs!

First, we are told that Psalm 66 and "portions of 68 and 72" were often sung by Christ.

"This psalm [Psalm 66:1-5 quoted below.] and portions of the sixty-eighth and seventy-second psalms were often sung by Christ. Thus in the most simple and unassuming way He taught others." —*The Youth's Instructor*, September 8, 1898).

Psalm 66:1-5

"Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands:

"Sing forth the honour of his name: make his praise glorious.

"Say unto God, How terrible art thou in thy works! through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee.

"All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee; they shall sing to thy name. Selah.

"Come and see the works of God: he is terrible in his doing toward the children of men."

What a beautiful psalm of praise and worship is Psalm 66! He also sang portions of Psalm 68 and 72. Here are portions of Psalm 68 which I have selected.

"Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him.

"As smoke is driven away, so drive them away: as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence

of God.

"But let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God: yea, let them exceedingly rejoice.

"Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him.

"A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation.

"God setteth the solitary in families: he bringeth out those which are bound with chains: but the rebellious dwell in a dry land.

"O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, when thou didst march through the wilderness; Selah:

"The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel.

"Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary.

"Thy congregation hath dwelt therein: thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor.

"The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it. ...

"The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place.

"Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them.

"Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah.

"He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto GOD the Lord belong the issues from death. ...

"They have seen thy goings, O God; even the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary. ...

"Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.

"Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth; O sing praises unto the Lord; Selah:

"To him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens, which were of old; lo, he doth send out his voice, and that a mighty voice.

"Ascribe ye strength unto God: his excellency is over Israel, and his strength is in the clouds.

"O God, thou art terrible out of thy holy places: the God of Israel is he that giveth strength and power unto his people. Blessed be God."

Psalm 68: 1-11, 17-20, 24, 31-35

Continued on page 7

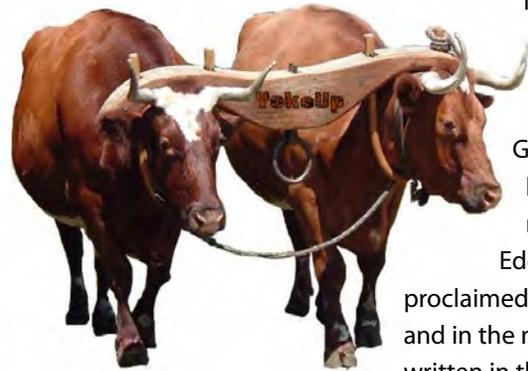
Gems for Thought

"Every soul is surrounded by an atmosphere of its own—an atmosphere, it may be, charged with the lifegiving power of faith, courage, and hope, and sweet with the fragrance of love. Or it may be heavy and chill with the gloom of discontent and selfishness, or poisonous with the deadly taint of cherished sin. By the atmosphere surrounding us, every person with whom we come in contact is consciously or unconsciously affected." (*Messages to Young People*, page 417.2)

"When the soul surrenders itself to Christ, a new power takes possession of the new heart. A change is wrought which man can never accomplish for himself. It is a supernatural work, bringing a supernatural element into human nature. The soul that is yielded to Christ becomes His own fortress, which He holds in a revolted world, and He intends that no authority shall be known in it but His own. A soul thus kept in possession by the heavenly agencies is impregnable to the assaults of Satan. ... " (*Desire of Ages*, page 324.1)

"Whatever your anxieties and trials, spread out your case before the Lord. Your spirit will be braced for endurance. The way will be opened for you to disentangle yourself from embarrassment and difficulty. The weaker and more helpless you know yourself to be, the stronger will you become in His strength. The heavier your burdens, the more blessed the rest in casting them upon the Burden Bearer. The rest that Christ offers depends upon conditions, but these conditions are plainly specified. They are those with which all can comply. He tells us just how His rest is to be found.

"'Take My yoke upon you,' Jesus says. The yoke is an instrument of service. Cattle are yoked for labor, and the yoke is essential that they may labor effectually. By this illustration Christ teaches us that we are called to service as long as life shall last. We are to take upon us His yoke, that we may be co-workers with Him.



"The yoke that binds to service is the law of God. The great law of love revealed in Eden, proclaimed upon Sinai, and in the new covenant written in the heart, is that which binds the human worker to the will of God." (*Desire of Ages*, page 329.1-3)

"Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us, of which we know nothing. Those who accept the one principle of making the service and honor of God supreme will find perplexities vanish, and a plain path before their feet." (*Desire of Ages*, page 330.1)

"Jesus assures His disciples of God's sympathy for them in their needs and weaknesses. Not a sigh is breathed, not a pain felt, not a grief pierces the soul, but the throb vibrates to the Father's heart." (*Desire of Ages*, page 356.2)

"Men may deny Christ by evil-speaking, by foolish talking, by words that are untruthful or unkind. They may deny Him by shunning life's burdens, by the pursuit of sinful pleasure. They may deny Him by conforming to the world, by uncourteous behavior, by the love of their own opinions, by justifying self, by cherishing doubt, borrowing trouble, and dwelling in darkness. In all these ways they declare that Christ is not in them. And 'whosoever shall deny Me before men,' He says, 'him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven.'" (*Desire of Ages*, page 357.2)

"The only remedy for the sins and sorrows of men is Christ. The gospel of His grace alone can cure the evils that curse society. The injustice of the rich toward the poor, the hatred of the poor toward the rich, alike have their root in selfishness, and this can be eradicated only through submission to Christ. He alone, for the selfish heart of sin, gives the new heart of love. Let the servants of Christ preach the gospel with the Spirit sent down from heaven, and work as He did for the benefit of men. Then such results will be manifest in the blessing and uplifting of mankind as are wholly impossible of accomplishment by human power." (*Christ's Object Lessons*, page 254.2)

The Sanctuary Doctrine

“The subject of the sanctuary and the investigative judgment should be clearly understood by the people of God.”—*The Great Controversy*, 488.

“The minds of believers were to be directed to the heavenly sanctuary, where Christ had entered to make atonement for His people.”—*Selected Messages*, 1:67.

“The correct understanding of the ministration in the heavenly sanctuary is the foundation of our faith.”—*Evangelism*, 221.

The doctrine of the Sanctuary is a pillar of our faith that the enemy wants to destroy. We need to know the truth of the sanctuary so when false ideas come to us we will be able to refute them. Here are some questions to test your knowledge of the Sanctuary doctrine. Answers can be found in the book *Christ in His Sanctuary*, a compilation of EG White writings on the subject. Read pages 23-39 for answers to the questions below. To read the book online, go to: https://egwwritings.org/?ref=en_CIHS.3.4¶=12119.15. As you read you can answer the study questions below.

Study Questions

1. What were the “first requisites” for preparing the sanctuary in the wilderness? (23)
2. What formed the basis for the plan for this sanctuary?

How was it obtained? (23)

3. Is there significance to incense fragrance diffusing throughout the sanctuary and “far around the tabernacle”? (26, 27, 32, 33)
4. What was the manifestation of the divine Presence, and where did it appear? (27)
5. The law and the mercy seat were both in the most holy place. Why is this so? (27)
6. Why was the breastplate the most sacred of the priestly vestments? (30)
7. What three things were to be impressed upon Israel by the apparel and deportment of the priests? (30)
8. Why was the instruction on every part of the sanctuary services so explicit and definite? (30, 31)
9. How was the fact that the animal sacrifices were “without blemish” of double significance? (31, 32)
10. The offering of incense and blood was simultaneous. Why was this so? (32, 33)
11. In what two ways was sin transferred from the penitent to the sanctuary? (34)
12. When and how was the sanctuary cleansed from the sins of the people? (35, 36)
13. What objects did John see as in vision he viewed the first and second apartments of the heavenly sanctuary? What of its vastness and glory? (36)
14. How are the daily and yearly services of the sanctuary connected to each other? Apply this to Christ’s ministry as our High Priest and the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary from the record of sin. (37, 38)



SONGS OF JESUS

continued from 5

“Song is a weapon that we can always use against discouragement. As we thus open the heart to the sunlight of the Saviour’s presence, we shall have health and His blessing.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, page. 254 (1905).

“Would it not be well to cultivate gratitude, and to offer grateful songs of thanksgiving to God? As Christians we ought to praise God more than we do. We ought to bring more of the brightness of His love into our lives. As by faith we look to

Jesus His joy and peace are reflected from the countenances. How earnestly we should seek so to relate ourselves to God that our faces may reflect the sunshine of His love! When our own souls are vivified by the Holy Spirit, we shall exert an uplifting influence upon others who know not the joy of Christ’s presence.”—*Bible Commentary*, Volumn 3, page 1148.2.

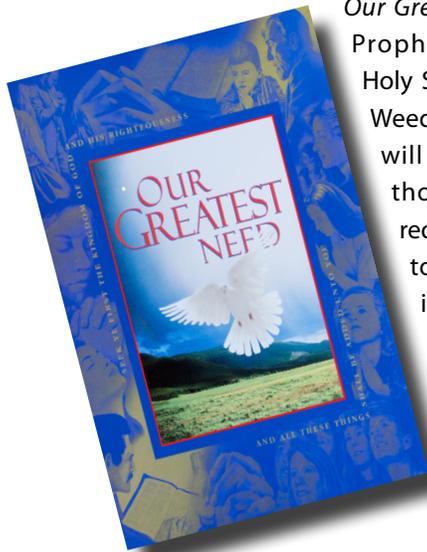
It is obvious that, while here on earth, Christ clung to His Father through prayer and song. Surely, our Saviour did not sing mechanically as many now do. He meant every word of each song! Life to Him was closeness to God, and that is the way it should be for us also.



Books for Sale.

To purchase, please send your request, with the book title that you want, to
Church of the Three Angels, P.O. Box 1596, Sandy, OR 97055.

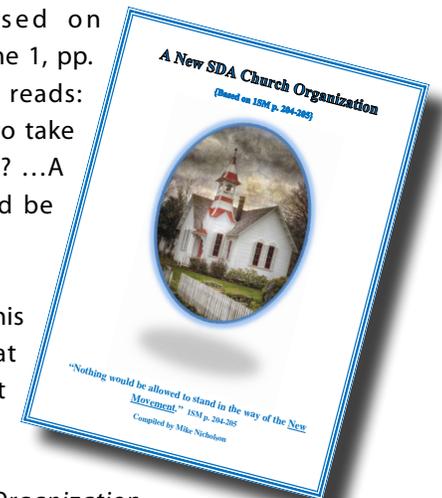
Our Greatest Need



Our Greatest Need is a Spirit of Prophecy collection on the Holy Spirit, compiled by Cathy Weedman. God says that He will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask. Read the requirements, given by God, to receive the Holy Spirit into your life.

Cost is \$15.00, which includes shipping.

A New SDA Church Organization



This book is based on *Selected Messages*, Volume 1, pp. 204-205; part of which reads: "Were this reformation to take place, what would result? ...A new organization would be established. ..."

Will you recognize this new organization? What will it do and when will it appear?

A New SDA Church Organization is a Spirit of Prophecy collection compiled by Mike Nicholson. Cost is \$15.00, which includes shipping.

The End of Time

The End of Time is a Spirit of Prophecy Collection on the End of Time, compiled by Vance Ferrell. A progression of closing events is carefully explained in a complete book which details the events just before the close of probation for Seventh-day Adventists at the National Sunday Law, down to the general close of probation, and beyond to the Second Advent of Christ. It is one of the most complete, categorized collection of Spirit of Prophecy statements on the coming events available anywhere. It is 336 pages; 8 1/2" x 11" and is hardback. Cost is \$12.50 which includes shipping.

