

Uniting Heaven and Earth: Christ in Philippians and Colossians
Reconciliation and Hope

Lesson #9 for February 28, 2026

Scriptures: **Colossians 1:20-29**; Ephesians 1:7-10; 3:3-6,17; 5:27; Romans 8:18; Proverbs 14:12.

1. What is reconciliation? What is our hope? Does reconciliation give us hope?

[From the *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*=T-BSG:] This ... lesson emphasizes three major themes:

1. God takes the first step in reconciling us to Himself. For that purpose, He sent Jesus into the world to bring humanity back to the Father. But, in response, we must “continue in the faith” and not be “moved away from the hope of the gospel” (*Col. 1:23*).—T-BSG* 119.†§

2. **It is very important to recognize that God is reconciling us to Himself. There is nothing in the Bible suggesting that Jesus or anyone else needs to reconcile God to us! There is no need for Jesus to plead with the Father for us! (See John 16:25-27.) The Father Himself loves us! We are the ones who have gone astray and need to be won back!**

[T-BSG:] **2.** In our work for Christ, we must remember that we are merely His agents in a much bigger divine plan.—T-BSG* 119.††

3. **There are three things that Christians are asked to do to complete their Christianity: 1) Bible study, 2) Prayer, and 3) Witnessing! Are we doing each of these things?**

[T-BSG:] **3.** The power of the gospel causes us to mature for salvation in Christ.—T-BSG* 119.††

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] **It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature that by beholding we become changed. The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell.**—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 555.1.††

[\[https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p132.2513&index=0\]](https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p132.2513&index=0)†

4. Paul wrote repeatedly about the mystery of God and the mystery of salvation. How is that related to Paul’s explanations of the gospel?

[T-BSG:] Paul says that “it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell” (*Col. 1:19, NKJV*). In other words, Paul is asserting that Jesus is God! Simply put, Paul is telling us that Jesus does what He does because He is who He is! As fully God, He is able to create and redeem. In Colossians 1:19, 20, Paul implies that God was pleased with two things: (1) that in Jesus all His fullness should dwell, and (2) that through Jesus all things should be reconciled to Him. These two ideas indicate that Jesus’ divine status and His work of reconciliation are inseparable.—T-BSG* 119.†§

5. Paul recognized that in his travels, he, like us, was surrounded with wickedness of almost every kind. He recognized that many of his Christian converts were rescued from that wickedness into pure, holy, faultless lives. Does this seem possible? With what power?

Colossians 1:21-22: ²¹At one time you were far away from God and were his enemies because of the evil things you did and thought. ²²But now, **by**

means of the physical death of his Son, God has made you his friends, **in order to bring you, holy, pure, and faultless, into his presence** American Bible Society. (©1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation*^{®*} [GNT] (*Today's English Version*) [TEV], Second Edition, (Colossians 1:21-22). Philadelphia: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible-TEV** or *GNB-TEV**].^{†‡} [Does Calvary make us friends?][‡]

Ephesians 5:27: In order to present the church to himself in all its beauty—pure and faultless, without spot or wrinkle or any other imperfection.—*Good News Bible-TEV.**[†] [The death of Jesus demonstrated the results of sin: death! Are we warned? Does understanding this fact change us?][‡]

[From the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide=BSG:*] Paul has always painted a dark picture of humanity, at least humanity apart from the righteousness of Christ. And who today, almost two thousand years later, could argue with that sentiment? **Someone once said that the one Christian doctrine that doesn't need to be taken on faith is the sinfulness of humanity.—BSG*** for Sunday, February 22.^{†‡}

Players in a Much Larger Plan

6. Paul recognized that he was suffering because of his preaching of the gospel. However, he also recognized that he was a player in a much bigger plan—the great controversy between God and Satan over the character and government of God. If life on this earth were all there was to look forward to, he would not have been doing what he was doing.

Colossians 1:24: And now I am happy about my sufferings for you, for by means of my physical sufferings I am helping to complete what still remains of Christ's sufferings on behalf of his body, the church.—*GNB-TEV.**

2 Corinthians 4:17: And this small and temporary trouble we suffer will bring us a tremendous and eternal glory, much greater than the trouble.—*GNB-TEV.**

7. Consider the examples of some people who, at the time, may have gone through very difficult situations; but, things ultimately worked out for God's glory and to their benefit.
8. **Think of Joseph.** He was sold by his brothers into slavery.

[EGW:] For a time Joseph gave himself up to uncontrolled grief and terror.

But, **in the providence of God**, even this experience was to be a blessing to him. He had learned in a few hours that which years might not otherwise have taught him.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets** 213.1-2.^{†‡}
<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p84.902&index=0>[‡]

Genesis 50:20: “You [Joseph's brothers] plotted evil against me, but God turned it into good, in order to preserve the lives of many people who are alive today because of what happened.”—*GNB-TEV.**^{†‡} [See Romans 8:28.][‡]

9. **Think also of Ruth.** Her father-in-law died. Her husband died. She had almost nothing left. She made a choice to follow God's plan and became a part of a much larger picture. She ended up being the great-grandmother of King David. See Matthew 1:1-5.

The Plan of Salvation—“The Larger View”

Colossians 1:19-20: ¹⁹For it was by God's own decision that the Son has in himself **the full nature of God**. ²⁰Through the Son, then, **God decided to bring the whole universe back to himself**. God made peace through his Son's blood on the cross and so brought back to himself all things, **both on earth and in heaven**.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.^{*†}

10. ***The plan of salvation is not complete until the entire universe is reconciled. What did/does the plan of salvation do for the onlooking universe? See Ephesians 1:7-10; 3:7-10. See the following handouts on www.theox.org:***

- https://www.theox.org/images/uploads/bbk/KHart_BTGG_PDF_Gnrl_Great_Controversy_Described_in_Scripture_16.pdf
- https://www.theox.org/images/uploads/bbk/KHart_BTGG_PDF_Gnrl_Plan_of_Salvation_in_the_Setting_of_the_Great_Controversy_05.pdf (See the quotations below.)

[EGW:] It would be well for us to **spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ**. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, **especially the closing ones**. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*^{*} 83.4.^{†‡} [Are we doing this? What is penitence?][‡]
[\[https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p130.313&index=0\]](https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p130.313&index=0)[‡]

11. Think of how God started on this earth with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. As soon as they sinned, He went looking for them. God has always been the One to take the initial action in seeking us.

[BSG:] Sometimes the gospel is made so complicated and theoretical that it has little practical meaning for twenty-first-century living. But it's really quite simple and straightforward.—BSG^{*} for Sunday, February 22.[‡]

[BSG:] **The gospel has three parts:**

First, because we are helpless to save ourselves, Jesus came and died for our sins. (See *Rom. 5:6–8*.) [Actually, Jesus died to teach us the truth about the results of sin and the truth about God. (Romans 3:25-26; 6:23; John 17:3) The picture is MUCH LARGER THAN JESUS DYING FOR OUR SINS! If we do not learn the truth about God and the truth about sin, WE ARE LOST!]

Second, by accepting His death as ours through faith, repentance, and baptism, we are justified and set free from the condemnation of sin. (See *Rom. 5:9–11; Rom. 6:6, 7*.)....—BSG^{*} for Sunday, February 22.^{†‡§}

12. ***The life and death of Jesus give us a choice: We can choose to live lives as close as possible to the life that He lived with the help of the Holy Spirit and the angels; or, we will die the death that He died, separated from His Father—the only Source of life (Isaiah 59:2; Matthew 27:46; The Desire of Ages 753.1-2) and be dead forever. Do we realize that every time we sin, we are separating ourselves from God? Do we really believe that sin pays its wage: Death? (See Romans 6:23.)***

13. **How do the life and death of Jesus make us into God's friends?**

John 15:15: "I do not call you servants any longer, because servants do not know what their master is doing. Instead, **I call you friends, because I have told you everything I heard from my Father.**"—*Good News Bible-TEV*.^{*†}

Romans 6:6-7: ⁶And we know that our old being has been put to death with Christ on his cross, in order that the power of the sinful self might be destroyed, so that we should no longer be the slaves of sin. ⁷For when we die, we are set free from the power of sin.—*GNB-TEV*.^{*} [Is our sinful self dead now?][‡]

14. What does it mean **to die to sin**? What does it mean to be **no longer slaves of sin**?

[EGW:] All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And **if we consent**, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, [John 17:3] our life will be a life of continual obedience. **Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us.**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*^{*} 668.3.^{*†‡} [Has that happened to us?][‡]
[\[https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p130.3287&index=0\]](https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p130.3287&index=0)[‡]

[BSG:] **Third**, the life we live now is the result of being united with Christ, experiencing His re-creating power, and His living His life in us. (See 2 Cor. 5:17–21, Gal. 2:20.)—*BSG*^{*} for Sunday, February 22.^{†§}

15. **Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21.** Compare **Jeremiah 31:34** (as quoted in Item #38 below). If we honestly get to know God, He will "no longer remember" our wrongs (sins).

John 17:3: "And **eternal life means to know you**, the only true God, and to know Jesus Christ, whom you sent."—*Good News Bible-TEV*.^{*†}

16. **If we are serious about efforts to obey God, He promises to take care of the record of our sins. Who is it that is focused on our sins? Ellen White says Satan is!**

[EGW:] While Jesus is pleading for the subjects of His grace, **Satan accuses them before God as transgressors.... Now he points to the record of their lives, to the defects of character, the unlikeness to Christ, which has dishonored their Redeemer, to all the sins that he has tempted them to commit, and because of these he claims them as his subjects.**—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*^{*} 484.1.^{†‡}
[\[https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p132.2192&index=0\]](https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p132.2192&index=0)[‡]

[EGW:] **Satan has an accurate knowledge of the sins that he has tempted God's people to commit, and he urges his accusations against them, declaring, that by their sins they have forfeited divine protection, and claiming that he has the right to destroy them. He pronounces them just as deserving as himself of exclusion from the favor of God.** "Are these," he says, "the people who are to take my place in heaven, and the place of the angels who united with me? They profess to obey the law of God; but have they kept its precepts? Have they not been lovers of self more than lovers of God? Have they not placed their own

interests above His service? Have they not loved the things of the world? Look at the sins that have marked their lives. Behold their selfishness, their malice, their hatred of one another. Will God banish me [Satan] and my angels from His presence, and yet reward those who have been guilty of the same sins? Thou canst not do this, O Lord, in justice. **Justice demands** that sentence be pronounced against them.”—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings** 588.3.†† <https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p88.2625&index=0>†

17. **How does the final judgment take place? Read Zechariah 3:1-5 and Daniel 7:9-10. The entire universe is watching to see who will be their neighbors for the rest of eternity! In God’s “fair” and just judgment, it is Satan who is condemned!**
18. When you look at yourself, your character, and your innermost being, what do they tell you about your need of the cross? **The cross tells us that sin leads to death!** Are we willing to give up our sins, accept God’s terms of salvation, and accept Christ as our Savior?

Reconciliation, Faith, and Hope

[T-BSG:] The Bible clearly indicates that God initiated the process of reconciling humanity to Himself.... Notably, God’s initiative in bringing about reconciliation is a pervasive theme in Romans 5:5–11, as one can see in the table below.

Rom. 5:6 (ESV)	“While we were still weak,	at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.”
Rom. 5:8 (ESV)	“While we were still sinners,	Christ died for us.”
Rom. 5:10 (ESV)	“While we were enemies	we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son” [... and now we will be saved/healed by Christ’s life.]

There is a close parallelism between verses 6, 8, and 10 (see also *Eph. 2:4, 5*). When we were still weak, when we were sinners and enemies, Christ died for us, thereby reconciling us to God. Paul also touches on this theme elsewhere, with minor adjustments, as the table below shows.

Passage	Ultimate Agent	Action	Patient	Beneficiary	Intermediate Agent
2 Cor. 5:18 (ESV)	God	reconciled	us	to Himself	through Christ
2 Cor. 5:19 (ESV)	God	was reconciling	the world	to Himself	in Christ
Col. 1:20 (ESV)	God	reconciled	all things	to Himself	through Him [Christ]
Eph. 2:4, 5 (ESV)	God	loved, made alive	us		together with Christ

God is always the ultimate Agent and Initiator of the reconciliation process. In Galatians 4:4, 5, Paul uses adoption language to refer to God’s initiative in reconciling us to Himself. As John eloquently states, “We love Him because He first loved us” (*1 John 4:19, NKJV*). Reconciliation is made

possible through the death of Christ (*Rom. 5:6; 2 Cor. 5:21; Col. 1:20; Eph. 2:13, 16; etc.*), and it results in peace with God (*Eph. 2:14–19*). Because we have been adopted as God’s children (*Rom. 8:15; Gal. 3:26; Gal. 4:4–6; 1 John 3:1, 2*), our elevated status, through faith in Christ, results in access to Him (*Rom. 5:2, Eph. 2:18, Eph. 3:12, Heb. 10:19–22*).—*T-BSG* 120.†‡Ω§*

19. **Why and how did the death of Jesus on the cross make possible our reconciliation?**
20. **Read 2 Corinthians 5:21 and Colossians 1:19-20.** Peace “on earth and in heaven!”
21. How does the blood of Jesus make peace? **Read Ephesians 2:13-16.** See also Galatians 3:26-29.
22. Paul was telling us that all men and women throughout the world fall under God’s plan of salvation. No one is left out. This brings peace. All the old rules of separation and segregation that Jews believed and Paul grew up with do not matter anymore!
1 John 3:2: My dear friends, we are now God’s children, but it is not yet clear what we shall become. But **we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he really is.**—*GNB-TEV.*†*
23. ***So, what does this peace and this promise to all mankind do for us? It makes it possible for us to approach God the Father directly. There is no need for an intermediary.***
John 16:25-27: ²⁵ “I have used figures of speech to tell you these things. But the time will come when I will not use figures of speech, but will speak to you plainly about the Father. ²⁶When that day comes, you will ask him in my name; and **I do not say that I will ask him on your behalf,** ²⁷**for the Father himself loves you. He loves you because you love me and have believed that I came from God.**”—*Good News Bible-TEV.*†*
24. **Again read Jeremiah 31:34 (below in Item #38). Compare Hebrews 10:19-22.**
25. **Let us be very clear. God’s plan to reconcile us is not an on-again, off-again experience. We must continue in the faith. God’s plan is very simple and straightforward and does not include any human-based ways of salvation.**
Colossians 2:8,20: ⁸See to it, then, that no one enslaves you by means of the worthless deceit of human wisdom, which comes from the teachings handed down by human beings and from the ruling spirits of the universe, and not from Christ....
²⁰You have died with Christ and are set free from the ruling spirits of the universe.—*Good News Bible-TEV.**
26. The ancient Jews had rules like that and so did some of the pagan religions!
27. It should be very clear. The common belief of “once saved, always saved” cannot be true.
28. Paul was clearly writing these words to his followers and to us based on his belief that God has an eternal plan for all of us. However, we must not slip back into sin. See Colossians 1:24-26 (as partially quoted in Item #6 above).
29. Did Paul believe that a certain amount of suffering was necessary for the church to prosper? Remember that Tertullian (about 197 A.D.) said that the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church! Could that happen again?

[BSG:] Though Paul wrote Colossians while under house arrest in Rome, perhaps his greatest suffering came from not being able to labor intensively from place to place and house to house, as he had done previously (*Acts 20:20*). These afflictions (or tribulations), which Christ forewarned of (*Matt. 24:9, John 16:33*), “are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (*Rom. 8:18*). This is the bigger picture. As Paul had written to the Christians in Philippi, so now to the Colossians he rejoices over his sufferings, which are for their benefit (*Col. 1:24*).—BSG* for Tuesday, February 24.^{‡§} [Paul was evangelizing even Nero’s soldiers!][‡]

30. Even though Paul was in prison, he did not believe that the Word of God was in any way chained. While in prison, he wrote the books of Philippians, Colossians, Ephesians, Philemon, and possibly Hebrews. After his release, he wrote 1 Timothy and Titus; and then, during his final imprisonment in Rome, he wrote 2 Timothy. Think how much we have been blessed by these. Paul implied that God’s plan of salvation includes everyone in the entire universe. How would you say your life fits with what Paul was saying?

Ephesians 1:4: Even before the world was made, God had already chosen us to be his through our union with Christ, so that we would be holy and without fault before him.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.^{*} [Are we there yet?][‡]

31. Paul recognized that what he was talking about would be to many people a mystery of God. What do you suppose Paul said to the pagans in various cities that he visited to convince them that Christianity was their only hope? Living many years later, we recognize that the picture is much larger even than what Paul probably recognized!

[EGW:] **But not alone for His earthborn children was this revelation given. Our little world is the lesson book of the universe.** God’s wonderful purpose of grace, the mystery of redeeming love, is the theme into which “angels desire to look,” [1 Peter 1:12] and **it will be their study throughout endless ages.**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*^{*} 19.2 [1898]; *Reflecting Christ*[€] 15.4 [1985].[‡] [Compare *Amazing Grace* 45.3; *Our Father Cares* 228.3; *Last Day Events* 31.1.][‡] [How God deals with sin?][‡] [<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p130.23&index=0>][‡]

[EGW:] To the angels and the unfallen worlds the cry, “It is finished,” had a deep significance. It was for them as well as for us that the great work of redemption had been accomplished. They with us share the fruits of Christ’s victory. [The life and death of Jesus reveal the truth about God *and Satan!*] **Not until the death of Christ was the character of Satan clearly revealed to the angels or to the unfallen worlds. The archapostate had so clothed himself with deception that even holy beings had not understood his principles. They had not clearly seen the nature of his rebellion.**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*^{*} 758.2-3 [1898].[‡]

[<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p130.3744&index=0>][‡]

[See also: <https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p459.1409&index=0> (=BE) and <https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p44.1991&index=0> (=LHU)][‡]

- 1 Corinthians 4:9:** For it seems to me that God has given the very last place to us apostles, like people condemned to die in public as a **spectacle for the whole world of angels and of human beings.**—*Good News Bible-TEV*.^{*†}

32. The security of the universe is more important to God than the salvation of humans!

[EGW:] It was in order that the heavenly universe might see the conditions of the covenant of redemption that Christ bore the penalty in behalf of the human race. **The throne of Justice must be eternally and forever made secure, even tho the race [humans] be wiped out, and another creation populate the earth.** By the sacrifice Christ was about to make, all doubts would be forever settled, and the human race would be saved if they would return to their allegiance....

Who is able to describe the last scenes of Christ's life on earth, His trial in the judgment hall, His crucifixion? Who witnessed these scenes?—The heavenly universe, God the Father, Satan and his angels.—Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*,* July 12, 1899, par. 2-3.†‡ [<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p820.15949&index=0>]‡

- 33. Satan and his angels did everything they could to destroy or interrupt the plan of salvation. They failed. Even after Jesus's death, they tried their best to keep the tomb closed! Again, they failed! The entire universe watched every detail of the experience of Christ from birth to death. When Jesus "fell dying to the ground," an angel was sent to strengthen Him so He would not die right there in the garden. (See Luke 22:43-44. See 2T: <https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p120.860&index=0>.)**

Christ Died for Sinless Angels Too

[EGW:] The angels ascribe honor and glory to Christ, for even they are not secure except by looking to the sufferings of the Son of God. It is through the efficacy of the cross that the angels of heaven are guarded from apostasy. Without the cross they would be no more secure against evil than were the angels before the fall of Satan. Angelic perfection failed in heaven. Human perfection failed in Eden, the paradise of bliss.... The plan of salvation, making manifest the justice and love of God, provides an eternal safeguard against defection in unfallen worlds, as well as among those who shall be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.... Why should man not study the theme of redemption? It is the greatest subject that can engage the human mind.... There are many who will be lost, because they depend on legal religion, or mere repentance for sin. But repentance for sin alone cannot work the salvation of any soul. Man cannot be saved by his own works. Without Christ it is impossible for him to render perfect obedience to the law of God; and heaven can never be gained by an imperfect obedience; for this would place all heaven in jeopardy, and make possible a second rebellion.—Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*,* December 30, 1889, par. 4.†‡ [Underlining is added for emphasis.]‡ [Compare *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, 1132.8-9; *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7a, 476.3; *Our High Calling* 45.4; *The Home Missionary*, May 1, 1897.]‡ [<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p820.9834&index=0>]‡

- 34. The death of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane and on the cross proved to the entire onlooking universe, both good and bad, that the results of sin are eternal death. Jesus was able to arise after 3 days because Christ is divine!**

Why the Angels Needed the “Message of the Cross”

35. See Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 37.2 and *The Review and Herald*, July 17, 1900, par. 4-7. (<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p821.19450&index=0>)

[EGW:] [After the flood:] Notwithstanding this terrible lesson, men had no sooner begun to multiply once more than rebellion and vice became widespread. [Think of the tower of Babel.] Satan seemed to have taken control of the world. **The time came that a change must be made or the image of God would be wholly obliterated from the hearts of the beings He had created.** All heaven watched the movements of God with intense interest. Would He once more manifest His wrath? Would He destroy the world by fire? **The angels thought that the time had come to strike the blow of justice, when, lo, to their wondering vision was unveiled the plan of salvation.**—Ellen G. White, *Manuscript 22, 1890*,* par. 6 [January 10, 1890] [*LtMs, Ms 22, 1890, par. 6*].^{††} [from Ellen White’s diary reproduced in *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials** 569.3].[‡]
<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p14056.5727011&index=0>[‡]

[EGW:] Before Christ’s first advent, the sin of refusing to conform to God’s law had become widespread. Apparently Satan’s power was growing; his warfare against heaven was becoming more and more determined. **A crisis had been reached. With intense interest God’s movements were watched by the heavenly angels. Would He come forth from His place to punish the inhabitants of the world for their iniquity?** Would He send fire or flood to destroy them? **All heaven waited the bidding of their Commander to pour out the vials of wrath upon a rebellious world.** One word from Him, one sign, and the world would have been destroyed. The worlds unfallen would have said, “Amen. Thou art righteous, O God, because Thou hast exterminated rebellion.”—Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*,* August 27, 1902, par. 4; *Reflecting Christ*^{††} 58.4.[‡] [Compare *The Youth’s Instructor*, July 29, 1897, par. 8-9; *That I May Know Him* 19.3].[‡]
<https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p820.18277&index=0>[‡]

36. **In light of a careful study of the entire Scripture, Old Testament and New Testament, we now know that there is no evidence in the Old Testament that anyone was fully aware that Christ would come more than one time.** They expected all the events predicted in the Old Testament to happen in connection with His first coming. In the New Testament, there are many references to Christ’s second coming. **However, it is not until the very end of the book of Revelation that one can discover that there will be an “investigative” or pre-advent judgment before the second coming, and then, 1000 years of the millennium, and then, a third coming when the New Jerusalem will come to earth.** Then, this earth will become God’s eternal home. **Many of the details of these three comings and of the judgment prior to the second coming were withheld from even the main writers of the Old Testament and most of the writers of the New Testament.** This must be part of the mystery that Paul was talking about.
37. **Read Ephesians 1:7-10.** In Paul’s day, the mystery seemed to be that God planned to save Gentiles as well as Jews! Surely, none of us would have any question about that.

38. So, what is God's plan for dealing with our sins? Did Jesus die to "pay for" our sins? Remember what Jeremiah recorded in the Old Testament.

Jeremiah 31:34: "None of them will have to teach a neighbor to know the LORD, because all will know me, from the least to the greatest. **I will forgive their sins and I will no longer remember their wrongs. I, the LORD, have spoken.**"—*Good News Bible-TEV*.^{*†} [God chooses not to talk about them!][‡]

39. **These ideas are repeated many times in the New Testament** such as John 17:3 (as quoted in Item #15 above)!

40. **The gospel really means to know God personally, it is more than to learn about some details of the steps in the plan of salvation! To know God is to love Him. That will lead to all the necessary steps that will follow.**

Galatians 2:20: So that it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. This life that I live now, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave his life for me.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.^{*} [**Like Paul, are we learning to live Christlike lives?**][‡]

41. Do we recognize the real power of the gospel?

42. **Read Colossians 1:28-29.** It does seem surprising that God could win the great controversy by dying. Of course, He did not stay dead!

43. The Devil has been very clever at raising up all kinds of offshoot religions and perversions of the truth.

[BSG:] **False teachings usually have some truth but either add to or take away something of what the Bible says (see Isa. 8:20)....**—BSG^{*} for Thursday, February 26.^{†‡§}

Maturity in Christ

[BSG:] Maturity is an important concept. The parents of a newborn baby celebrate every milestone—first words, learning to walk, and learning to read. What parent would not be alarmed if their child, after several years, was still unable to walk or talk? **Growth and development are normal and expected. The same is true of the Christian life.**—BSG^{*} for Thursday.^{†‡}

[T-BSG:] As Christians, we are called to grow in maturity by believing and putting into practice the Word of God. Paul indicates that the goal of the gospel is to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (*Col. 1:28, NKJV*). God wants us to grow as we prepare ourselves for the Second Coming, knowing that "He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (*Phil. 1:6, NKJV*).—T-BSG^{*} 122.^{†§}

44. Spiritual growth involves at least three things. We must grow in faith, knowledge of God, and love. Are we prepared to accept the advice of **Jesus and Paul?**

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