

## ***The Prophetic Gift***

# ***The Message of the Prophets***

Lesson #10 for March 7, 2009

Scriptures: Exodus 20:1-17; Leviticus 16; Matthew 24:23-31; Romans 3:21-28; Hebrews 8:1,2; 9:23.

1. This lesson is about the “core doctrines,” or teachings, of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We believe those doctrines are firmly grounded in biblical truth. They were first worked out by a group of dedicated Bible students during a series of Sabbath conferences that took place in New York and New England. (*Ellen G. White: The Early Years, 1827-1862*, pp. 139-151) James White worked very hard for months to be able to afford the printing of a couple small pamphlets and the cost of travel to upstate New York for the conferences with other leaders. The participants studied together late into the night, and sometimes all night, to determine what, in fact, the Bible said on a particular doctrine. On one occasion at those conferences, Ellen White picked up a Bible and in vision pointed out the verses that the others had apparently overlooked in arriving at a conclusion on a particular doctrine. However, no Seventh-day Adventist doctrine is based solely on her writings.
2. In this lesson we will study the doctrines of righteousness by faith, the sanctuary, the Sabbath, the state of the dead (the nature of man), and the second coming. Those are generally considered to be core doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
3. However, there is one doctrine not specifically mentioned in this lesson which some of us consider to be the most important doctrine of all: the truth about God Himself and His government demonstrated by His response to Satan’s accusations and claims down through the millennia. God is not the kind of Person His enemies have made Him out to be. Each of our “key doctrines” tells us some important things about God.
4. Are some doctrines or teachings of the church really more important than others? Why? Or, why not? The doctrine of righteousness by faith is one that the Seventh-day Adventist Church has struggled with through the years. It has also been a major point of contention in the Christian church for millennia. For Seventh-day Adventists, the important conference at Minneapolis in 1888 was a key point in this discussion. The basic teaching of righteousness by faith is that as human beings, we are all sinners. (1 Kings 8:46; 2 Chronicles 6:36; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:9-28; Romans 5:12,18,19; 1 John 1:8-10) Sin separates us from our God. (Isaiah 59:2; Romans 14:23) In understanding Romans 14:23, we need to recognize that if we do something that we believe is wrong, it damages us. God is not “doing” something to us, we are doing it to ourselves. If we move in a direction that is not based on “faith”—a correct relationship with God—then “God condemns us,” that is, we suffer the consequences. Salvation comes only through a trusting relationship with God which will lead to a transformation in our lives. It is that transformation which is the final proof that we have the correct relationship with God. (2 Corinthians 3:18) Our only safety is in “looking to Jesus.” If we look to any other standard, we will be misled. Why is righteousness by faith such an important doctrine of the Seventh-day Adventist Church?
5. What motivates you to want to obey God’s laws and rules for your life? Is it that: 1) You fear that God will punish you or exclude you from heaven if you do wrong; 2) You are so thankful for what God has done for you and for the forgiveness that He offers, and you are thankful that Jesus died for you; or 3) You have come to love God because of all it has cost Him to demonstrate the truth about His government and the truth about sin, and you want to do what

is right because it is right. (COL 97) Why do we follow the instructions given to us by the manufacturer of a car? Is it a good idea to ignore what the manufacturer recommends?

Isn't it amazing that modern medical research is confirming more and more the advice given to us more than 100 years ago by a "little lady" with a third grade education?

6. Seventh-day Adventists accept and believe the "sanctuary" doctrine. We believe that the ancient Hebrew sanctuary in the desert with its tabernacle and sacrifices provided a "sandbox model" of the plan of salvation. (Hebrews 10:1-4) At the end of the religious calendar year, the people were to sanctify themselves for three days and prepare for the Day of Atonement. Through the services of the Day of Atonement, the sins of the people were symbolically removed, and the people were restored to a right relationship with God. Adventists believe that the pre-advent judgment—which is going on now during the time of the end—is the antitypical day of atonement. (Compare Leviticus 16; Hebrews 8:1,2; 9:1-8; 10:1-4) The sanctuary that is being discussed in Hebrews and which is still "active" in our day is, of course, the heavenly sanctuary. Just as all of the children of Israel were involved in the ceremony on the Day of Atonement, the entire universe is involved in the pre-advent judgment. Everyone who has ever lived on planet earth will be judged, and, in turn, God will be judged by His creatures based on how He has judged us. (Daniel 7:9-13; Romans 3:1-4) How can we say that the One who is doing the judging will also be the One who is judged? We do this all the time! When a new judge is appointed to the Supreme Court, he/she already has a long record of judgments that he/she has made in the past. Those judgments are used to "judge" him/her as to how "liberal" or how "conservative" he/she is. Through the sanctuary services and especially through the Day of Atonement, we learn that sin is deadly, but that God has graciously provided a plan of salvation to permanently eliminate sin from His universe. That is what God so effectively demonstrated through the life and death of His Son. The sanctuary doctrine is the one doctrine that is unique to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Most of our Christian friends reject it as a joke.
7. The key doctrine that has most conspicuously set Seventh-day Adventists apart from other Christians is the keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath. We believe that the Sabbath was instituted in the paradise of Eden, (Genesis 2:1-4) and that it has been kept (often poorly) from that day until this. (Nehemiah 13:15-22) Is it helpful to force people to "keep" the Sabbath? If the people inside the city of Jerusalem had not been eager to buy things on the Sabbath, there never would have been a problem. But, it was easier to shut the gates than it was to purify the hearts of the people inside the city! It was a lot easier to get the children of Israel out of Egypt than it was to get Egypt out of the children of Israel!
8. The Sabbath is considered by many to be arbitrary. However, just as the Fourth of July and your birthday are not arbitrary, **the Sabbath is linked to every important event in the plan of salvation. The Sabbath reminds us of where we came from (creation), why we are here (the Exodus and Sinai; and after Calvary, Christ rested on the Sabbath), what we should be doing while we are here (Jesus kept the Sabbath every week of His human life. We should follow His example), and where we will go after we die (heaven [Isaiah 66:23]).** Thus, the Sabbath is not only a reminder of the key events in the history of salvation but also answers the great philosophical questions of life. If the Sabbath had always been kept as it should have been, there would never have been an unbeliever, an infidel, or an atheist. (GC 437.2) In the catechism from the Council of Trent (1545-1563), the Roman Catholic Church has a very extensive passage on the change of the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday. Roman Catholics are very "strong" on natural law. They argue that there is no natural law or evidence in nature that the seventh-day Sabbath should be observed, and thus,

they say that the keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath is merely an arbitrary act. So, why does the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* support the Roman Catholic teaching that the Sabbath is arbitrary? We might be able to win a small battle on behalf of the Sabbath by taking the “arbitrary” approach, but we would then be losing a much bigger “war” on whether or not God is arbitrary in His dealings with us! Can’t we think of any non-arbitrary reason for keeping the Sabbath? Our whole great controversy theology is undermined by our “Sabbath theology” if we take the approach that the Sabbath is arbitrary. Didn’t God know what was best for us? Did God give us the Sabbath just to prove that He is boss? Even the calendars are being changed to start each week on Monday and end on Sunday. The Devil is doing everything he can to get us to ignore or disbelieve the seventh-day Sabbath and all it stands for. Sunday is the “arbitrary” day. God invites us to His party once a week. Why would anyone who really understands the issues not want to be there?

9. Why is the Sabbath so important to Seventh-day Adventists? Is it a proof that we are God’s true people? (Revelation 12:17; 14:12; 19:10) Or, is it primarily a wonderful opportunity God has provided for us to get to know Him better? Does the keeping of the Sabbath consist mainly of observing the correct times for sundown and attending the correct religious services? Or does it involve primarily a deep personal relationship with our Lord? Why is the Sabbath an important doctrine?
10. What does the Bible teach about the condition of those who are dead? (Psalms 146:4; Ecclesiastes 9:5,6; John 11:11-14; Acts 2:34) The basic issue is concerning the nature of man. Is man naturally immortal? (1 Timothy 6:16; 1 Corinthians 15:53-54) If we need to be changed from mortal to immortal, what is our current condition?
11. In the beginning God clearly stated that when combined together, the body and the spirit form a “soul.” (Genesis 2:7) The soul has no existence apart from the spirit and the body. Why is it then that so many Christians believe that man is immortal? How do we explain verses such as Matthew 25:46 and Revelation 14:9-11? What does the third angel’s message really mean?
12. The notion of human immortality is a very important part of almost every pagan and animistic religion. It was an important part of the Greek polytheistic religion and philosophy. As Bible students it is important that we understand that the words “forever,” “eternal,” and “everlasting” in the biblical languages of Hebrew and Greek did not mean what we commonly think they mean today. Look at Jude 7. Are the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah still burning? 2 Peter 2:6 clearly says that those cities turned into ashes. Compare Exodus 21:6. A slave could serve only as long as he lived. But the original versions suggest that he had to serve his master “forever.”
13. What would it say to us about God if we knew He planned to torture wicked people for eternity? So, how do we explain Revelation 14:9-11? Don’t we say that Seventh-day Adventism is for those who have accepted the third angel’s message? Those verses can only be understood correctly by those who already have studied the rest of Scripture carefully. God’s “wrath” or fury simply represents His final turning away from people who have rejected Him anyway and leaving them to the inevitable and awful consequences of their own rebellious choices. The fire represents God’s presence. (Exodus 24:17; Isaiah 33:10-16) Many other Christian scholars who are not Seventh-day Adventists have espoused those views. The “fire” in those verses represents God’s presence.
14. Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-23. Is it clear to you in this passage why a resurrection from the dead is so essential? While Paul does not emphasize this point, it also makes it clear that sin

is deadly.

15. The term “adventist” refers, of course, to those who believe in the second advent or coming of Jesus Christ. This is one of the most frequently mentioned or most frequently referred to doctrines in the New Testament. But in recent times, popular writers such as Hal Lindsey and Tim LaHaye have suggested some very different ideas about the coming of Jesus. What is the truth? Read Matthew 24:5,23-31; Revelation 1:7. The second coming will be a world-wide event, even an “earth-shaking” event. It will not be in the form of a secret rapture followed later by an “advent.” But one thing is for sure: He is coming back! Why hasn’t He come yet? Because we are not ready. (2 Peter 3:10-12)
16. In this lesson we have reviewed the “core doctrines” of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Why do we considered those doctrines as core doctrines? Is it because they set us apart and show that we are different (do we think better?) than other Christians and other religious groups? Do these particular doctrines say something very important about our heavenly Father? While we would not want to give up any of our 28 specified beliefs, do you believe that these particular doctrines are especially important in understanding God and His way of running His universe? All our doctrines need to be explained in ways that say something very good and important about our heavenly Father.

© 2009, Kenneth Hart, MD. ***Permission is hereby granted for any noncommercial use of these materials. Free distribution is encouraged. It is our goal to see them spread as widely and freely as possible. If you would like to use them for your class or even make copies of portions of them, feel free to do so. We always enjoy hearing about how you might be using the materials and we might even want to share good ideas with others, so let us know.*** [Info@theox.org](mailto:Info@theox.org)

Last modified: February 14, 2009

C:\My Documents\WPISSTG-Hart\Prophetic Gift\GPR-KH-Added-SS-10-PropheticGift-2009\_01\_16-2009\_03\_07-Fin.wpd