

God's Mission My Mission

The End of God's Mission

Lesson #13 for December 30, 2023

Scriptures: Revelation 1:1-7; 14:6-12; 21:1-4; 1 Peter 2:9; 2 Peter 3:11-12; Luke 11:23; 1 Timothy 2:4.

1. What is the end of God's mission? How will God's mission end?

[From the Bible study guide=BSG:] The book of Revelation fills the mind with scenes of the end. The epicenter of the book deals with the cosmic conflict between Christ and Satan. Satan has lost his legal hold over the earth, and now he pursues those who remain loyal to God. The book climaxes with Jesus' return to deliver His children, both the living righteous and those faithful ones who have died since the fall of Adam and Eve. The book shows us, too, the destruction of Satan and the wicked by fire, and Jesus' establishment of His eternal kingdom on the earth made new.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath, December 23.‡

2. It is common for scholars to search the book of Revelation for clues about history and when the world will come to an end. That is perfectly fine to do. But, in this lesson, we will talk about the fact that Revelation is a *missionary book*, focused on a missionary God and what He wants us to do. **He is challenging us to be a *missionary church*.** We need to present the truth to the entire world.
3. An eternal choice is presented to each person living on this earth: (1) Will we choose God's side, the loving side? Or, (2) will we choose Satan's side, the selfish side?
4. Look at the first few lines of the book of Revelation.

Revelation 1:1-7: ¹ This book is the record of the events that Jesus Christ revealed. God gave him this revelation in order to show his servants what must happen very soon. Christ made these things known to his servant John by sending his angel to him, ²and John has told all that he has seen. **This is his report concerning the message from God and the truth revealed by Jesus Christ.** ³Happy is the one who reads this book, and happy are those who listen to the words of this prophetic message and obey what is written in this book! For the time is near when all these things will happen. [What happened when the scroll of Revelation arrived?]

[Greetings to the Seven Churches]

⁴ From John to the seven churches in the province of Asia:

Grace and peace be yours from **God, who is, who was, and who is to come**, and from the seven spirits in front of his throne, ⁵and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first to be raised from death and who is also the ruler of the kings of the world.

He loves us, and by his sacrificial death he has freed us from our sins ⁶and made us **a kingdom of priests** to serve his God and Father. To Jesus Christ be the glory and power for ever [*sic-Br*] and ever! Amen.

⁷ Look, he is coming on the clouds! Everyone will see him, including those who pierced him. All peoples on earth will mourn over him. So shall it be!—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Revelation 1:1-7). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible*].^{†‡}

5. While the first verse focuses particularly on Jesus, it is interesting to notice in Revelation 1:4-5 that all three Members of the Godhead are mentioned. What does that tell us?
6. Both sides in the great controversy have a “trinity”!
7. Satan has developed his own “trinity”: (1) He is the dragon; (2) the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy is the first beast; and (3) apostate Protestantism is the second beast. Satan has attempted to use these earthly accomplices to cement his control over this world. (Revelation 12-14) However, he is failing; and God has a very different plan.

1 Peter 2:9: But you are the chosen race, **the King’s priests, the holy nation, God’s own people, chosen to proclaim the wonderful acts of God**, who called you out of darkness into his own marvellous [*sic-Br*] light.—*Good News Bible*.^{*†‡}

8. God intends for us to be members of His royal family. Not only that, but also we are to be “priests” who are spreading the good news about God to all around us. God is “missionary minded”; He wants us to be that way too.
9. The great controversy theme runs through the whole Bible. However, it is represented most clearly in Revelation. Revelation serves as a kind of summary of the previous 65 books. We learn that Satan’s rebellion began in heaven next to the throne of God, and Satan managed to convince one-third of the heavenly beings to join his side. (See Revelation 12:1-12.)
10. Notice in Revelation 12:12 that the rest of the universe has now realized what kind of a program Satan is operating. None of them wants to have anything to do with him. Satan’s last stronghold is on this earth. Satan knows that he has only a little time left.

Revelation 12:12: “And so be glad, you heavens, and all you that live there! But how terrible for the earth and the sea! For the Devil has come down to you, and he is filled with rage, because he knows that he has only a little time left.”—*Good News Bible*.^{*} [The Devil is an adventist!][‡]

11. In Revelation 13, Satan marshals his forces together. He is the dragon; he has developed two other “beasts,” as we have mentioned, to join him to make up his own trinity. Revelation 13:3-4,7-8, suggest that he has nearly accomplished his goals.

Revelation 13:3-4,7-8: ³One of the heads of the beast seemed to have been fatally wounded, but the wound had healed. The whole earth was amazed and followed the beast. ⁴Everyone worshipped the dragon because he had given his authority to the beast. They worshipped the beast also, saying, “Who is like the beast? Who can fight against it?”...

⁷It was allowed to fight against God’s people and to defeat them, and it was given authority over every tribe, nation, language, and race. ⁸All people living on earth will worship it, except those whose names were written

before the creation of the world in the book of the living which belongs to the Lamb that was killed.—*Good News Bible*.*

12. Satan recognizes that this is a life-and-death battle; so, he threatens death for anyone who chooses God's side. Not only that but also, he tries to prevent them from doing any kind of business.

Revelation 13:15-18: ¹⁵The second beast was allowed to breathe life into the image of the first beast, so that the image could talk and put to death all those who would not worship it. ¹⁶The beast forced all the people, small and great, rich and poor, slave and free, to have a mark placed on their right-hands or on their foreheads. ¹⁷No one could buy or sell without having this mark, that is, the beast's name or the number that stands for the name.

¹⁸ This calls for wisdom. Whoever is intelligent can work out the meaning of the number of the beast, because the number stands for a human name. Its number is 666.—*Good News Bible*.*

13. In Revelation 14, we see God's response to "the attack of Satan's trinity" on God's people.
Read Revelation 14:6-12.

14. The ultimate issue in this conflict is the question of who is telling us the truth! Can we trust God? Or, should we trust Satan? **The gospel is the truth about God in the face of Satan's false accusations against Him.** And God makes it clear that one cannot sit on the fence; one must **actively choose** one side or the other, **or passively be with Satan.**

Luke 11:23: "Anyone who is not for me is really against me; anyone who does not help me gather is really scattering."—*Good News Bible*.*

15. So, Revelation 14:6-12 is God's final warning to the inhabitants of this earth. And most of them have never heard about it. How should people be warned? The ultimate outcome is clear. People are motivated either by love, which is God's plan, or by selfishness, which is Satan's plan. The two never mix. Satan's plan is based on force.
16. Just before He left this earth, Jesus challenged His disciples to go out and carry the message—the truth about God—to all parts of the world. (See Matthew 28:19-20.)
17. The rest of the New Testament repeatedly emphasizes that God loves every single human being and expects to save people from every group: Every tribe, every nation, every language group, etc. God does not want anyone to be destroyed. He wants everyone to turn away from their sins. (See 1 John 4:8; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:4; and Genesis 12:3.)
18. Jesus's ministry on this earth was limited basically to one tiny area in the Middle East. But then, as He was about to leave this earth, He told His disciples that they needed to carry the message to the whole world! How do you suppose that impacted their thinking?
19. To summarize briefly the issues, notice this: The life and death of Jesus give us a choice. We must either seek to follow the example given by Jesus in His life; or, we will die the death that He died, separated from His Father, the only Source of life.

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] Satan with his fierce temptations wrung the heart of Jesus. The Saviour could not see through the portals of the tomb. Hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave a conqueror, or tell Him of the Father's acceptance of the sacrifice.

He feared that sin was so offensive to God that Their separation was to be eternal. **Christ felt the anguish which the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race. It was the sense of sin, bringing the Father's wrath upon Him as man's substitute, that made the cup He drank so bitter, and broke the heart of the Son of God.**—
Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 753.2.†‡

20. Today, it seems like there are many people who care little about anything to do with religion. But, as the final events of this world's history wind down, everyone will be forced to choose one side or the other. We do not know how this will be done; but, that is what the Bible seems to imply. Remember what we just stated from Revelation 13 and 14.
21. Revelation 17 implies that Christianity, which started out very pure "as a bride prepared for her husband," has now become a corrupt, jewel-bedecked, purple-dressed prostitute.
22. In Revelation 17 this prostitute has become drunk with the blood of God's people. Kings from all parts of the world will be, first of all, faithful to this prostitute; but then, they will turn on her and destroy her.
23. Is that fair to the many people who live in other parts of the world where it is almost impossible to spread Christianity? Notice this interesting paraphrase of Romans 1.

Romans 1:18-21: ¹⁸God's wrath against human selfishness, godlessness and wickedness is being revealed from heaven: God is showing what he does and how he responds to those who are infected with selfishness, yet refuse his antidote. These sick-of-heart and twisted-of-mind humans reject the Remedy and suppress the truth of God's character by their wicked and godless lives. ¹⁹For God has clearly revealed himself and his principles of love, beneficence, and giving in all he has created. ²⁰From the very moment the earth was created, God's true self has been constantly revealed: his eternal life-giving power, his loving nature, his respect for freedom, and his methods of gracious giving; his character is seen in everything he has made, so that humans are not left in darkness, and have no excuse for remaining in their terminal state.

²¹For although they knew the truth about God and his methods, they did not appreciate his gracious, humble character nor did they honor him by trusting him and incorporating his methods into their lives.

Therefore their reasoning was damaged, their consciences seared, their thoughts became illogical and irrational, and their minds were darkened with lies and falsehoods.—Timothy R. Jennings, MD. *The Remedy: A New Testament Expanded Paraphrase*.

24. Do the people living in the midst of a communist dictatorship have ready access to the truth? Romans 2:11-16 makes it very clear that God will judge everyone fairly, all by the same standard.

Romans 2:11-16: ¹¹For God judges everyone by the same standard.

¹² The Gentiles do not have the Law of Moses; they sin and are lost apart from the Law. The Jews have the Law; they sin and are judged by the Law.

¹³For it is not by hearing the Law that people are put right with God, but by

doing what the Law commands. ¹⁴The Gentiles do not have the Law; but whenever they do by instinct what the Law commands, they are their own law, even though they do not have the Law. ¹⁵**Their conduct shows that what the Law commands is written in their hearts.** Their consciences also show that this is true, since their thoughts sometimes accuse them and sometimes defend them. ¹⁶And so, according to the Good News I preach, this is how it will be on that Day when God through Jesus Christ will judge the secret thoughts of all.—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

25. Our world has clearly become polarized. The evidence about Satan's behavior is becoming more and more clear.

26. It is often suggested that we human beings are left with the challenge of spreading the truth to the whole world.

[BSG:] What is success in mission? We might be tempted to think that it is many baptisms, big churches, and rapid growth rates. We might feel that success consists of entering every tribe and people group on earth with the truth and that we can speed it up by using radio, the internet, and TV. While all of this can be good, we must remember what Paul wrote to the community of faith in Corinth: "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase" (1 Cor. 3:6, NKJV). **In other words, our focus is to be on the process; God's focus will be on the growth.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, December 27.^{†‡§}

27. Notice clearly how Paul felt about that challenge.

1 Corinthians 3:6: I sowed the seed, Apollos watered the plant, but it was God who made the plant grow.—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

28. God is trying to save as many people as possible. Look, for example, at these passages.

1 Timothy 2:4: [God] wants everyone to be saved and to come to know the truth.—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

John 16:12-13: ¹² "I have much more to tell you, but now it would be too much for you to bear. ¹³When, however, the Spirit comes, who reveals the truth about God, he will lead you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own authority, but he will speak of what he hears, and will tell you of things to come."—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

29. **Since that day, we also have the witness of the New Testament and the writings of Ellen White. Are those the writings that Jesus was talking about?**

2 Thessalonians 2:9-12: ⁹The Wicked One will come with the power of Satan and perform all kinds of false miracles and wonders, ¹⁰and use every kind of wicked deceit on those who will perish. **They will perish because they did not welcome and love the truth so as to be saved.** ¹¹And so God sends the power of error to work in them so that they believe what is false. ¹²**The result is that all who have not believed the truth, but have taken pleasure in sin, will be condemned.**—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

Hebrews 3:12-13: ¹² My fellow-believers, be careful that no one among you has a heart so evil and unbelieving as to turn away from the living God. ¹³Instead,

in order that none of you be deceived by sin and become stubborn, you must help one another every day, as long as the word “Today” in the scripture applies to us.—*Good News Bible*.*

1 John 1:8-9: ⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and there is no truth in us. ⁹ But if we confess our sins to God, he will keep his promise and do what is right: he will forgive us our sins and **purify us** from all our wrongdoing.—*Good News Bible*.*†

Revelation 7:14: “I don’t know, sir. You do,” I answered.

He said to me, “These are the people who have come safely through the terrible persecution. They have washed their robes and made them white with the blood of the Lamb.”—*Good News Bible*.*

Revelation 19:8: “She has been given clean shining linen to wear.” (The linen is the good deeds of God’s people.)—*Good News Bible*.*

30. God’s faithful people are committed to Him and Him only. Nothing that Satan can do will convince them to do otherwise. This will make Satan furious. He is determined at all costs to destroy anyone who is not on his side. However, they will be protected by God. It is certainly worth the fight that is ahead of us.

Revelation 21:1-4: ¹ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and the first earth disappeared, and the sea vanished. ²And I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared and ready, like a bride dressed to meet her husband. ³I heard a loud voice speaking from the throne: “Now God’s home is with human beings! He will live with them, and they shall be his people. God himself will be with them, and he will be their God. ⁴He will wipe away all tears from their eyes. There will be no more death, no more grief or crying or pain. The old things have disappeared.”—*Good News Bible*.*

31. But, there is still a lot of territory on this earth that has not been entered by anyone knowing about the three angels’ messages or having any Seventh-day Adventist. How are we going to reach those peoples?

[BSG:] The General Conference Mission Board has approved Global Mission metrics that can be used to determine whether a people group is reached or unreached. **A “reached people group”** is one that has adequate numbers and resources to witness effectively to the rest of the group without requiring outside assistance; it has worship services, Bibles, and other literature in their first language; and there are indigenous church leaders who can witness to the rest of the people group without working through a translator.

An “unreached people group” is one that has no indigenous community of believing Adventists with adequate numbers and resources to witness effectively to their own group without assistance from outside their culture.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, December 28.†‡ [How many of those “unreached” groups are there?]+

32. What can we do as individuals and as local church communities to reach any unreached groups in our area?

[BSG:] Challenge: How are you hastening Christ's return? Are you planting seeds of hope in the hearts of those who need to hear good news? Are you "watering" new believers by helping them learn what it means to live a life of loyal obedience to Christ? Pray for opportunities to communicate the promise of the earth made new with the people on your daily prayer list.

Challenge Up: Some of your "disciples" may be ready to accept Christ. This includes joining a church or group of believers. Put yourself in his or her place and imagine attending your church for the first time. What kind of experience would he or she have? How prepared is your church to welcome and disciple new people? Are you open to starting new groups of believers, not just building up your own existing church? Create a strategy to address weak areas. Share your thoughts with your church leaders, and work with them to implement a plan to become a more intentional disciple-making church.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, December 28.†

33. Ellen White loved to talk about the final results when all the trouble is over.

[EGW:] **The great plan of redemption results in fully bringing back the world into God's favor. All that was lost by sin is restored.** Not only man but the earth is redeemed, to be the eternal abode of the obedient. For six thousand years Satan has struggled to maintain possession of the earth. Now God's original purpose in its creation is accomplished. "The saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever."—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets** 342.1.††

34. It is certainly not God's plan that church members should just attend a service once a week and sit in the pews and listen. **Every church member is expected to be an active participant, spreading the good news.**

[EGW:] I long to see very many laborers at work for those who know not the evidences of our faith. Many have received great light through hearing the three angels' messages, and **now they should proclaim these messages in all parts of the world.** I desire to do my part and to open the way for others to carry the light of truth. May the Lord help us to put the armor on. The believers are to unite in the solemn work of giving the last note of warning to the world.—Ellen G. White, *Letter 390*,* 1907 [unpublished].††

[BSG:] While it is true that the destruction of sin and suffering will be the most terrifying days of earth's history, God casts our vision to a time beyond this destruction and provides comfort and encouragement in the promise of the earth restored....

1. What is the "everlasting gospel"? Why is it "everlasting"? And why must what it teaches be foundational to our mission? [The truth about God!]

2. Why do we have such an emphasis on the three angels' messages? How do you respond to the argument that we need to focus on Jesus and not on something as supposedly "negative" as these messages, which include very strong warnings? [Do the three angels' message present Jesus?]

3. How has this quarter helped you better understand not only the importance of mission but [also] how you and your church could better participate in it, which is what we have been called to do?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Friday, December 29.‡

[BSG:] The second coming of Jesus, which leads to the re-creation of this earth, is the culmination of the biblical story. Revelation 21 and 22 could be described as the ultimate “happy” ending. And in some sense, this is an accurate interpretation. From this perspective, the Second Coming and the new earth are the end of God’s mission. The end is an eternal life of happiness and joy with God. In another sense, this ending is not the “end” but the beginning, or continuation, of what God intended for humanity and for the earth, a beginning in which the redeemed deepen their understanding of God and His character throughout eternity.

It may be helpful to think of God’s revelation of Himself in three phases, with each phase requiring different definitions of “mission.” (1) The first phase comprises the world’s creation and God’s interaction with His created beings in Eden. Even in Eden, God’s mission was to reveal, through loving relationships, who He was. [Adam and Eve were visited by angels and God.] But sin altered this reality, leading to the world we dwell in, a world full of misery, pain, suffering, and death. (2) This great change required God’s mission to take on new elements, most specifically the need for the Incarnation, leading to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The Incarnation makes possible the future reality of the new earth. (3) The final phase of God’s mission reaches its climax at the Second Coming.

But the Second Coming is not the end of humanity or God’s story. Eternal life would be meaningless if the Second Coming heralded only the end of this earth’s history. Instead, eternity is a new beginning of infinite possibilities.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 171.‡

35. Adam and Eve were created with freedom and love. Then, they made that terrible mistake by distrusting God and taking the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. **That tree was a protection; only at that one tree could Satan approach them.** They should have stayed well away from that tree. Since that day, humanity has departed further and further from God’s original plan. God refuses to give up on freedom; His government is based on freedom. Think of all that we can learn from the life and death of Jesus.

John 1:1-14: ¹ In the beginning the Word already existed; the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²From the very beginning the Word was with God. ³Through him God made all things; not one thing in all creation was made without him. ⁴The Word was the source of life, and this life brought light to humanity. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never put it out. [If you had gone out to hear John, what would you have thought?] ⁶ God sent his messenger, a man named John, ⁷who came to tell people about the light, so that all should hear the message and believe. ⁸He himself was not the light; he came to tell about the light. ⁹This was the real light—the light that comes into the world and shines on everyone.

¹⁰ The Word was in the world, and though God made the world through him, yet the world did not recognize him. ¹¹He came to his own country, but his own people did not receive him. ¹²Some, however, did receive him and believed in him; so he gave them the right to become God's children. ¹³They did not become God's children by natural means, that is, by being born as the children of a human father; God himself was their Father.

¹⁴ The Word became a human being and, full of grace and truth, lived among us. We saw his glory, the glory which he received as the Father's only Son.—*Good News Bible*.*†

36. However, this leaves us with a big question: **Two thousand years have passed, and He has not come back yet! Why not? See Evangelism 694-697.**
37. But, the book of Revelation ends with Revelation 21-22 in which we are asked to imagine the marvelous plans for heaven and the new earth that God has for us. Are we preparing? Are we so convinced that not even the Devil himself could mislead us?
38. Read Revelation 21-22. The pictures portrayed there are beyond our capability of comprehending. But, it seems like something better than we can possibly imagine.
39. **When God comes back to this earth after spending the millennium in heaven, He will finally get to turn this earth into the expanded Garden of Eden** that He intended originally for Adam and Eve and their descendants. There will be no sin or sinner; no death; no crying; no tears; nothing that could bring trouble.

[BSG:] From this perspective, it could be argued that God's mission is completed in the new earth. Indeed, the plan of Redemption has played itself out at this stage. And yet, at some level, it seems God's mission continues beyond what we as humans can even fathom. Is the new earth the end or the beginning? In short, it is both.

As humans, we must keep in mind that we are created beings. As a result, we can never claim to be all-knowing as God is. Such a realization entails that **humans will be eternal learners**, constantly growing in understanding who God is and who we are in relation to God, one another, and the earth. Therefore, if we define the mission of God as being God's desire to reveal His love to humanity and have that love creatively replicated, then God's mission would have no end, but is, rather, an eternal, ongoing reality.

This understanding fits the biblical description of God more accurately, rather than claiming the new earth to be the end of His mission. Instead, the **new earth is a new beginning that builds on what has come before but eternally changes toward deeper and more meaningful relational love.** In this sense, God's mission is an eternal activity in which we have the privilege of participating. Thus, the end of a particular phase of God's mission occurs at the Second Coming. But this ending leads into the next phase of God's mission. So, **the new earth is not simply a completion; it also is a continuation.**

The new earth phase of God's mission also is a time of abundance and joy, fulfilling what John 10:10 claims is God's purpose for humanity. The description of the new earth is one of diversity, with people from all different

cultural backgrounds making up the population (*Rev. 21:24*). Under divine inspiration, John the revelator describes the redeemed joyfully eating and drinking together, partaking of the fruits of the tree of life and of the living water flowing from God's throne (*Rev. 21:6, Rev. 22:2*). The new earth is a place that gives the impression of creativity beyond our wildest imagination. God will be there among humanity, interacting with us, creating new ideas, and showing love in new ways alongside us. No wonder, then, that John's reaction was an urgent plea for God to come quickly (*Rev. 22:20*). The same desire inspires us today to share with others the good news of God's plans for the redeemed in eternity.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 172-173.^{†‡§}

John 10:10: “The thief comes only in order to steal, kill, and destroy. I [Jesus] have come in order that you might have life—life in all its fullness.”—*Good News Bible*.^{*‡}

40. From the beginning, Seventh-day Adventists have claimed that the second advent is the major doctrine of our church.

[BSG:] But the truth about the Second Coming goes beyond sharing a message. Humanity also needs to see what it means to live in the present with the hope of the Second Coming and of the new earth. Believing in the biblical description should lead to more than evangelistic sermons; there should be transformation to a radically different way of living in the present. Those who read Revelation 21 and 22 and understand the relational beauty it portrays should be drawn into this kind of life now. There are limits because of the impact of sin and death, but these constraints don't preclude the possibility of sharing glimpses of the new earth. For those who have experienced the love of God firsthand and believe in the promises of Scripture, eternal life begins now.

When the hope of the Second Coming and the reality of the new earth become part of our way of living, we as believers will experience daily life from a perspective of hope in the midst of a world that can seem hopeless. This perspective can aid the believer in experiencing and sharing joy and peace, which will be manifested in kindness, patience, and gentleness toward others. Such a perspective also can inspire people to use their talents and gifts to creatively live out God's love, as He intended for humanity from the beginning.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 173-174.[‡]

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