

MICHAEL ASKS WHY

ELLEN G. WHITE'S
CLASSIC
THE GREAT
CONTROVERSY
ADAPTED FOR
CHILDREN



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Dedication

To Michael Dillon, the thinker, for asking so many questions; and to Don and Betty Pierson, my parents, for telling me these stories and teaching me what I needed to know to answer Michael's questions.

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Introduction

Michael wandered into the kitchen where Mother was chopping carrots. She smiled as he parked himself on a stool next to her. “I’ve been thinking,” he began.

“Oh no!” said Mother, “Does it hurt?”

Michael laughed. “No! I’ve been thinking about your friend, Mrs. Dean. I heard her say that her church was the only real Christian church and that all the other churches broke off from her church. She said her church is still the same as when Jesus’ disciples started it in the first place. Is that true?”

“Well,” said Mother, “my friend Nicki Dean belongs to the Russian Orthodox Church.”

“What is that?” asked Michael.

“Right after Jesus went back to heaven,” said Mother, “there was only one Christian church. For about a thousand years there was one official church. Then the leaders had a big disagreement, and the church split into two groups. Each claimed to be the true church. The Eastern group called itself the Orthodox Church. Their church is still around; it’s known as the Greek Orthodox, or the Russian Orthodox, or the Eastern Orthodox Church, depending on the language used. The other church group stayed in the western part of Europe, and for a long time they were the official Christian church there. Today, that church is known as the Roman Catholic Church.”

“Oh,” said Michael. “So the Orthodox feel that the Roman Catholics split off of their group?”

“Yes,” said Mother.

“Well, why are there so many churches today? There are hardly any Catholics in our neighborhood, and Mrs. Dean is the only Orthodox person I know. But there are lots of Baptists and Methodists and Lutherans and Episcopalians and even a few Seventh-day Adventists. Where did they all come from?”

“Whoa!” said Mother. “One question at a time!”

“And,” said Michael, “how come, even though Christians are supposed to be kind and to love each other, they do so many mean things? I know they did mean things a long time ago in history, like persecuting people and killing them and stuff like that, but Christians are still doing mean things. On the news, there was a Christian guy in Florida who was threatening some people at a clinic, and someone else shot a doctor and other people who worked there. And the news was also talking about Christians bombing each other in Ireland. Christians shouldn’t be bombing anyone, should they, Mom?”

“No,” answered Mother, “not if they are living the way Jesus taught them to.”

“There’s some other stuff that I was wondering too,” said Michael. Mother swallowed her further explanation and sat down to listen.

“Our church believes a lot of the same stuff as other churches. The people I know who aren’t Adventists just seem to believe one or two things differently than we do. But the different things depend on what church they’re from.”

“Yes, that’s true,” said Mother.

“I know the things I believe that are different,” said Michael, “but I’m not always sure why I believe them. Especially the really different things, like whether dead people are really dead and how come we worship on Sabbath instead of Sunday. And what is this ‘sanctuary’ I hear you talk about sometimes? Why is it important?”

“That’s an easy one,” said Mother. “I can answer that for you.”
But Michael was on a roll.

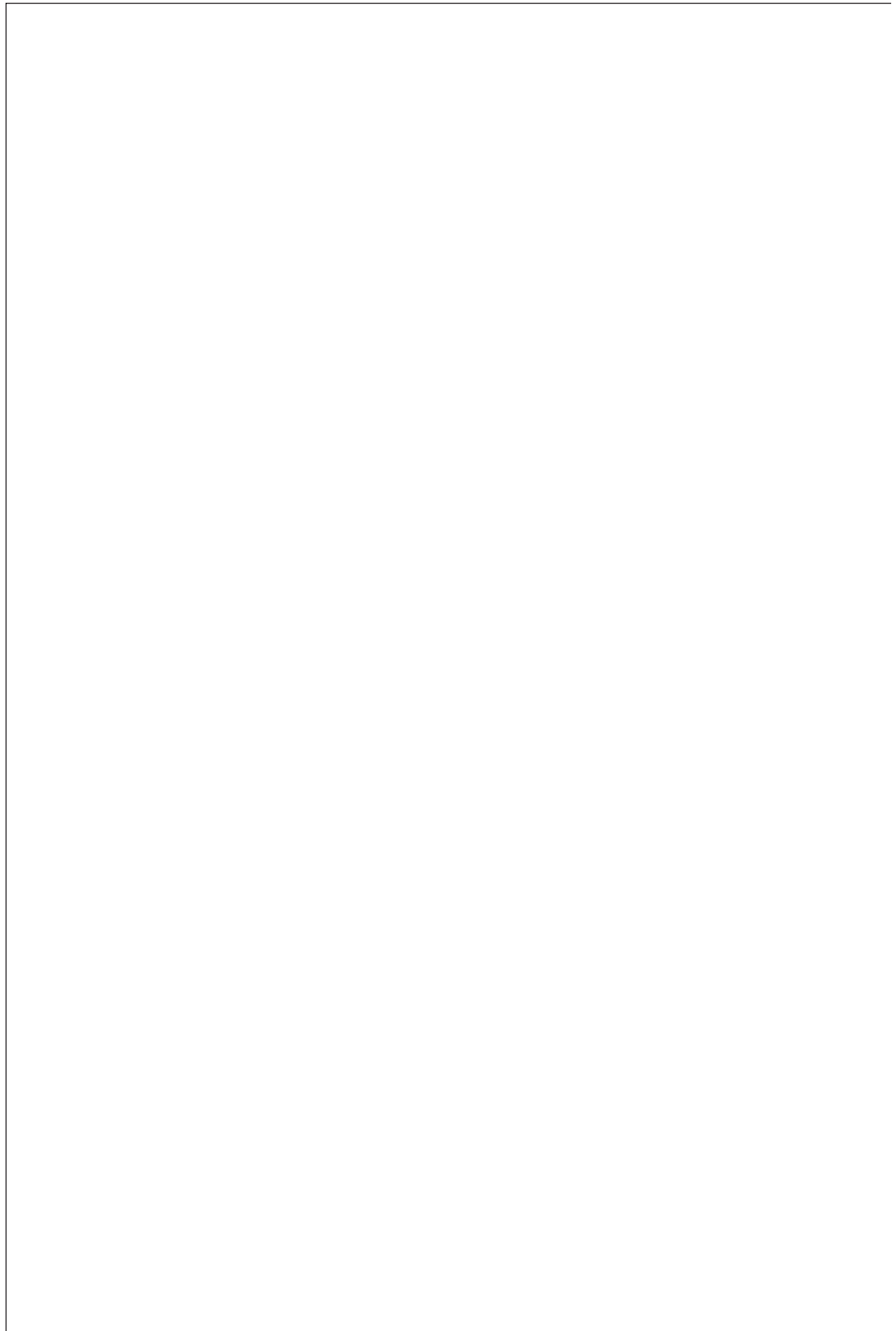
“Something else . . . at school we were talking about Jesus coming again and how soon it’s going to be, especially with all the stuff going on in the news. Some kids were really scared and were talking about terrible things that were going to happen. I wasn’t scared until they started talking about it, but now I’m really worried. How can I be ready for Jesus to come again? And how do I know that I am ready? And how can I face the terrible things that will happen without being afraid? I feel really worried about it right now!”

Mother put her arm around Michael. “You’ve asked about fifty important questions in the last ten minutes,” she said. “What if we take some time every day, right after you finish your homework, and talk about them? We’ll start with what happened after Jesus went back to heaven and bring you right up to today. And then we’ll talk about the future.”

“That sounds great,” said Michael. “So how about before I do my homework?”

“Nice try.” Mother laughed.

“I guess I’ll go start on my homework, then,” Michael sighed.



1

Where Did Sin Come From?



“Mom,” said Michael, “I’m kind of confused. Why did God ever let sin happen? I mean, so many people have suffered because of it.”

“Yes,” said Mother, “they have. The Bible tells us how Lucifer became Satan. Look in Isaiah, chapter 14, verses 13 and 14.”

Michael found Isaiah in his Bible and then found chapter 14. He read: “You told yourself, ‘I will go up to heaven. I will put my throne above God’s stars. I will sit on the mountain of the gods. I will sit on the slopes of the sacred mountain. I will go up above the tops of the clouds. I will be like God Most High.’ ” “But Mom, that doesn’t really tell what happened to Lucifer.”

“Yes, it does,” Mother countered. “You see, before Lucifer decided he wanted to be like God, he was the highest angel in heaven. He was perfect and beautiful, just the way God created him to be. But Lucifer became impressed with himself. He was filled with pride and thought he was more important than he really was. He was jealous of Jesus, who was God the Son.”

“So Jesus was in heaven even before He came to earth as a baby?”

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“Oh yes,” said Mother. “The first few verses of the book of John tell us that Jesus has always existed with God the Father, long before He came to earth.”

“OK,” said Michael, “go ahead. Why was Lucifer jealous of Jesus?”

“Lucifer thought he should be included in the plans for the new world God and Jesus were creating. He felt that They were leaving him out on purpose to humiliate him in front of the other angels. Satan became so jealous of Jesus he began talking to the other angels and raising questions—‘Why is Jesus involved in the plans for a new world? Why wasn’t I included? Why is Jesus honored above me?’

“Lucifer convinced as many angels as he could that God was unfair. Because of his rebellious attitude, he and one-third of the angels were banished from heaven. Now Satan was furious.”

“Are Satan and Lucifer the same person?” asked Michael.

“Yes,” said Mother. “After he left heaven, he wasn’t called Lucifer anymore, because he was no longer a good angel. The name Lucifer means ‘lightbearer,’ and Satan means ‘the enemy.’ ”

“OK,” said Michael, “so what did Satan do then?”

“He told the other angels it was all God’s fault. He claimed it was God’s unreasonable rules that had caused him to be jealous and to be banished from heaven. Then he tricked Adam and Eve into sinning. He blamed that on God, too, saying God’s rules were not fair to Adam and Eve either. He was shocked when God offered His own Son in exchange for the lives of the humans who had sinned. In everything he did, Satan kept trying to put himself above God.”

“Like in the temptation in the wilderness when he asked Jesus to bow down to him or to obey him by doing a miracle and turning the rocks into bread?”

“Yes, that’s another example of how he tried to be above God,” said Mother. “And when he wasn’t able to get Jesus to sin or to acknowledge him as the ruler, he hated Him even more. Finally, he made sure that Jesus was tortured to death.”

“That’s awful!” said Michael.

WHERE DID SIN COME FROM?

“Yes,” said Mother, “but it proved to the whole universe, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that God was fair and that He loved humans and was willing to do anything to save them even though Satan had deceived them and made them suffer.”

Michael thought about that awhile. Then he said, “If people really understood what happened, there’s no way they could blame God for all of the suffering on the earth.”

“But so many people don’t know,” said Mother.

“Someone ought to tell them,” said Michael. He sat quietly for several moments. “That’s really what this is all about, isn’t it?” he said, “proving that God is fair.”

“That’s what the conflict was about from the beginning,” agreed Mother. “The first accusation Satan made was that God was not fair. This great controversy is not about you or me or even about Satan. It’s about God and proving that He is fair. And when this war between Christ and Satan is over, everyone will know for sure that God is fair. Everyone will have had an opportunity to choose which side to be on.”

“God must love us a lot,” said Michael, “to be willing to give us a chance like that!”

“Yes,” said Mother. “He’s a very loving Father.”

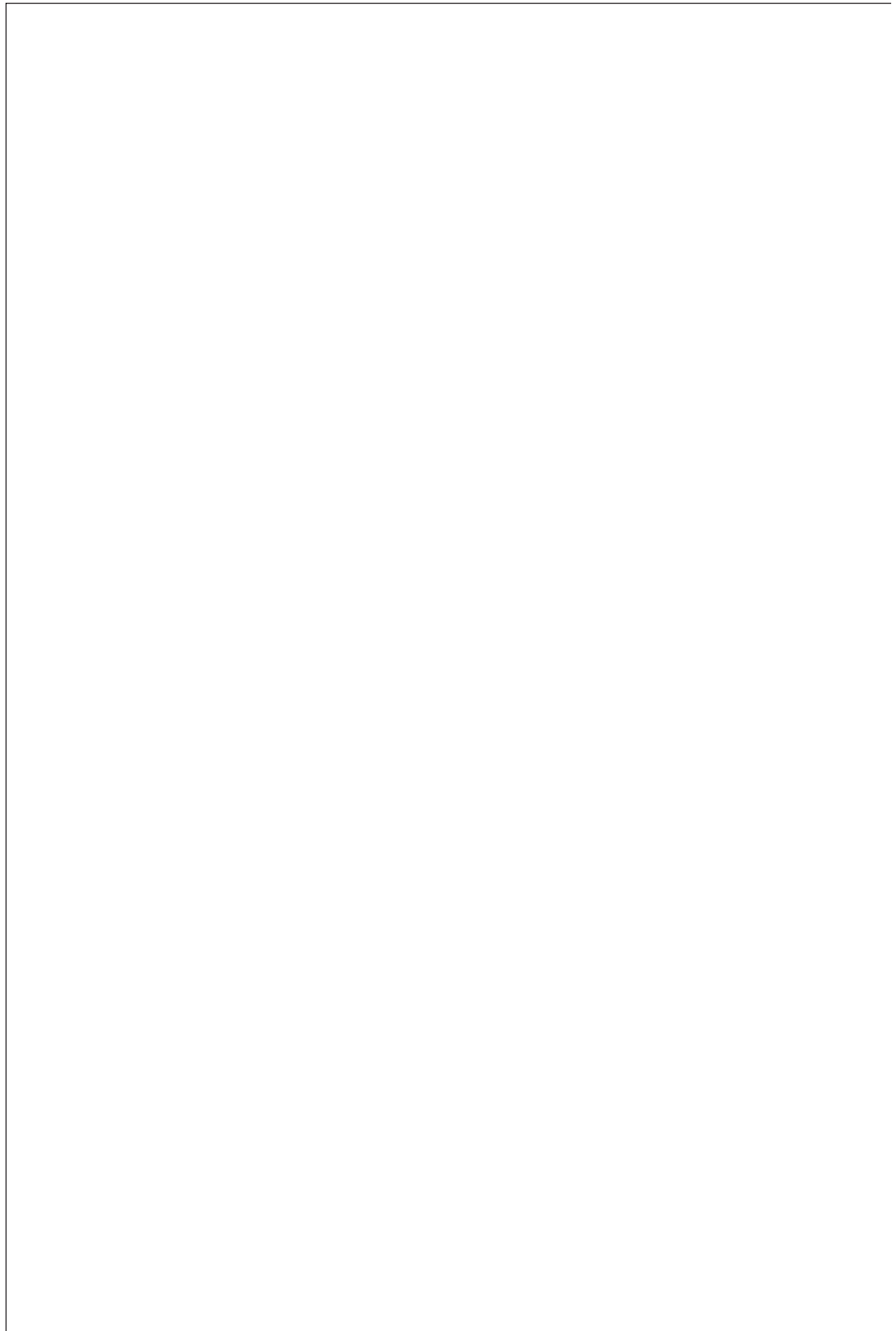
“I can’t wait until this is all over and everybody understands and loves God,” said Michael.

“It will be a great relief to the whole universe when the war ends,” said Mother. “But it will also be very sad because some people will never choose to understand. And those people will be lost even though God loves them so much. It will hurt Him terribly to see them die.”

“Yes,” said Michael, “I guess it will.”

“Still,” said Mom, “when it is over, then there will be no more sin because everyone will understand.”

“So it will be a happy time but a sad time too,” Michael said. “We’ll be happy because there is no more sin, but it will be sad that some people choose not to love God and live with Him.”



2

Our Worst Enemy



“Do you know who our worst enemy is?” Mother asked.

“I don’t know,” said Michael. “Probably we are ourselves.”

Mother laughed. “Sometimes that’s true,” she said. “But actually, Satan is our worst enemy. Would you read Genesis 3:15? This is what God said to Satan after he tricked Adam and Eve into sinning in the Garden of Eden.”

Michael found the text and read: “I will make you and the woman enemies to each other. Your descendants and her descendants will be enemies. Her child will crush your head. And you will bite his heel.”

“Satan was angry,” Mother reminded Michael. “He had been pointing to the fact that Adam and Eve had sinned, to prove that God was unfair, and now God had gone way out of His way to save them. Anyone who was paying attention at all would see that God was loving and merciful. This made Satan hate God even more. He couldn’t attack God directly because God is stronger than Satan, of course. But Satan could pick on God’s children. So that’s what he did, and he is going to keep doing that until this conflict is over. See what Paul

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says in 2 Timothy 3:2.”

“In those times,” Michael read, “people will love only themselves and money. They will brag and be proud. They will say evil things against others. They will not obey their parents. People will not be thankful or be the kind of people God wants.” He looked up, “But why is there so little resistance to Satan’s plan? Why are God’s people so, well, sleepy? They don’t seem to be paying attention.”

“Many of God’s people are sleepy because they don’t have the Holy Spirit in their lives as much as they should. They don’t really understand Satan’s power and how he plans to fight against God. It’s much easier for an enemy to win if the army he is fighting against is asleep. It’s easier still if the people don’t even know there is a war going on and no one is paying attention. People who don’t keep a strong connection with Christ forget these things or never knew about them in the first place.

“People who are close to Jesus hate sin as much as He does. They don’t want to do anything that would hurt God because He loves them so much. But many people don’t stay connected to God. So they forget that Satan is at war with God’s people. They are ignorant of Satan’s power and cruelty toward the followers of Jesus. They blame God for evil things that happen. But God isn’t the one who causes evil. Bad things happen because there is a war going on and because Satan, the enemy, is so cruel.”

“What can we do?” demanded Michael.

“Read Ephesians 6:11, 12,” Mother replied.

“Wear the full armor of God,” Michael read. “Wear God’s armor so that you can fight against the devil’s evil tricks. Our fight is not against people on earth. We are fighting against the rulers and authorities and the powers of this world’s darkness. We are fighting against the spiritual powers of evil in the heavenly world.”

“Now read 1 Peter 5:8,” Mother said.

“Control yourselves and be careful! The devil is your enemy. And he goes around like a roaring lion looking for someone to eat.”

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Mother looked at Michael as he put down the Bible. “Those verses tell us very clearly just who we’re fighting against. But we never need to be afraid!”

“Because Jesus fought and won, right?” said Michael.

“That’s right,” said Mother, “and He will give us strength if we ask. Satan can’t control our minds or what we do. He can affect us only if we let him. He can upset us, but he can’t destroy us. He can hurt us, but he can never cut us off from Jesus. Satan has already lost the war, but he can still cause us trouble until Jesus comes to take us to heaven.”

“I wish Jesus would hurry up!” said Michael.

Who Are the Angels?

“Mom, exactly who are the angels?” asked Michael.

“Look in your Bible, and it will tell you. Try Hebrews 1:14.”

Michael read, “All the angels are spirits who serve God and are sent to help those who will receive salvation.”

“Now read Psalm 8:5.”

“You made man a little lower than the angels. And you crowned him with glory and honor.” “So the angels are spirits who serve God and who are sent to help us?” asked Michael.

“Yes,” replied Mother. “God created the angels and gave them certain jobs to carry out.”

“I remember lots of places in the Bible where there were angels,” Michael said. “Like when Daniel was in the lions’ den, and angels came to keep him safe. And at Jesus’ resurrection an angel came and rolled away the stone and told Him, ‘Your Father calls you.’ And an angel told Mary she was going to have a baby.”

“That’s right,” said Mother, “and there are many other angel stories in the Bible too. I’m sure you can think of more.”

“There’s my angel,” said Michael, “because every follower of Jesus has a guardian angel.”

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Mother smiled. "Here are a couple more verses about angels. You read Psalm 34:7, and I'll read Job 1:9, 10."

"All right," Michael said. "The Lord saves those who fear him. His angel camps around them."

Then Mother read, "Satan answered God, 'Job honors God for a good reason. You have put a wall around him, his family and everything he owns. You have blessed the things he has done. So his flocks of sheep and herds of cattle are large. They almost cover the land.'" She looked at Michael. "You see, God uses angels to protect us. I think that wall around Job was a wall of angels."

"But what about that third of the angels who followed Satan? Are they still with him?" Michael wanted to know.

"Unfortunately, yes," said Mother. "Today we refer to them as evil spirits because they are on Satan's side. We don't usually call them angels anymore, although the Bible tells us that they can still appear as angels of light. Remember the story in Mark, chapter 5, where there was a man who had evil spirits in him?"

"I thought it was just one evil spirit," said Michael.

"Look at verse 9," said Mother. "When Jesus asked the man's name, he said 'My name is Legion,' because he had so many spirits in him. The Roman legions had anywhere from three thousand to five thousand men, so there must have been thousands of evil spirits in that poor man."

"That's a cool story," said Michael. "I like the part where Jesus sent the spirits out into the pigs, and they all jumped off the cliff into the ocean."

Mother smiled.

"Served the owners right," said Michael. "They shouldn't have been raising pigs anyway. Jews aren't supposed to eat pigs, so why would they raise them and sell them to their friends?"

Mother laughed. "Maybe that's what Jesus thought too. But Satan's spirits always destroy when they inhabit something or someone. The Bible has other stories about evil spirits too. You can read them

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later in Luke 4:33-36 about the man in the synagogue; or Mark 7:26-30 and Mark 9:17-27, which tell about people who were possessed by evil spirits.”

“It sounds as if people who have an evil spirit or a bunch of evil spirits are really suffering and need Jesus to help them.”

“They do need Jesus to help them,” said Mother, “but they aren’t always suffering. Some people have evil spirits because they like them and choose to have them. Simon Magus, the magician, was like that. His story is in the book of Acts.

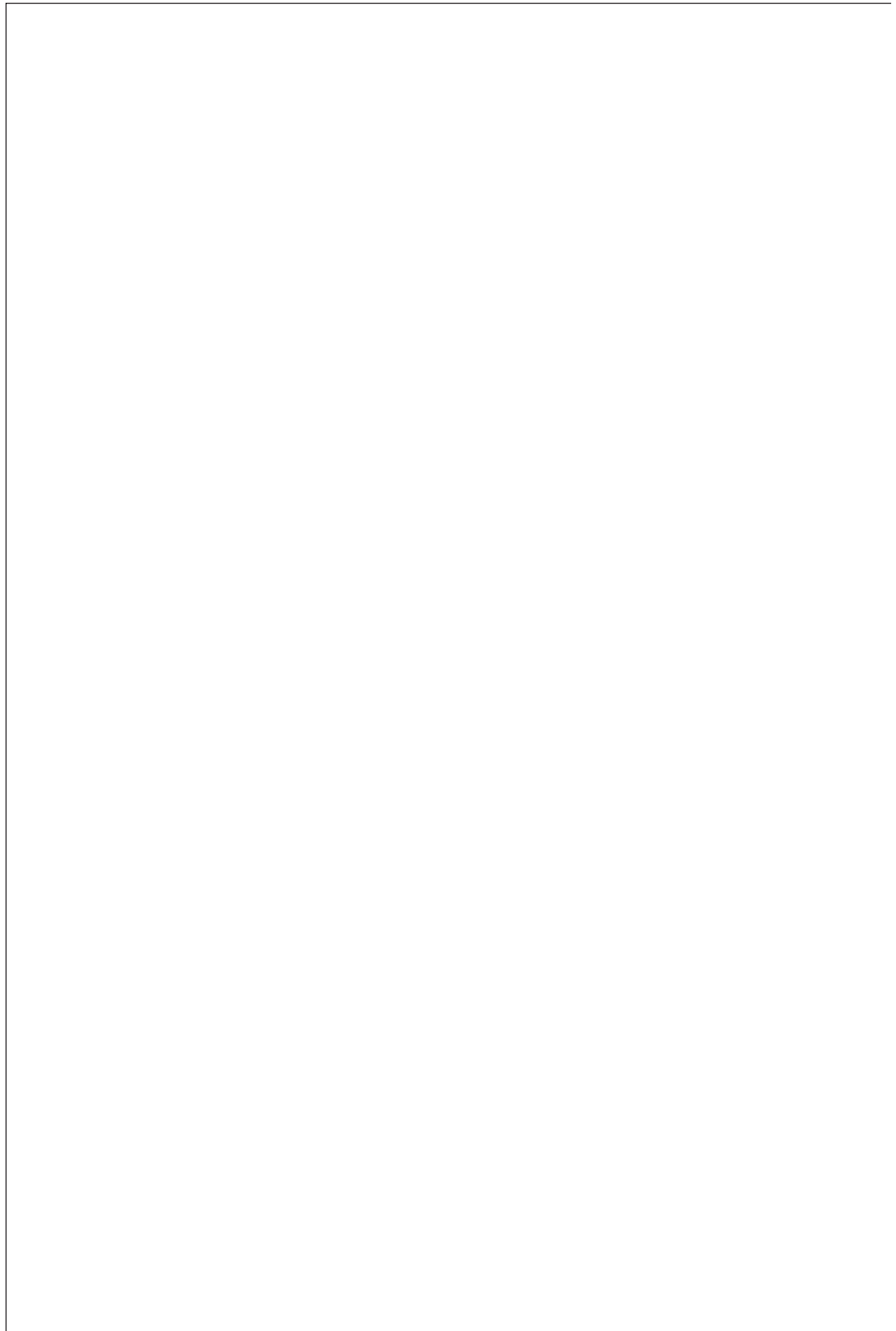
“Even more dangerous is pretending that Satan doesn’t exist at all. If you deny his existence, then you can’t protect yourself from his power. Satan really likes it when people describe him as a red devil with horns and beastlike hooves. Then they aren’t afraid of him, and they don’t pay attention. He is actually a powerful being who’s very angry at humans. He is their greatest enemy.”

Michael shuddered, “Sounds scary.”

“Well Michael,” said Mother, “you don’t ever have to be afraid of Satan, because Jesus has much more power than Satan will ever have. Jesus puts a hedge of guardian angels around you to keep you safe. He will never let you down. Your part is to renew your friendship with Him each morning and walk with Him throughout the day.”

“I certainly will,” said Michael.

“Every day I pray for you,” said Mother, “putting you in Jesus’ hands to keep you safe from Satan’s power.”



3

God's Word, the Bible



“As we come nearer to the end of time, Satan makes stronger and stronger efforts to tempt us to leave Jesus’ side,” Mother told Michael as they began their talk.

“You make it sound as if he really plans ahead.”

“He does,” said Mother. “He makes battle plans just like an army general. Remember the story of Job? Job 1:6 says: ‘One day the angels came to show themselves before the Lord. Satan also came with them. The Lord said to Satan, “Where have you come from?” Satan answered the Lord, “I have been wandering around the earth. I have been going back and forth in it.”’

“He finds many ways to tempt us to do wrong, and he likes to confuse us if he can. He even tries to use the Bible to confuse people. If a person believes the Bible, then Satan tries to mix him up and get him to twist the Bible around so that he believes it says something it really doesn’t say.”

“How could Satan use the Bible itself to confuse people?” Michael wanted to know.

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“Sometimes people will take only a single verse, or even just part of a verse, and not pay any attention to all the rest of the chapter. They focus on just that one verse or a few words and claim it means a certain thing. But if they read the whole chapter, they would see it isn’t talking about what they think it is at all.”

“I’m still not sure I understand,” said Michael.

“For example,” said Mother, “some people read what Paul wrote in Romans 6:14—‘You are not under law but under God’s grace’—and say that this proves Christians don’t need to obey God anymore, that they don’t have to keep God’s rules. But if they would read all that Paul says in Romans, chapter 6, they would see he is teaching that Christians are saved only by God’s grace, not because they earn salvation by being obedient. But that doesn’t mean they shouldn’t be obeying God’s law anymore.”

“I see,” said Michael. “It’s like looking at just part of a picture and thinking that is the whole thing.”

“Something like that,” agreed Mother. “We need to study the Bible ourselves to know what it says so that we won’t be confused by what other people think it means. Also, it’s very important for us to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to help us understand by making the Bible plain and clear as we study. Another way Satan tries to confuse people is with science.”

“You mean Satan invented science?” asked Michael.

“No!” Mother laughed. “God put the rules of science in place at creation. It’s just that people haven’t always understood science. They learn a little bit, and when it doesn’t agree with what they think the Bible says, then they don’t believe the Bible.”

“So if they understood more about science,” said Michael, “then they would find that science and the Bible actually agree?”

“Of course,” said Mother. “God created science, so it will naturally agree with what He tells us in the Bible. Also, we need to be careful what we believe. We will hear a lot of ideas, but they won’t always be true. We need to make sure that the Bible backs up

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everything we believe.

“Satan also likes to tell people that God didn't reveal everything we really need to know. Sometimes people go poking around in places other than the Bible—like talking to spirits—to find out secrets and mysteries that God has never told us. With this temptation, Satan is going back to his lie to Eve in the Garden of Eden when he pretended God was withholding information from her.”

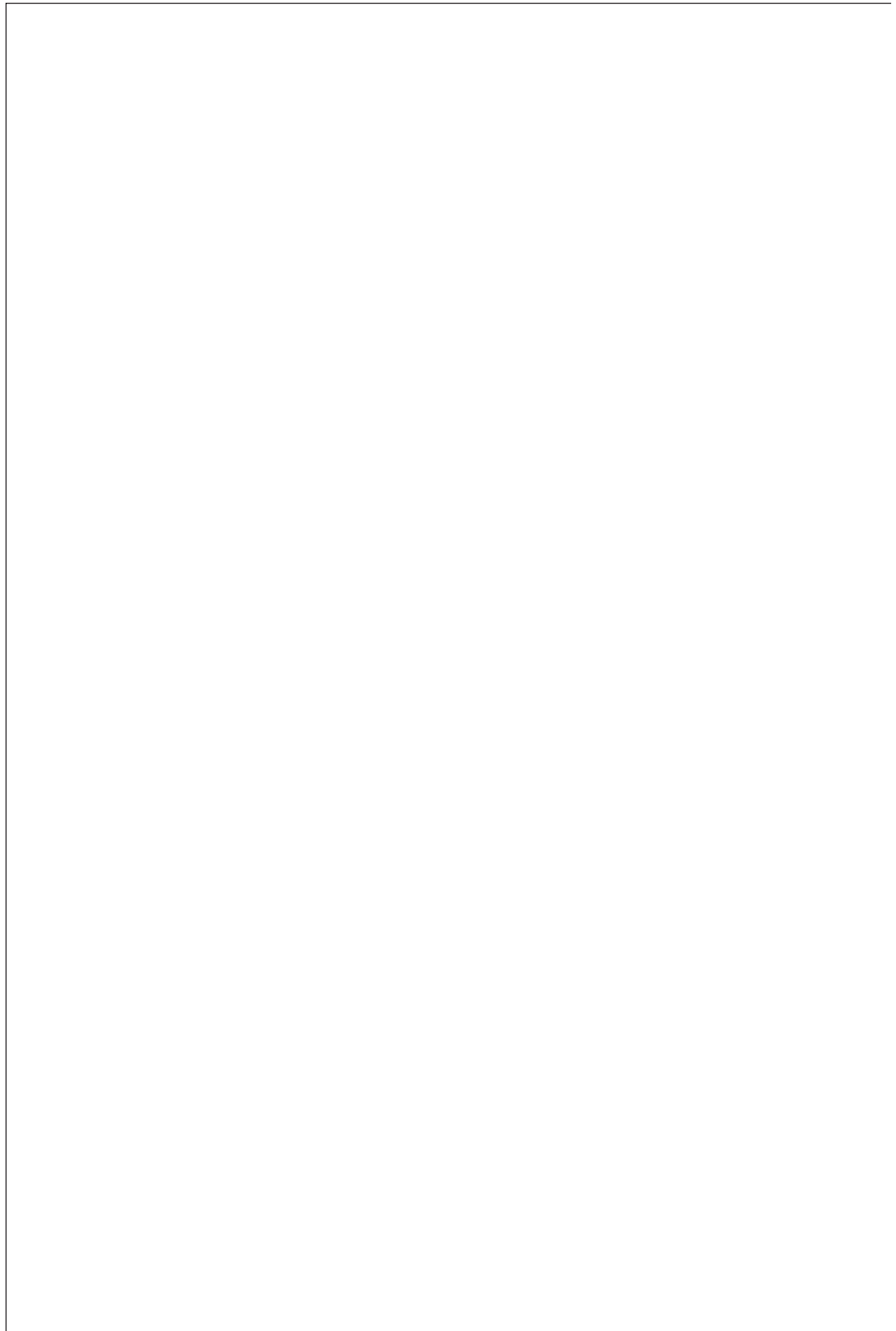
“Isn't that called spiritualism?” said Michael.

“Yes,” said Mother. “And remember that Satan can appear as an angel of light. Many spiritualists feel that they are being guided by heavenly angels or their inner spirit guide. But we can be sure that we don't need to try to contact spirits; God has already told us in the Bible everything we need to know to be saved.

“Sometimes Satan confuses people by making them doubt whether Jesus was really God. Many of them believe that He was just a good man but not really God. Other people don't believe in a real Satan. Because they don't believe he really exists, they aren't on guard against the things he does to them. Others believe that people don't really die; instead, Jesus takes them to heaven. We will talk more about that next time. Others don't trust God; they doubt His promises. They don't believe that He can really take care of them. But the weakest Christian who trusts Jesus is more than a match for all of Satan's evil angels.”

Michael said, “I know in Bible times God protected His people as long as they were loyal to Him by obeying His law. So if we stay on His side today, He'll take care of us too.”

“That's right,” said Mom. “And remember to talk to Jesus every day, because no one is safe without prayer.”



4

Death and Resurrection



“From the very beginning of time, Satan has been confusing people by telling them that there really is no such thing as death. Read in Genesis 3:2-5 what he said to Eve in the garden of Eden.”

Michael read:

The woman answered the snake, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden. But God told us, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden. You must not even touch it, or you will die.’ ” But the snake said to the woman, “You will not die. God knows that if you eat the fruit from that tree, you will learn about good and evil. Then you will be like God!”

“You see,” said Mother, “from the time of Adam and Eve, Satan has been trying to convince men and women that they don’t really die, that they are naturally immortal.”

“What does that mean?” Michael asked.

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“It means that Satan has convinced many Christians, and other people, too, that when a person dies, his body dies and is buried, but he has a soul that goes on living somehow—in fact, that his soul cannot die and will go on living forever even though the body is dead.”

“That doesn’t make sense,” said Michael.

“A lot of people think it does,” said Mother. “Most Christians believe the soul keeps on living forever. That’s what immortal means—to keep living forever and never die. Other religions believe that the soul is immortal too—Hindus, Moslems, Buddhists, and others.”

“And Satan is the one who started trying to get people to believe that they have a soul that can’t die?” asked Michael. “Why would he do that?”

“Because if he can confuse people about this, they will become confused about what God is like. You see, if all humans really live forever, even after they die, then the good people go to live with God, but what about the bad people? Where do they go? If we believe that the soul can’t die and goes on living forever, then bad people must suffer forever just like the good people enjoy eternal life forever.”

“Oh,” said Michael, “you’re talking about hell now.”

“Yes,” said Mom. “Many believe that bad people will suffer forever, screaming in pain, being burned in the flames of hell. But God isn’t like that.”

“Doesn’t the Bible talk about hell?” asked Michael.

“Yes, but we have to understand what hell really is and what God is really like. Take a look at what Ezekiel 33:11 says about God.”

Michael read, “Say to them: ‘The Lord God says: As surely as I live, this is true. I do not want a wicked person to die. I want him to stop doing evil and live. Turn back! Turn back from your wicked ways! You don’t want to die, people of Israel.’ ” “God certainly sounds loving there,” said Michael.

“And, of course, He is,” said Mother. “But because people believed that sinners burn in hell forever, they became afraid of God, and some became atheists.”

DEATH AND RESURRECTION

“Not everyone fell for Satan’s lie about sinners suffering forever in hell. They saw that God would have to be terribly cruel to do such a thing. So then Satan tried to swing these people to the other extreme. He tried to make them believe that God is so gentle and kind that He will save everyone, whether or not they accept Christ’s sacrifice. But this isn’t true either. The Bible says that the wages of sin is death. Those who choose not to accept Jesus’ sacrifice for their sins will have to receive the wages of sin.

“In fact, God knows that those who have chosen Satan as their leader would not be happy in heaven. Think about it. If you had spent your whole life filled with hatred, would you even want to go to heaven and spend eternity with the people you had hated on earth? Heaven would be torture to sinners. They wouldn’t like it at all. The Bible tells us very clearly what happens when we die; it says there is a final death for people who don’t love God. Here is what Exodus 34:6, 7 says:

The Lord passed in front of Moses and said, “I am the Lord.” The Lord is a God who shows mercy and is kind. The Lord doesn’t become angry quickly. The Lord has great love and faithfulness. The Lord is kind to thousands of people. The Lord forgives people for wrong and sin and turning against Him. But the Lord does not forget to punish guilty people.

“And Psalm 145:20 says, ‘The Lord protects everyone who loves Him. But He will destroy the wicked.’ ”

“That’s pretty clear,” Michael said.

“You understand, don’t you, that God is the source of life?” asked Mother.

“Oh yes,” said Michael. “He is the only one who can give us life and keep us alive.”

“Right,” said mother. “So when everyone has made a final choice about which side to be on, there will be no further reason for God to

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keep the people alive who have decided not to be with Him. When God withdraws from them, they can no longer live.”

Mother continued. “When God destroyed the world in the time of Noah, He was doing it out of mercy to the few good people who were left in the world, because the world had become such a terrible place. If God waited longer, nobody would have been left who was willing to listen to Him. In the same way, God was being merciful when He destroyed Sodom. And when God destroys our world at the end of time, He will also be showing His mercy. He will be ending all sadness and suffering and taking away sin so that there will never be suffering again. Michael, would you read Psalm 9:5, 6?”

Michael read, “You spoke strongly against the foreign nations and destroyed the wicked people. You wiped out their names forever and ever. The enemy is gone forever. You destroyed their cities. No one even remembers them.” “That certainly sounds as if there is a definite end to things,” said Michael.

“And nowhere,” said Mother, “do you read about people writhing in agony, screaming forever, and shouting curses at God for their suffering in eternity. In fact, the Bible says quite clearly that after sin is ended and sinners are destroyed all of us who are left will be praising God forever. It’s here in Revelation 5:13. ‘Then I heard every living thing in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea. I heard every thing in all these places, saying: “All praise and honor and glory and power forever and ever to the One who sits on the throne and to the Lamb!” ’ ”

“Satan has convinced many Christians that they go right to heaven when they die. But the Bible teaches that the people who are dead now are just asleep waiting for Jesus to wake them up again.”

“We learned a verse in school about that,” Michael said. “It’s in Ecclesiastes 9:5. It says, ‘The living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing’ ” (KJV).

“And verses 6 and 10 add some more to that,” Mother said. “After a person is dead, he can no longer show love or hate or jealousy. And

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he will never again share in the things that happen here on earth. . . . Whatever work you do, do your best. This is because you are going to the grave. There is no working, no planning, no knowledge and no wisdom there.”

“Now read Psalm 6:5.”

Michael read, “Dead people don’t remember you. Those in the grave don’t praise you.”

“And Psalm 115:17 says, ‘Dead people do not praise the Lord. Those in the grave are silent,’ ” Mother said. “And Psalm 146:4 says, ‘When people die, they are buried. Then all of their plans come to an end.’ So it’s pretty clear from the Bible that when a person dies, he is asleep in the grave; there isn’t any soul that keeps on living and knows what is going on.

“If good people went to heaven when they died, and were in heaven for years and years, why would Jesus say he was coming to earth again to resurrect them and give them their reward? They would have already been enjoying their reward for a long time!”

Michael laughed. “That doesn’t sound very logical. What would be the point of having a judgment?”

“And how could they live happily in heaven,” Mother asked, “while other people—maybe even loved ones—were being tortured in hell? How could they enjoy heaven while watching the pain and struggles of their loved ones left on earth?”

“Let’s read one more text that tells very clearly what will happen when Jesus comes. Michael, I’ll help you find 1 Corinthians 15:52-55, and you read.”

It will only take a second. We will be changed as quickly as an eye blinks. This will happen when the last trumpet sounds. The trumpet will sound and those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we will all be changed. This body that will ruin must clothe itself with something that will never ruin. And this body that dies must clothe

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itself with something that will never die. So this body that ruins will clothe itself with that which never ruins. And this body that dies will clothe itself with that which never dies. When this happens, then this Scripture will be made true: “Death is destroyed forever in victory. Death, where is your victory? Death, where is your power to hurt?”

“It sounds wonderful, doesn’t it?” said Mother.

“It will be so exciting,” said Michael. “I’ll get to hug Grandma Jo and play with my friend Andy who was hit by the car. Grandma Jo will have hair again and won’t be sick anymore. And Andy won’t be broken.”

5

Can the Dead Speak to Us?



“Mom,” said Michael. “You remember when Auntie Gina went to that fortuneteller and she said they had seances where they could talk to people who had already died? Can they really do that?”

“No,” said Mother. “Ecclesiastes 9:5 says that the dead don’t know anything.”

“Then who do those people speak to? Aunt Gina said the people at the seance were talking to someone.”

“Satan is able to make himself look like dead friends and loved ones,” Mother replied, “so that people will actually recognize them. Because he is a spirit, he can take any form he wants to.”

“So when people think they are talking to a friend who has died, they are really talking to Satan or one of his angels?”

“Yes. We call that kind of communication spiritualism. Those who believe in spiritualism believe that humans don’t really die but go on living throughout eternity. They think people just keep progressing, getting better and better, and eventually become gods.”

“That sounds like what Satan told Eve in the Garden of Eden,”

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said Michael.

“It does, doesn’t it?” said Mother. “Satan told her, ‘God knows that if you eat the fruit from that tree, you will learn about good and evil. Then you will be like God!’ Because of this lie, God later made strong rules against witchcraft for Israel, so that the Israelites would not be confused. They were not supposed to allow any witches to live in their country or practice witchcraft anywhere near them. You can read about it in Leviticus 19:31.”

Michael looked up the text and read, “Do not go to mediums or fortune-tellers for advice. If you do, you will become unclean. I am the Lord your God.”

“I remember the story about the witch of Endor and how King Saul went to talk to her because he was worried about how the battle would go the next day. He actually saw something that looked like the prophet Samuel. But you’re saying it wasn’t really Samuel?”

“Yes,” said Mother. “Samuel was dead.”

“But the person that King Saul saw told him he was going to die in the battle the next day, and that came true.”

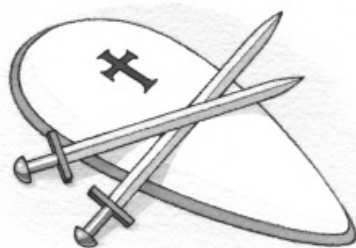
“That’s right. But Satan knows what his plans are for the next day, and unless God keeps them from happening, Satan can predict what he’s going to do. So fortunetellers often are correct in their predictions, but they are still being led by Satan, and we should stay away from them.”

“I guess so,” said Michael. “With Satan as cruel as he is, we should stay as far away from him as possible.”

“Just remember,” said Mother, “Satan can control us only if we choose to give in to his temptations. God is always there to protect us as long as we ask Him to.”

6

Four Keys to Heaven



Martin Luther

“Who are we talking about today?” asked Michael.

“Martin Luther,” answered Mother. “He lived in the 1500s.”

“Oh, I’ve heard of him,” said Michael. “He wrote the song, A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.” Michael started to sing:

“A mighty fortress is our God,
A bulwark never failing;
Our helper He, amid the flood
Of mortal ills prevailing.”

“Very good!” Mother said. “What do you think Martin Luther knew about fortresses?”

“I don’t know,” said Michael, “Did he live in a castle?”

“For a while,” said Mother, “but it wasn’t much fun. He was a prisoner in a castle, but let’s start at the beginning.

“When Martin Luther went away to school, his father wanted him

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to be a lawyer. His parents were very poor, and for a while, Martin had to sing songs from door to door so that he could buy food with the money people gave him. Often he went to bed hungry.

“After two years of college, Martin Luther decided he would rather be a priest than a lawyer. His father was very angry with him. Martin’s mother and father had always raised him to love God, and they had prayed for him. They just hadn’t expected him to be a priest. Although his parents had more money now, his father refused to give him any money for school if he was going to become a priest. But later they changed their minds and helped him.

“Martin Luther was a good man who loved God very much. He had become more and more worried about his sins and wanted to please God and be forgiven. So he would fast.”

“What, go without eating?” exclaimed Michael.

“Yes,” said Mother, “and stay awake all night. Those were called vigils. He would do this to punish himself for his sins.”

“That doesn’t sound healthy,” said Michael.

“It wasn’t,” said Mother. “Soon Martin Luther was sick. He became so sick that he would often faint; even after he stopped his fasts and vigils, he never fully recovered.”

“That’s sad,” said Michael. “Didn’t he know that Jesus died for him and he didn’t have to do that stuff?”

“He learned,” smiled Mother. “One day in a monastery . . .”

“What’s a monastery?” interrupted Michael.

“It’s a place where monks, priests, and church leaders live,” replied Mother.

“What’s a monk?” Michael wanted to know.

“A monk,” said Mother, “is a special kind of priest. He takes special vows and lives with other monks in a monastery. One day when Martin Luther was living in a monastery, he saw something that delighted him. It was a Latin Bible chained to the wall. He had seen a Bible in the university and had loved to read it. Now he was fascinated to find one in the monastery. He spent every spare minute, even when

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he should have been eating or sleeping, reading the Latin Bible.

“As he read the Bible, Martin Luther discovered that he didn’t have to fast and do other things to try to pay for his sins because Jesus had already paid for them all. He became very excited! He realized that all he needed to do was to love Jesus, have faith in Him, and obey Him.

“Not everyone was as excited as Martin Luther about this good news. A man named Tetzel was in charge of selling indulgences in Germany. Indulgences were pieces of paper that people could buy that gave them forgiveness for a sin, or sometimes for many sins. Tetzel would even sell indulgences ahead of time if you were planning to commit a sin!”

Mother laughed. “In several books I’ve read a really funny story about Tetzel. Once he sold an indulgence for future sins to a certain man. The next day, as Tetzel traveled through the countryside to a nearby town, that same man robbed him of all the money he had earned selling indulgences. Tetzel began to curse the thief and told him he would burn in hell for stealing his money! But the robber just grinned, pulled out the indulgence he had bought the day before, and shook it in Tetzel’s face. And then he rode off with the money!”

“Wow!” exclaimed Michael. “How could Tetzel really believe in indulgences after that?”

“He probably didn’t.” said Mother. “Luther preached about Jesus’ love for us and how He had died for us so that no one needed indulgences.

“Tetzel was very angry and complained to the church leaders. Luther tried to tell people that indulgences were worthless and unnecessary, but Tetzel kept selling them anyway. Just before a religious holiday, when lots of people would be in town and at the church, Luther nailed a paper on the church door. Written on the paper were ninety-five statements showing that indulgences and other church teachings were not what the Bible taught. Luther offered to explain these statements to everyone who would come to the church the next day.

Luther kept pointing out teachings that were not in the Bible.

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Many people agreed with Luther, but the church leaders became more and more angry. Finally, the pope, the head of the church, declared Martin Luther a heretic and excommunicated him and all of his followers.”

“What does it mean to be excommunicated?” asked Michael.

“It means that the pope said that Martin Luther could not go to heaven and that he could not pray to God anymore and that he could not worship with other Christians anymore. If he died, he could not even be buried in the same cemetery as other Christians.”

“But the pope couldn’t do that,” said Michael. “Only God can decide who goes to heaven.”

“That’s true,” said Mother. “But that’s what the pope said. Martin Luther had taught other things, too, that upset the church leaders. He preached against all of their extravagant palaces, feasts, robes, fancy foods, and other sins. He felt that the church leaders should lead a simple life like Jesus lived. He was brought to trial in Germany by the church leaders, and they planned to bring him to Rome. But Martin Luther escaped. God kept protecting him.

“Many people consider Martin Luther the first Protestant because he was excommunicated from the church.”

“What is a Protestant?” asked Michael.

“Well,” Mother answered, “when Luther lived, there really was only one Christian church. It was called the ‘Catholic’ church because it was the church that everyone belonged to. But Luther protested against practices and teachings in the Catholic Church that didn’t follow what Jesus taught in the Bible. When he was excommunicated, he was no longer a Catholic. Those, like Luther, who protested against the Catholic Church came to be called ‘Protestants.’ And Luther was one of the first of these protesters.

“Actually, Martin Luther was not happy about being put out of the Catholic Church. He had meant to be a Catholic always. He wanted to correct the things that were wrong with his church, not leave it. And it made him very sad not to be part of his church anymore.”

“But he had to believe what the Bible said, didn’t he?” Michael

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asked. “He couldn’t just go along with his church even if it was going against the Bible.”

“No, he couldn’t,” agreed Mother. “But he wondered sometimes if maybe he was mistaken. All the church leaders kept telling him he was wrong. Could it be that just one man was right and everyone else was wrong? But the more he read the Bible, the more sure he was that the church was wrong about many things. And so he kept on preaching and teaching what he found in the Bible. Many people in Germany began to listen to Luther and to think that he was right. This made the church leaders even more angry and afraid. They tried even harder to make Luther stop preaching and teaching.”

“Why did the church leaders hate Luther so much?” asked Michael. “Why didn’t they listen to him?”

“It isn’t easy to admit you are wrong,” Mother said. “People today often believe what they want to believe—even if it disagrees with the Bible. It was that way in Martin Luther’s day, it’s that way today, and it will be that way until Jesus comes.”

“I wish Jesus would come right away,” said Michael. “Then everyone would be happy and agree with each other.”

“That will be a wonderful day,” Mother said.

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“What were other churches doing while William Miller was preaching about the Second Coming?” asked Michael.

“During the 1800s,” said Mom, “there were lots of revivals. Some were genuine, but many of them were only temporary experiences. People became on fire for the Lord, burned brightly, and burned out quickly, leaving their spiritual life darker than it had been before. Many ministers were preaching that after Jesus died the law wasn’t important anymore and that people didn’t need to keep it any longer.”

“That doesn’t make sense,” said Michael.

“You’re right,” said Mom. “If there is no law, then there can be

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no sin, because sin is just breaking the law.”

“Right,” said Michael.

“And if there’s no sin, then we don’t need a Savior.”

“Right,” said Michael.

“And if there’s no need for a Savior, then we wouldn’t need Jesus anymore.”

“Right,” said Michael.

“And then pastors wouldn’t have anything left to preach about, would they?”

“No,” said Michael. “That idea doesn’t make any sense.”

“In fact,” said Mother, “The first step in getting right with Jesus is to realize our sin and how much we need Jesus. The law is like a mirror that helps us do that. It shows us our sins so we will know how much we need Jesus to forgive us.

“There are four keys that unlock the secret of going to heaven with Jesus,” explained Mother. “The first key is recognizing that God’s law is still important. Jesus said in Matthew 5:17, ‘Don’t think that I have come to destroy the law of Moses or the teaching of the prophets. I have not come to destroy their teachings but to do what they said.’

“The second key,” continued Mother, “is realizing that breaking the law is sin, which means we still need forgiveness.”

“Besides,” added Michael, “since there is a sanctuary in heaven, it means there must still be a reason for the sanctuary and that people still need to have sins forgiven.”

“Yes, and the sanctuary is there for us. We need to use it by confessing our sins, so that Jesus can blot them out in the atonement. That is key number three.”

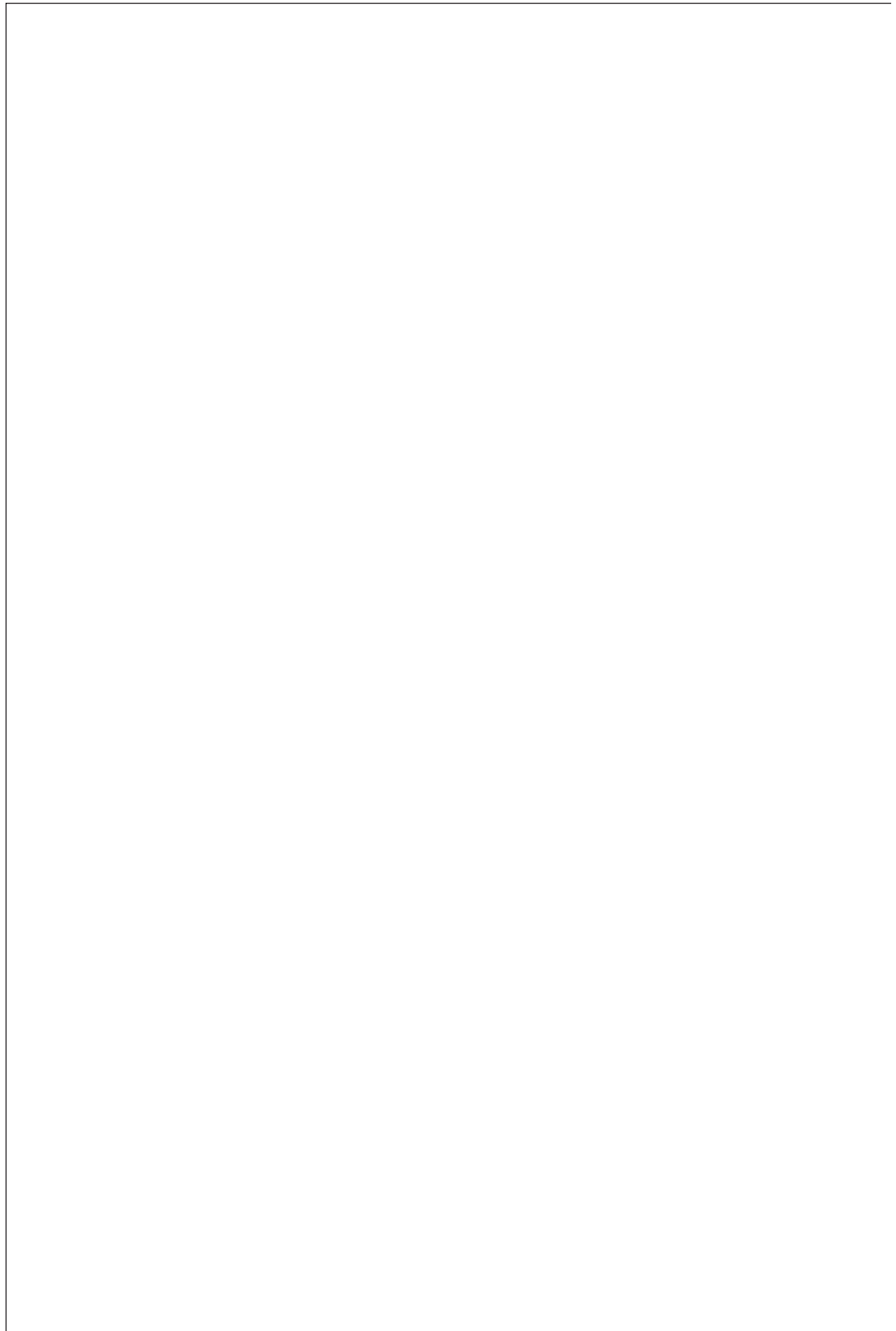
“What’s key number four?” asked Michael.

“If a conversion is real, if a person really is sorry for his sins and wants to be forgiven, then there will be a change in that person’s life. His experience with God will not be a temporary thing that causes him to burn brightly for a little while and then burn out. It will make a lasting change in his life. Getting to know Jesus makes us different.

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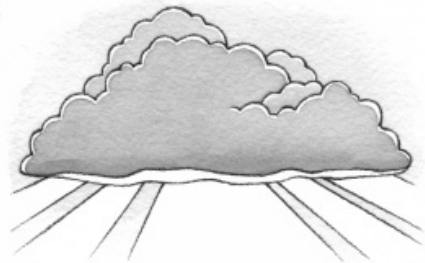
And the difference should last for the rest of our lives. This change is the evidence that we really know Jesus and that we love Him. That is true conversion and the final key to entering heaven.”

“God has made sure we have everything we need, hasn’t He?” exclaimed Michael.



7

Safety in the Scriptures



“Last night we talked about the hard times that are coming,” Michael said. He looked very serious. “What can we do to get through them and stay on Jesus’ side?”

“Fortunately, God has given us good instruction in the Bible,” Mother replied. “It will keep us safe if we follow it.”

“Do you mean that if we follow what God says in the Bible we won’t get hurt in any of the disasters that will happen?” Michael asked.

“No,” said Mother. “I’m sure God will do all He can to keep us safe physically. But sometimes good people get hurt. I’m talking about God keeping us safe spiritually. If we choose to follow Him, He will help us to follow even more closely.

“Of course, Satan does everything he can to keep people from learning what the Bible teaches. He creates counterfeits to make it hard to tell the difference between what God actually taught and what men say that God taught. In order to stay faithful to Him during the coming trials, we need to understand for ourselves what the Bible teaches. Mrs. White says we need to ‘fortify our minds’ with the

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truths of the Bible to be safe spiritually. What do you think of when you think of a fortified city?”

Michael thought awhile. “It would need to have a strong wall and good soldiers, wouldn’t it?”

“Yes,” agreed Mother. “And what would it need to have stored inside the walls?”

“Oh yeah,” smiled Michael, “the city wouldn’t last very long without a supply of food and water.”

“Right,” said Mother. “What could the wall and the soldiers represent in the ‘fortified city’ of our minds?”

“Maybe the wall would be like God’s law that protects us, and the soldiers might represent the angels,” Michael replied.

“I think you’re right,” responded Mother. “And what would the supplies inside the city represent?”

“Would that be like knowing the Bible for ourselves?”

“It certainly would. If we are to keep from being deceived, we need to have real Bible information stored in our minds. Otherwise, we would just believe our feelings or whatever other people tell us, whether or not they are in harmony with God’s Word.”

Michael said, “It sounds as though we need to make sure we take time to learn things now that we’ll need to remember then.”

“That’s what we’ve been doing as we’ve talked about these things,” said Mother. “And we need to be sure to invite Jesus into our hearts every day. Let’s look at some Bible verses now. Would you read Revelation 14:9?”

“OK,” said Michael. “A third angel followed the first two angels. This third angel said in a loud voice: ‘It will be bad for the person who worships the beast and his idol and gets the beast’s mark on the forehead or on the hand.’ ” “What is the mark of the beast, Mom, and how do we keep from getting it? What does it look like? Is it like a tattoo or something?”

“No,” smiled Mother. “The mark of the beast isn’t anything you can see; it isn’t like a tattoo actually written on someone’s body. The

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mark of the beast is the way the Bible describes people accepting the special deceptions of Satan in the last days. It says that those who choose to follow Satan and his rules, instead of God and His rules, will be ‘marked’ as unfaithful to God. People who follow what their church leaders teach them, instead of studying in the Bible for themselves, will be ‘marked’ as unfaithful.”

“Does that mean that we shouldn’t trust any of our church leaders?” asked Michael.

“No,” said Mother. “Most of our church leaders are wonderful, godly people, but we are all responsible for studying our Bibles. We all need to make sure that what we believe is what God said. People will have to make hard choices because sometimes their loyalties will be divided. Maybe some members of their own family, people they love and good friends, will choose the wrong way. But Jesus will help us. Psalm 16:7, 8 promises, ‘I praise the Lord because he guides me. Even at night, I feel his leading. I keep the Lord before me always. Because he is close by my side I will not be hurt.’ That’s an encouraging promise, isn’t it? And I really like the prayer that David prayed in Psalm 119:18. ‘Open my eyes to see the wonderful things in your teachings.’ ”

“That’s a good promise,” said Michael. “I think I’ll pray that prayer too.”

“Here’s another helpful promise,” said Mother. “It’s John 14:26. ‘But the Helper will teach you everything. He will cause you to remember all the things I told you. This Helper is the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in My name.’ ”

“That’s great! So God will help us remember Bible verses when we need them. What else can I do to get ready?” asked Michael.

“Take a look at Psalm 119:11,” suggested Mother.

Michael found the text and read: “I have taken your words to heart so I would not sin against you.” “What does this mean, Mom?”

“It means that if we really listen to God’s Word and think about it, and believe it, it will help us not to sin. Too many people today

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look for easy meanings in the Bible, or they just ignore it completely. We need to accept what it says and put it into practice. We still have a choice about whom to follow. This text is talking about choosing to follow God's Word and being obedient.

"Many people today say it doesn't matter what we believe as long as we do what we think is right. But that isn't true. For example, suppose you're traveling and you come to an intersection where two roads go off in different directions. A sign points down one road to the place you want to go. But you ignore the sign and take the road that "seems right" to you. You may mean well, but you will still be on the wrong road and end up in the wrong place.

"Here's another verse about choosing. Read John 7:17."

Michael read, "If anyone chooses to do what God wants, then he will know that my teaching comes from God. He will know that this teaching is not my own."

"Does this mean that God will help us to know what is right if we choose to follow Him?"

"That's exactly what it means," said Mother.

"I'm glad God has given us these promises," said Michael. "How could anyone be lost with all the help God has promised to give us?"

"It's hard to understand," said Mother, "and I'm sure it makes God cry when He thinks about it."

"Well, I don't want Him to ever have to cry about me. I love Him too much for that. I'm going to prepare for this time by staying on His side and storing His word in my heart and mind."

"I'm sure that will make God very happy," said Mother. "And He wants us to do all we can to be ready. But just remember that it is Jesus who saves us. It really isn't how good we are or how much Bible we know."

"I know," said Michael. "But I still want to show Him I love Him by doing whatever I can to be ready when He comes."

8

God's Unchangeable Law



“Michael,” said Mother, “today we have something really difficult to study, but it’s also really important for us to understand. Do you want to read Revelation 12:7-9, or shall I?”

“I’ll read it,” Michael said, turning to Revelation in his Bible.

Then there was a war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back. But the dragon was not strong enough. He and his angels lost their place in heaven. He was thrown down out of heaven. (The giant dragon is that old snake called the devil or Satan. He leads the whole world the wrong way.) The dragon with his angels was thrown down to the earth.

“Mom, this makes it really clear that the dragon is Satan.”

“And when we know who the dragon is,” said Mother, “then we are ready to understand something else. Now read Revelation 13:11.”

“OK. It says, ‘Then I saw another beast coming up out of the

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earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he talked like a dragon.' So this is another animal that John saw in vision, and it looked gentle until it opened its mouth," Michael said.

"That's right," said Mother, "but let's stop right there a minute. Before we decide what this gentle-looking animal represents, we need to identify one more animal mentioned in the prophecy. Now would you read Revelation 13:1-10?"

Michael read:

Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea. It had ten horns and seven heads. There was a crown on each horn. A name against God was written on each head. This beast looked like a leopard, with feet like a bear's feet. He had a mouth like a lion's mouth. The dragon gave the beast all of his power and his throne and great authority. One of the heads of the beast looked as if it had been wounded and killed. But this death wound was healed. The whole world was amazed and followed the beast. People worshiped the dragon because he had given his power to the beast. And they also worshiped the beast. They asked, "Who is as powerful as the beast? Who can make war against him?"

The beast was allowed to say proud words and words against God. He was allowed to use his power for forty-two months. He used his mouth to speak against God. He spoke against God's name, against the place where God lives, and against all those who live in heaven. He was given power to make war against God's holy people and to defeat them. He was given power over every tribe, people, language, and nation. All who live on earth will worship the beast. These are all the people since the beginning of the world whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life. The Lamb is the One who was killed.

If anyone has ears, he should listen: If anyone is to be a

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prisoner, then he will be a prisoner. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, then he will be killed with the sword. This means that God's holy people must have patience and faith.

"There sure are a lot of animals in the book of Revelation," said Michael. "It sounds pretty confusing."

"Well," said Mom. "Actually there are only three that we read about in these verses—the dragon, the animal that comes from the land, and the animal that comes from the sea—and we already know that the dragon represents Satan. Now we need to figure out who these other two animals represent. Let's start with the animal that came from the sea—the one to whom the dragon gave his power and authority. A lot of the early Protestants identified this beast as the papacy."

"What's the papacy?" asked Michael.

"The papacy is another word for all the popes—the system of the Roman Catholic Church and its leadership," said Mother.

"Why did these Protestants think this animal represented the papacy?" asked Michael.

"They put this description in Revelation together with something similar that Daniel described in his book. We can read about it in Daniel 7:19-27," Mother replied.

Michael read:

"Then I wanted to know what the fourth animal meant. It was different from all the other animals. It was very terrible. It had iron teeth and bronze claws. It was the animal that crushed and ate what it killed. And it walked on whatever was left. I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head. And I wanted to know about the little horn that grew there. It had pulled out three of the other ten horns. It looked greater than the others. And it had eyes and a mouth that kept bragging. As I watched, the little horn began making war against God's people. And the horn kept killing them

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until God, who has been alive forever, came. He judged in favor of the people who belong to the Most High God. And the time came for them to receive the power to rule.

And he explained this to me: ‘The fourth animal is a fourth kingdom that will come on the earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms. It will destroy people all over the world. It will walk on and crush the whole earth. The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this fourth kingdom. After those ten kings are gone, another king will come. He will be different from the kings who ruled before him. He will defeat three of the other kings. This king will say things against the Most High God. And he will hurt and kill God’s people. He will try to change times and laws that have already been set. The people that belong to God will be in that king’s power for three and one-half years.

‘But the court will decide what should happen. And the power of the king will be taken away. His kingdom will be completely destroyed. Then the people who belong to the Most High God will have the power to rule. They will rule over all the kingdoms under heaven with power and greatness. Their power to rule will last forever. And people from all the other kingdoms will respect and serve them.’ ”

“So, Mom,” asked Michael, “who does this animal—the one that Daniel is talking about—represent?”

“Can you think of a powerful empire that took over all the known world and was represented by iron legs in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream?”

“Oh, yeah, that would be the Roman Empire.”

“So this fourth animal of Daniel’s vision represents the Roman Empire,” continued Mom. “Then Daniel saw a little horn that grew out of the Roman Empire, but it was somehow different. He described this power as doing some of the same things that the animal did that John saw coming out of the sea in Revelation 13. That’s why many

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Protestant Bible students decided that Revelation 13 and Daniel 7 are talking about the same power.”

“But why do people think that Daniel and John are talking about the papacy?” Michael wanted to know.

“What does John say this animal will be doing?” asked Mother. “What did you find out about it when you read Revelation 13:1-10 and Daniel 7:19-27?”

“Well,” said Michael, “Revelation says it will be speaking against God and making war on God’s people. And Daniel says the same thing and that it will try to change God’s laws and times.”

“That’s right” said Mother. “Now who has tried to change God’s laws?”

“I’m not sure,” said Michael. “How could anyone change one of God’s laws?”

“They couldn’t, really,” said Mother. “But one thing the established church, the Roman Catholic Church, did was to change the day people worshiped from the seventh-day Sabbath to Sunday, the first day of the week. In fact, the Catholic Church admits that they changed the Sabbath to Sunday and that the change demonstrates the pope’s power to make such decisions.”

“And so that’s what Daniel means when he says this power would try to change times and laws that God has already set?” said Michael.

“Yes,” said Mother, “the change of the Sabbath to Sunday would be an example of that.”

“What does John mean when he says this power would receive a deadly wound?” asked Michael.

“Revelation says that this power will rule for forty-two months, speaking against God and persecuting God’s people. Then it would receive a wound that looked like it would be deadly. But the wound would be healed. Do you remember when we talked before, we learned that often a day in Bible prophecy stands for a year of real time?”

“I remember,” Michael answered.

“Well, Mother replied, “you add up the time from 538 AD. to 1798—”

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“Hang on,” said Michael, “what happened in those years, and how do I add that up?”

“The bishop of Rome gained control over all the other church bishops in 538 A.D.,” Mother told him. “This put the bishop of Rome, who was also known as the pope, in control of the whole established Christian church in Europe and the west. So if the papacy was to rule for forty-two months, how long would that be?”

“Forty-two times thirty days in each month would be . . . 1,260 days or years,” Michael looked up from the paper where he had been writing figures.

“So if the papacy began to rule the church in 538 A.D. and continued for 1,260 years, when would the end of its rule take place?”

“You’d add 538 and 1,260,” said Michael. “And the answer is . . . 1798. What happened then?”

“That’s when the deadly wound that John talked about happened. The history books tell us that the French army took the pope captive in 1798.”

“Oh,” said Michael, “he became a prisoner, just like Revelation 13 said.”

“But he didn’t stay a prisoner forever,” said Mother. “OK, now we have identified two of the animals. Let’s go on to the animal that came from the earth. Look again at Revelation 13:11. Right after that, another animal—”

“Wait a minute,” said Michael, “I want to read that verse from my Bible. Here it is: ‘Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he talked like a dragon.’ That’s the gentle-looking animal with the bad language!”

Mother smiled, “This animal comes out of the earth and grows very quickly. What nation was growing quickly in 1798 and eventually became a great world power?”

“We learned in school that the United States declared its independence in 1776, so it would be growing fast right about then.”

“That’s right,” said Mother.

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"So," said Michael, "do you think this animal with horns like a lamb represents the United States?"

"Yes," said Mother, "that's what I think."

"But one of the reasons people came to America was to have religious freedom," said Michael, "and Revelation 13 says that even though this power looked like a lamb, it spoke like a dragon and made people worship the animal that came from the sea. The United States doesn't do that!"

"No," said Mother, "right now it doesn't."

"So how does this fit in with the lamblike country making people worship the beast?"

"Well," said Mother, "the best way to worship someone is to respect his authority."

"Right," said Michael, "but the United States doesn't have an official church like Europe did in the Dark Ages. And it isn't making people worship the papacy."

"No," Mom said, "it isn't. But by keeping Sunday instead of Sabbath, aren't Protestant churches respecting the authority of the Catholic Church and the authority of the pope to make a change in God's laws?"

"Oh," said Michael, thinking. "Yes, I guess so."

"Mrs. White, who wrote *The Great Controversy*, says that in the future laws will be passed in the United States requiring people to worship on Sunday; we will not be allowed to worship on the seventh-day Sabbath. At that time, those who keep Sunday instead of Sabbath will be worshipping the beast power."

"Oh," said Michael, "that makes sense; I mean, if they know they should worship on Sabbath but obey the law to worship on Sunday, that would be respecting the authority of the Catholic Church over God's law. But I don't see how anyone could ever be forced to do that in this country."

"Not right now," agreed Mother. "People have felt that there could never be religious persecution in this country because the Prot-

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estant churches were all so different in their beliefs. But from what John says in the book of Revelation, it certainly seems that toward the end of time Christians will get together and unite on some specific issues—and then there will be persecution.”

“I see,” said Michael. “So, even though at the time the Bible was written, people in Europe and the Bible lands didn’t even know America existed, God still knew it was here and predicted that it would be involved in the end-time conflict.”

“That’s right,” said Mother. “God knows everything that’s going to happen. Aren’t you glad He told us? With God knowing the end from the beginning, and with us knowing that God is going to win, we never have to be worried about anything.”

The Seventh-day Sabbath

“Michael,” said Mother, “when do you think the Sabbath began?”

“Uh . . . a long time ago,” said Michael. “Oh, I know! Of course, it began with the creation of the world.”

“Yes, in fact, we keep the seventh day holy to honor God as our Creator,” agreed Mother. “Why don’t you read Genesis 2:1-3?”

“OK.” Michael found the text and read:

So the sky, the earth and all that filled them were finished. By the seventh day God finished the work he had been doing. So on the seventh day he rested from all his work. God blessed the seventh day and made it a holy day. He made it holy because on that day he rested. He rested from all the work he had done in creating the world.

“Now read Isaiah 56:1, 2,” said Mom.

Michael read, “This is what the Lord says: ‘Give justice to all people. Do what is right. Do this because my salvation will come to you soon. Soon everyone will know that I do what is right. The person

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who obeys the law about the Sabbath will be blessed. And the person who does no evil will be blessed.' ” He looked up. “Sabbath was really special, wasn't it?”

“It still is,” said Mother. “Adam and Eve kept the Sabbath in the Garden of Eden.”

“Noah kept the Sabbath too,” said Michael.

“So did Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,” Mother added.

“And Jesus,” said Michael.

“Yes. Mrs. White, the author of *The Great Controversy*, tells us that ever since the beginning of time, someone, somewhere, has always kept the Sabbath holy. It was never completely stamped out no matter how strong the people on Satan's side became.”

“Always?” asked Michael.

“Always,” said Mother. “But Satan tries to keep people from obeying God's laws. Listen to this: ‘Then the dragon was very angry at the woman. He went off to make war against all her other children. Her children are those who obey God's commands and have the truth that Jesus taught’ ”(Revelation 12:17).

“The commandments are very important to God, just like the Sabbath, aren't they,” said Michael.

“Yes they are,” said Mother. “At different times, people have used different reasons for not wanting to keep the Sabbath. Satan has always helped them come up with an excuse. The early Christians felt that keeping the Sabbath was observing Jewish traditions. Today, people don't want to worship on Sabbath because everyone else worships on Sunday. A change was hard for the early Adventists because people had been keeping Sunday for centuries. People who rejected the Sabbath said to the believers, ‘It can't be that you are right and all the educated Bible scholars are wrong.’ But as the early Adventists studied the Bible, they discovered two things—the sanctuary and God's law. They realized that the sanctuary and the law went together because in the sanctuary, inside the golden ark of the covenant, right under the lid to the ark, was . . .”

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“I know!” said Michael. “The Ten Commandments!”

“That’s right,” said Mom. “In the heavenly sanctuary, the lid to the ark represented God’s throne.”

“And the lid was right over His law!” said Michael. “That showed how much God thought of the law.”

“That’s right,” said Mother. “All the dates the early Adventists set for Jesus to come just distracted them from what God really wanted them to learn about the sanctuary in heaven and the importance of His law.”

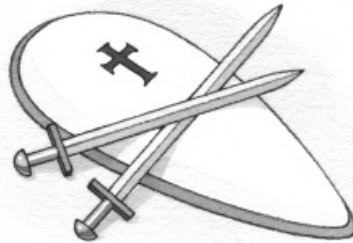
Michael said, “I guess date setting still distracts people, doesn’t it?”

“Sometimes,” agreed Mom. “Every once in a while you will hear of someone setting a time when they think Jesus is coming again, but Jesus told us nobody would know when He was coming. What God really wants is for us to understand and appreciate what Jesus is doing now.”

“And how much He wants us to take His Word seriously,” added Michael.

9

Jesus Loves Everyone



“Mom, I’m ready,” Michael called. “My homework is all done.”

“Good,” said Mother. She sat down on the bed next to Michael. “Do you remember what happened right before Jesus was crucified in Jerusalem?”

“I think so,” said Michael. “What do you want to know about?”

“Jesus’ triumphal entry.”

“Sure,” said Michael. “Jesus came riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, and all the people shouted ‘Hosanna’ and were really excited. When Jesus got to the top of the hill and looked down into Jerusalem, He started to cry.”

“Do you know why?” asked Mother.

“Because He knew Jerusalem would be destroyed someday.”

“Yes,” said Mother. “The destruction of Jerusalem and its people was awful. Jesus was able to look into the future and see what was going to happen, and it broke His heart. Jesus warned His disciples and followers. He told them exactly what would happen and when they should escape. You can find what He said in Matthew 23 and 24.”

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“OK,” said Michael. He read Matthew 23:37–24:3 from his Bible.

Jerusalem, Jerusalem! You kill the prophets and kill with stones those men God sent to you. Many times I wanted to help your people! I wanted to gather them together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. But you did not let me. Now your home will be left completely empty. I tell you, you will not see me again until that time when you will say, “God bless the One who comes in the name of the Lord.” Jesus left the Temple and was walking away. But his followers came to show him the Temple’s buildings. Jesus asked, “Do you see all these buildings? I tell you the truth. Every stone will be thrown down to the ground. Not one stone will be left on another.”

Michael looked at Mother. Then he read Jesus’ explanation of what would happen during this time (verses 9-12):

“Then men will arrest you and hand you over to be hurt and kill you. They will hate you because you believe in me. At that time, many who believe will lose their faith. They will turn against each other and hate each other. Many false prophets will come and cause many people to believe false things. There will be more and more evil in the world. So most people will stop showing their love for each other.”

“Now read Luke 21:20, 21,” Mother said.

Michael read:

“When you see armies all around Jerusalem, then you will know that it will soon be destroyed. At that time, the people in Judea should run away to the mountains. The people in Jerusalem must get out. If you are near the city, don’t go in!”

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“Good,” said Mom. “So Jesus told them that when they saw soldiers surrounding Jerusalem, they should escape. For forty years, after Jesus gave all of these warnings, everything went on day after day, just the same. But Jesus’ followers remembered His warnings and watched and waited. People became more and more wicked. The love of many did grow cold toward each other. Even in families, they betrayed and killed each other. All of Jesus’ predictions came true.

“Many other strange things happened that made people afraid. In the middle of the night, a bright light shone on the altar in the temple. The earth trembled. The great eastern gate was so large it took twenty men to close it. It was kept shut with great bars of iron fastened deep into the street that was paved with solid stone. Yet it opened by itself at midnight. People started wondering, ‘Is it time to go? Should we run away?’ The priests paid false prophets to say the people should stay and wait, that everything was fine. Everything was happening just as Jesus had said.

“The Roman soldiers surrounded Jerusalem and wouldn’t let anyone go in or out. Was this the sign Jesus had talked about? Not quite yet, because no one could get food or water or escape. They were slowly being starved into surrender.

“But just when the people in Jerusalem were about to give up, the Roman general and his armies suddenly left! The soldiers in Jerusalem ran after them, attacking those in the rear. They poured out of the city and grabbed any belongings the Romans had left behind. Now there was no one—neither the people of Jerusalem nor Romans—to stop God’s people from fleeing from the city. The Christians recognized this as their sign to escape, and they did. They fled to the town of Pella in the mountains across the Jordan River. But the people who didn’t believe Jesus’ warnings went back into the city to celebrate, carrying all the things they had stolen from the Roman camp.

“However, General Titus soon returned with a huge Roman army. Again, he surrounded the city, and thousands of people died from hunger and disease. Whenever the Romans captured someone, they

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treated their prisoners cruelly and then crucified them just outside the city wall. Mrs. White tells about this in a book called *The Great Controversy*. God showed her things that had happened long ago as well as things in the future and told her to write them down so people could understand what they all meant. Mrs. White said that there were so many crosses around Jerusalem and nearby that there was hardly enough room to move between them.

“When Titus attacked Jerusalem, Roman soldiers poured into the city, killing people as they went. Titus told his soldiers not to touch the temple. However, a soldier threw a flaming torch into the temple, and soon smoke was billowing out of it. The soldiers swarmed in and killed the people who had gathered there thinking they would be safe.”

“Wow!” said Michael. “And Jesus was seeing all of this in the future when He was on the donkey up on the hill?”

“Yes,” said Mother.

“No wonder He cried!” said Michael.

“It made Jesus very sad,” Mother said. “More than a million people were killed. Even though they had rejected Him, Jesus loved them so much. But we need to remember that when Jerusalem was destroyed, not one person died who listened to Jesus’ warnings and did what He told them to do. Jesus had told them ahead of time what was going to happen, and He took care of them during the siege of Jerusalem.”

“Wow!” said Michael. “You mean not one Christian died?”

“Not one,” said Mother. “Look in your Bible again and read what Jesus said.”

Michael took several minutes and read the whole chapter of Matthew 24. Then he said, “Is Jesus talking here just about the destruction of Jerusalem? It sounds like He’s talking about the end of the world and the Second Coming too.”

“That’s right,” said Mother. “He was describing both things. And, if Jesus could take care of all the Christians back then when Jerusalem was destroyed, don’t you think He can take care of us during

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the difficult days when He comes again? Do you think we need to be afraid of the things that will happen just before the Second Coming?"

"No," said Michael, "I don't think so. I feel better about that now."

Signs of Jesus' Coming

"God has given us many promises of Jesus' second coming. Some of them were even given before Jesus had come the first time. Remember Enoch in the Old Testament?" Mother looked at Michael.

"Yes," he said. "Enoch was the man who lived longer than anyone else ever, ever, ever has!"

Mother laughed. "I guess that's right," she said. "We usually think of Enoch's son, Methuselah, as the person who lived the longest. But since Enoch never died and is still alive, I suppose that would make him the oldest man who ever lived."

"That's what I said!" exclaimed Michael.

"Well, when Enoch was preaching, a long time before he was taken to live with God, he talked about Jesus' second coming. We find what he said in verses 14 and 15 of the book of Jude." Mother picked up her Bible and read:

Enoch, the seventh descendant from Adam, said this about these people: "Look, the Lord is coming with thousands and thousands of his holy angels. The Lord will judge every person. He is coming to judge everyone and to punish all who are against God. He will punish them for all the evil they have done against him. And he will punish the sinners who are against God. He will punish them for all the evil things they have said against him."

"Jesus Himself also told us that He was coming back," said Michael.

"That's right," said Mother. "He did. One of His most famous quotations is found in John 14:1-3."

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“Oh, I know those verses by heart,” said Michael, “let me say them:”

Jesus said, “Don’t let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God. And trust in me. There are many rooms in my Father’s house. I would not tell you this if it were not true. I am going there to prepare a place for you. After I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back. Then I will take you to be with me so that you may be where I am.”

“Paul talked about Jesus’ coming too,” said Mother. “In 1 Thessalonians 4:16 he says:”

The Lord himself will come down from heaven. There will be a loud command with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God. And those who have died and were in Christ will rise first.

“Paul probably knew about the Second Coming because Jesus had already lived here by the time Paul was writing, and he knew what Jesus had said about coming back,” Michael said.

“Paul did know what Jesus had said,” Mother agreed, “but the Holy Spirit told Paul even more details. Paul’s description is especially comforting to those who have had someone they love die. Paul didn’t want Christians to feel sad or worried about loved ones who had died, so he described exactly what would happen when Jesus comes.”

“I remember when Grandma Jo died and the minister read those verses. It made me feel better,” said Michael.

“Me too,” said Mother, hugging Michael. “Isaiah talked about Jesus’ return too.”

“Isaiah?” said Michael. “I knew he talked about Jesus’ first coming because we learned about that in our Christmas play at school.”

“Yes,” said Mom, “but Isaiah also talked about Jesus’ second coming. Why don’t you read Isaiah 51:3?”

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Michael got his Bible and found the verse in Isaiah. He read:

So the Lord will comfort Jerusalem. He will show mercy to those who live in her ruins. He will change her deserts into a garden like Eden. He will make her empty lands like the garden of the Lord. People there will be very happy. They will give thanks and sing songs.

“Now try Isaiah 62:4, 5 and Isaiah 35:1, 2,” Mother said. Again, Michael read:

You will never again be called the People that God Left. Your land will never again be called the Land that God Destroyed. You will be called the People God Loves. Your land will be called the Bride of God. This is because the Lord loves you. And your land will belong to him as a bride belongs to her husband. As a young man marries a woman, so your children will marry your land. As a man is very happy about his new wife, so your God will be happy with you. . . . The desert and dry land will become happy. The desert will be glad and will produce flowers. Like a flower, it will have many blooms. It will show its happiness, as if it is shouting with joy. It will be beautiful like the forest of Lebanon. It will be as beautiful as the hill of Carmel and the Plain of Sharon. All people will see the glory of the Lord. They will see the splendor of our God.

Michael looked up. “Wow! That’s pretty neat! I didn’t know Isaiah knew all of that!”

“Who else talked about Jesus’ coming again?” asked Mother.

“Um. . . .” Michael thought. “The guy that wrote Revelation.”

“That’s right,” said Mother. “Do you remember which of the disciples wrote Revelation?”

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“Was it John?” asked Michael.

“Yes,” said Mother. “John was one of Jesus’ best friends. John missed Jesus when He went back to heaven; he wanted to see Jesus again so badly! John told us a lot about Jesus’ second coming. Read Revelation 22:20, Michael.”

Michael read:

Jesus is the One who says that these things are true.
Now he says, “Yes, I am coming soon.”

“But Bible writers weren’t the only ones who talked about Jesus coming again. Martin Luther was excited about His return. And Luther’s friend Melanchthon talked about it too. So did the reformer in Scotland, John Knox.”

“I guess all Jesus’ friends would be excited to see Him again, wouldn’t they?” said Michael.

“Yes,” said Mother. “All of us who love Jesus will be delighted to see Him again. We’ll be even more happy to go live with Him and not have to deal with all the sad things that happen here on our earth.”

“But Jesus said a lot of scary things would happen before He came.” Michael seemed worried.

“That’s true,” said Mother. “The Bible tells us very clearly that a lot of the signs that Jesus is coming soon could be scary for some people.”

“Didn’t Jesus talk about earthquakes and stuff?” asked Michael.

“Yes, in Matthew 24 He talked about earthquakes. Since then, there have been some very large earthquakes.”

“I remember when there was an earthquake in Mexico,” said Michael, “and one in California.”

“One of the worst earthquakes that our earth has survived was in 1755,” said Mother.

“That was a long time ago.”

“Yes,” said Mother, “but people were looking forward to Jesus’

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second coming back then too, and they recognized this earthquake as a sign that the earth was getting older and that we didn't have as long to wait until Jesus came."

"Tell me about it," said Michael. "Where did it hit?"

"The worst part of the earthquake was in Lisbon."

"That's in Portugal. I learned that in geography," said Michael. "We learned about earthquakes too. The worst spot in an earthquake is called the epicenter."

"Well, the epicenter of this earthquake was in Lisbon, Portugal. But it shook many countries in Europe and Africa. It was even felt in America, Greenland, and the West Indies. In fact," said Mother, "the earth shook so hard that the quake could be felt for over four million square miles. In Cadiz, Spain, there was a tidal wave, following the earthquake, that was sixty feet tall."

"Sixty feet!" said Michael. "Are tidal waves that big?"

"Not usually," said Mother. "And even worse, during the earthquake the water ran a long way out into the ocean, leaving a lot of land that was usually covered by water. People rushed down to the harbor to see what was going on, and when the tidal wave rolled back in, they were all drowned."

"That sounds terrible," said Michael.

"Historians have estimated that about ninety thousand people died," said Mother. "Jesus predicted other signs besides earthquakes to let us know that He was coming again."

"Didn't He say that the sun would become dark and the moon would, too, and that the stars would fall out of the sky? That sounds impossible," Michael said.

"It probably sounded pretty impossible to the people who were listening to Jesus, because they had never seen anything like that happen before. But it happened."

"Really?" said Michael. "When?"

"On May 19, 1780, twenty-five years after the Lisbon earthquake, the sun and moon were darkened, just like Jesus said."

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“What happened?” asked Michael.

“It started out like a normal sunny day,” replied Mother. “Farmers were doing their work, and their animals were out grazing in the fields. But in the late morning, clouds rolled in. It looked like maybe there would be a thunderstorm. There wasn’t much rain, but the sky just kept getting darker and darker. Even the cows knew something was wrong. They all walked back to the barns, thinking it was evening and time to be milked. The sky got darker and still darker.”

“What about the people?” asked Michael. “Did they understand what was going on?”

“No,” said Mother. “Many of them were afraid and thought it was the end of the world.”

“But it wasn’t,” said Michael, “because we’re still here.”

“That’s true,” said Mother. “But people remembered that Jesus had said these things would happen before He came again, and it made them study their Bibles.”

“Then it was a good thing,” said Michael.

“Yes,” said Mother, “it was a good thing. That same evening another strange thing happened. When the moon came up, it was a dark red color. It was so dark that it didn’t give any light. It was a very dark night, and many people were afraid of that too.”

“But the Bible said that was going to happen,” said Michael. “It was in the same verse about the sun.”

“Well, the people who had studied their Bibles weren’t afraid; they were excited. They knew it meant that things were happening just as Jesus said they would.”

“What about the stars?” said Michael.

“That comes later,” said Mother. “You remember that Jesus also said there would be a lot of bad people and a lot of bad things happening in the world just before He returns. He said it would be just like it was in the days of Noah.”

“In the days of Noah, things were so bad that God had to destroy the earth,” Michael said.

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“Things will be very bad again before Jesus comes,” Mother said. “There will be a lot of people who don’t love Jesus and who don’t care about His feelings and who don’t keep His laws.”

“It sounds like lots of people will get hurt then,” said Michael. “That’s what happened in Noah’s day. The Flood came.”

“Yes,” said Mother, “whenever people disregard God’s laws, people get hurt.”

“But, how come it has to be like that? The Bible tells us exactly what’s going to happen. People know He’s going to come.”

Mother put her arms around Michael. “That’s true, but do you remember the story about Baby Jesus coming to Bethlehem? People were looking for Jesus to come then too. But only a few people were really prepared to see Him. Not many noticed when He did actually come. It will be like that before Jesus comes the second time. We know He’s coming because He told us in the Bible. And we know the things that will happen before He comes. But many people are not getting ready to meet Him.”

“That must make Him really sad.”

“Yes, I think it does,” said Mother.

“Well, I’ll be happy to see Him,” said Michael.

“And He’ll be happy to see you too,” Mother answered.

Trouble in the Future

“Mom,” Michael said, “yesterday you told me that persecution might come in the future. How could that happen?”

“That’s a good question, Michael,” Mother replied. “I’m glad you are thinking about the things we’re discussing. We are fortunate that God has told us ahead of time what will happen. That way we can be prepared instead of surprised. Satan has long planned to overthrow God’s law and to deceive and confuse as many people as possible. He wants them to believe that God’s law is unfair. Early in the history of the church, he introduced all kinds of errors into Christian teachings.

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“Truth and error came into conflict, and Christians had to choose between following God’s laws or human rules. They had to decide whether to believe what the Bible teaches or human traditions. The world has often made fun of people who believe that the Bible is true and should be followed. Satan influenced church leaders to call them fanatics who weren’t smart enough to understand the real meaning of the Bible. He also influenced church leaders to say that God’s law had been done away with.”

“But that doesn’t make sense,” said Michael. “No government, even here on earth, can operate without laws. How could people think that God’s government could exist without laws?”

“It doesn’t have to make sense,” said Mother. “If Satan can convince people that God’s laws aren’t important, then they won’t have to keep them. It’s much easier for people to believe that God’s laws are done away with than to be obedient to them.”

“But remember when we were talking about what happened in France?” said Michael. “They abolished God’s laws, and people were dishonest and stole things. People couldn’t trust each other.”

“When God’s laws were disregarded in France,” said Mother, “human life was unimportant; lots of people were killed. Marriage wasn’t sacred anymore. Children were disobedient. The whole country was filled with violence; even the courts and judges were unfair. Who would want to live in a country like that? But people don’t think about those things when they ignore God’s laws and the way God has told us to live. People think they know better than God.”

“So if Satan couldn’t keep people from having Bibles,” said Michael, “I guess he decided to persuade them that the Bible wasn’t important.”

“Satan has focused on two areas—what happens when a person dies and Sabbath keeping,” said Mother. “If people don’t understand what happens when a person dies, then they can be easily fooled by spiritualism to believe that people go on living and can communicate with them some way. And if people don’t understand

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God's law about keeping the Sabbath, church leaders can deceive them when they claim that His law isn't important anymore."

"Like the Catholic Church did back in the Dark Ages?" Michael wanted to know.

"Yes," said Mother, "but it isn't just Catholics. A lot of Christians don't understand these things. We need to pray for anyone whom Satan has confused about Sabbath keeping or who feels that God's law is not important. Many simply have never read what the Bible says about these things; they just don't understand.

"Church leaders are especially responsible. They have taught the people things that aren't true. Because of this, Satan will be able to deceive many Christians. Someday, Protestants, who once valued freedom so much, will join hands with spiritualism. They will cooperate with the Catholic Church and agree that it did have authority to change the Sabbath from the seventh day to the first day of the week.

"Miracles will unite Protestants, spiritualists, and Catholics. They will believe that the whole world is about to be converted and that a wonderful time is coming when everyone will worship together and there will be a single world government and a single world church."

"Wow," said Michael. "That sounds like some of the things I've heard on TV about a New World Order."

"Yes," said Mother. "A long time ago God told us what was going to happen. Now some of these things are actually taking place. And more people will be deceived as they see miracles and healings taking place.

"Satan will also spend lots of time figuring out how he can use the laws of science and nature to cause terrible disasters. The more people turn away from God, the less God will be able to protect them. So Satan will be able to cause more disasters and diseases. There will be terrible accidents on land and sea."

"And in the air," said Michael. "On the news we see airplanes crashing sometimes."

"And it will get worse, said Mother. "Tornadoes and hailstorms,

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floods and cyclones, tidal waves and earthquakes, and famines and air pollution. Read what Isaiah 24:4, 5 says.”

Michael read, “The earth will dry up and die. The world will grow weak and die. The great leaders in this land will become weak. The people of the earth have ruined it. They do not follow God’s teachings. They do not obey God’s laws. They break their agreement with God that was to last forever.” He looked up. “That sounds scary, like the world is going to get to be a terrible place.”

“But when things get bad, we can always trust God to be with us,” Mother assured him. “No matter what happens, He won’t ever leave us alone. He’s promised to be with us to the very end of the world, and He always keeps His promises.

“But the Bible does say that some terrible things will happen before Jesus comes,” Mother went on. “For example, disasters will get worse and worse. As a result, people will begin saying that the whole world needs to turn to God and worship Him. But they will be teaching that everyone should worship on Sunday. And as these terrible disasters continue, they are going to look for someone to blame.”

“So you’re saying that it would be easy for them to blame anyone who didn’t agree with them and their ideas about worship and one world church?”

“Exactly,” said Mother.

“It’s sort of like that Bible story you read me,” said Michael. “The one about Ahab. You remember when he and Jezebel had been so bad and God caused a drought in Israel. It hadn’t rained for three years. When Ahab ran into Elijah, he said ‘So you’re the one that’s been causing all these problems,’ when really it was Ahab and his wife, Jezebel, who had been causing the problems.”

“Yes. Just like in Ahab’s day, Satan will try to confuse people. And if he can’t confuse someone, he will try to force that person to follow him. Those who keep the Bible Sabbath will be accused of disobeying the government. Ministers and leaders will preach from the pulpit that God wants them to obey the government. They will misrepresent and

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condemn people who are faithful to God's commandments."

"It sounds terrible," said Michael.

"It will be a difficult time," said Mother, "but Jesus has promised that He will be with us always, and we will never ever be left alone through any of those hard times. He will be with us just as He was with Elijah or Daniel."

Choosing to Be Loyal

"Michael, do you know what the word prophecy means?" asked Mother.

"Sure. When God wanted to send a message to people, He used a prophet. If it was an important message, He sent it to a major prophet. If it was just a little message, God sent it to a minor prophet."

Mother smiled. "Actually," she said, "all of God's messages are important. The prophets we call 'major' prophets wrote longer books than the ones we call 'minor' prophets—that's all. But you're right that people who receive messages from God are called prophets. And the messages they receive are called prophecy."

"Most of the prophecies in the Bible have already happened. Today we are going to talk about some prophecies that haven't happened yet. Please read Revelation 18:1, 2, and 4."

Michael read:

Then I saw another angel coming down from heaven. This angel had great power. The angel's glory made the earth bright. The angel shouted in a powerful voice: "The great city of Babylon is destroyed! She has become a home for demons. She has become a city for every evil spirit, a city for every unclean and hated bird." . . . Then I heard another voice from heaven say: "Come out of that city, my people, so that you will not share in her sins. Then you will not receive the terrible things that will happen to her."

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“By the time this prophecy takes place, the religious world will be in a terrible condition,” said Mother. “There will be spiritualism and disobedience throughout the churches.”

“Spiritualism means not believing that the dead are really dead, doesn’t it?” asked Michael.

“That’s right,” said Mother.

“A lot of people believe that the dead can come back as angels and help them with things. I’ve seen TV shows about that.”

“Yes,” said Mother, “many people do believe that. But we know from what the Bible says that the dead are unconscious and can’t take part in anything that is going on here on earth.”

“And the disobedience that will be in the churches at the end of time means that they won’t be keeping all of God’s commandments, especially the one about the Sabbath, right?”

“Yes,” replied Mother. “Most churches believe that we should obey God’s commandments—except the fourth one. As this condition progresses, people who choose to follow the beast instead of Jesus will receive the mark of the beast.”

“And the beast is Satan?” interrupted Michael.

“Yes,” said Mother. “Satan and the institutions through which he works. So those who choose not to follow God but to do things their own way—or Satan’s way—will receive his mark.”

“OK, I’ve got it,” said Michael. “And the mark of the beast isn’t some kind of real mark on people’s skin, right?”

“No,” Mother replied, “it isn’t. The mark of the beast is the sign of those who are loyal to the power that is fighting against God. So those who follow the beast power are ‘marked’ as disloyal to God. But John also says in Revelation that those who remain faithful to God receive His seal. They are ‘marked’ too; marked as faithful to God. As this process continues, countries will use civil penalties to try to make everybody worship the same way and on the same day—Sunday.”

“Civil penalties? Do you mean like fines or sending people to jail or things that are decided in court?” asked Michael.

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“Yes,” said Mother. “When all of this happens, the Sabbath will become the biggest test of loyalty to God. The question will become: Will we be faithful to God and obey His commandment to keep the seventh-day Sabbath holy? Or will we obey Satan and worship on the first day of the week? Everyone will have a chance to make the right choice. No one will be punished by God until he or she understands truth and decides to reject it anyway.

“The United States started out being a defender of religious freedom, but it will become more and more intolerant of religious differences. In every generation, God has sent prophets to remind people to return to Him, and to point out people’s sins.”

“And no one likes having their sins pointed out!” Michael said.

“That’s why most of God’s prophets have been rejected and badly treated by some people,” agreed Mother.

“Well then,” said Michael, “I suppose God’s people will be treated badly at the end of time, too, if they have to point out when people are not following God.”

“Yes,” said Mother, “I’m afraid that’s how it will go. But when they are taken to court and when they are accused, they will just answer: ‘Can you show us from the Word of God what our mistake is?’ ”

“But the Bible is clear,” said Michael, “so the people accusing them won’t be able to point out mistakes.”

“But many people are not familiar with what the Bible says,” Mother continued. “Also, there will be people during this time who have known the Bible and the prophecies. Once they belonged to God’s people, but they haven’t been faithful to God in their hearts. Now they will join with the people who are accusing God’s followers.

“That’s terrible,” said Michael. “How could they leave and go to the other side?”

“Not everybody is fully committed to God,” Mother replied. “Some people are obedient on the outside but not on the inside. These people will be some of the most effective persecutors of God’s people. They will be afraid of the punishments that are being passed out

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to God's people, and they will join those who are persecuting them.

"Meanwhile, God's people will be going through a very hard time. They will be worried that perhaps their mistakes have caused some of their problems. They will keep wondering, 'Is this our fault? Have we done something to give God a bad reputation?' They will say, 'If we had understood the consequences, we never would have said anything about the sins in the world.' But, of course, they must do what they know is right and leave the results with God.

"And God will give them strength and will increase their faith so that they will be able to face everything that they need to. As long as Jesus remains in the sanctuary working as our Intercessor, the Holy Spirit will be able to restrain evil on the earth. It won't be nearly as bad as it might have been otherwise."

"So the Holy Spirit will still be helping us?"

"Yes," said Mother, "The Bible promises us extra help from the Holy Spirit during this time. It refers to this help as 'the latter rain' because in Bible times they had the early rains in the spring and then the later rains right before the harvest. You can read about that in Joel 2:23."

Michael read, "So be happy, people of Jerusalem. Be joyful in the Lord your God. He will do what is right and will give you rain. He will send the early rain and the late rain for you, as before."

"And you can also read in Acts 2:17, 21 about the way God will help us."

Michael found that text too and read, "God says: 'In the last days I will give my Spirit freely to all kinds of people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams. Your young men will see visions. . . . Then anyone who asks the Lord for help will be saved.' "

"So when the Holy Spirit's help is poured out in extra quantities on God's people, many wonderful things will happen," Mother said. "There will be great miracles among God's people. But Satan will also be able to perform miracles. This can be very confusing to people

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who haven't studied carefully what the Bible teaches. That's why it's so important to study the Bible now so we can be ready for the time we've been talking about."

"I want to be ready," Michael said. "And I'm glad God promises us special help for the hard times."

A Time of Trouble

"Mom," Michael said, "tell me about the time of trouble. We talked a little bit about it at school, and it makes me afraid."

"All right. Let's start with some Bible verses. First, read what the angel said to Daniel in chapter 12:1."

Michael found the chapter in Daniel and read, "Daniel, at that time Michael, the great prince, will stand up. (He is the one who protects your people.) There will be a time of much trouble. It will be the worst time since nations have been on earth. But your people will be saved. Everyone whose name is written in God's book will be saved."

"Another good verse is Revelation 22:11."

"Whoever is doing evil, let him continue to do evil. Whoever is unclean, let him continue to be unclean. Whoever is doing right, let him continue to do right. Whoever is holy, let him continue to be holy," Michael read.

"These two verses are talking about the close of probation," said Mother.

"What is the 'close of probation'?" asked Michael.

"Ever since Adam and Eve sinned, about six thousand years ago," said Mother, "everyone has had the opportunity to choose whether to be on God's side or on Satan's side. This has been a period of 'probation' when people were deciding whom they would follow. But just before Jesus returns, everyone who is alive at that time will make a final choice. No one will be left who hasn't made up his or her mind which side to be on. This is called the 'close of probation,' and it will close because everyone has made a final decision."

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“Jesus’ work will be all finished in the heavenly sanctuary because God’s people will now be sealed as righteous. They will ‘continue to be holy,’ just as you read in Revelation 22:11. Those who have decided to go against God’s laws have made a permanent choice too. They will ‘continue to do evil.’ Then the Holy Spirit will be removed from the earth.”

“That sounds scary,” said Michael. “Remember in the story of Moses in Egypt how just one angel came through Egypt and killed all the firstborn sons in the whole country? If one good angel could do that, just think what trouble a whole bunch of evil angels could cause in the world—especially if the Holy Spirit wasn’t there to keep things in check!”

“It will be a terrible disaster,” said Mother.

“Will God’s people be blamed for all the problems?” Michael wanted to know.

“Yes,” said Mother. “The time of trouble will be a terrible time for the world. Especially for God’s enemies, but it will be a hard time for God’s people, too, in a different way. Read Jeremiah 30:5-7.”

Michael found Jeremiah and read, “This is what the Lord said: ‘We hear people crying from fear. They are afraid. There is no peace. Ask this question, and consider it: A man cannot have a baby. So why do I see every strong man holding his stomach in pain like a woman having a baby? Why is everyone’s face turning white like a dead man’s face? This will be a terrible day! There will never be another time like this. This is a time of great trouble for the people of Jacob. But they will be saved from it.’ ” “What does Jeremiah mean by ‘trouble for the people of Jacob?’” asked Michael.

“Remember in the story of Jacob,” said Mother, “that his trouble came at night while he and his family were trying to go back home. His brother, Esau, was coming to meet him with a huge army. Jacob sent his family across a stream and then wrestled all night with doubts and worries. He felt that all his troubles were his own fault for the

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mistakes that he had made in the past.”

“Well, he did make some big ones!” said Michael.

“Yes,” said Mother, “he did. And now he was defenseless. He was wondering if his family would be killed. He confessed everything to God. He repented.”

“That means he was sorry, right?” asked Michael.

“Yes,” said Mother. “He was hanging onto the Lord as His only defense. Without God’s protection, he and his family would be killed. Jacob told God that he couldn’t let Him go unless He blessed him.”

“Oh, I see,” said Michael. “That’s how it will be for God’s people at the end of time. They will be defenseless and afraid that they will be killed unless God takes care of them. And they’ll be worried about things they have done earlier; they’ll be wondering, like Jacob, if it’s their fault that they’re having all these problems.”

“Yes,” said Mother. “Satan claimed he had the right to destroy Jacob because of his sin. As you said, Michael, Jacob had made some big mistakes. He was very aware of his weakness and the wrong things he had done.”

Michael looked thoughtful. “So, like Jacob, God’s people at this time will really need assurance of forgiveness from God? And they will be worried that things they have done will hurt God’s reputation?”

“Yes,” said Mother. “Isaiah 27:5 says, ‘If anyone comes to me for safety and wants to make peace with me, he should come and make peace with me.’ It’s important for God’s people not to lose courage and hope, even though their prayers are not immediately answered. We need to remember that if we ask Jesus to take away all our sins and forgive them, He will. He promised in 1 John 1:9—”

“I know that verse,” said Michael. “Let me say it. ‘But if we confess our sins, he will forgive our sins. We can trust God. He does what is right. He will make us clean from all the wrongs we have done.’ ”

“Good!” said Mother. “We need to confess our sins now and accept Jesus’ pardon. Then in the time of trouble, even though we will feel bad about the many poor choices we have made, we won’t be

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able to think of even one unforgiven sin.

“Other things will happen during this difficult time too. The Bible tells us that people will come along claiming to be Christ. Read Matthew 24:23-25.”

“At that time,” Michael read, “someone might say to you, ‘Look, there is the Christ!’ Or another person might say, ‘There he is!’ But don’t believe them. False Christs and false prophets will come and perform great things and miracles. They will do these things to the people God has chosen. They will fool them, if that is possible. Now I have warned you about this before it happens.”

“Mrs. White tells us that Satan will imitate Jesus’ coming,” said Mother. “And he will tell people that he changed the Sabbath to Sunday and that the people who are still hanging on to the old Jewish Sabbath are causing all the problems in the world. But one thing Satan cannot imitate. He cannot come in the clouds as Jesus has promised to do. He will appear in different spots on earth, but He cannot come so that every eye in the whole world can see him at once.”

“But Jesus can do that,” said Michael.

“Yes, Revelation 1:7 tells us about that. ‘Look, Jesus is coming with the clouds! Everyone will see him, even those who stabbed him. And all peoples of the earth will cry loudly because of him. Yes, this will happen! Amen.’ Now, Michael, you read 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17.”

Michael read, “The Lord himself will come down from heaven. There will be a loud command with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God. And those who have died and were in Christ will rise first. After that, those who are still alive at that time will be gathered up with them. We will be taken up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And we will be with the Lord forever.”

“In Matthew 24:27 Jesus Himself described His coming so that we would know exactly what will happen.” “When the Son of Man comes, he will be seen by everyone. It will be like lightning flashing in the sky that can be seen everywhere.”

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“All of that sounds real good, Mom. But the things that happen before Jesus comes in the clouds . . . well, they don’t sound very good.”

“It’s true that God’s people will go through a hard time before Jesus comes. Some of them will be in prison, and some of them will be hungry and treated badly. But God will not forget them. In fact, although it’s easy now to worry about the difficult times ahead, when they actually arrive, God’s people will be much more concerned about spiritual things than the physical hardships. They will want to be sure that they have repented of all their sins and that they are all forgiven.”

“I know God never forgets us,” said Michael. “Joseph was in prison and treated badly, but God didn’t forget him. He became the ruler of Egypt.”

Mother smiled.

“And God didn’t forget Noah during the Flood. He didn’t forget Daniel when he was thrown into the lions’ den. And He didn’t forget Elijah when he was hungry by the Brook Cherith.”

“And He won’t forget us,” said Mother. “Read Isaiah 49:14-16.”

“Jerusalem said, ‘The Lord has left me. The Lord has forgotten me.’ The Lord answers, ‘Can a woman forget the baby she nurses? Can she feel no kindness for the child she gave birth to? Even if she could forget her children, I will not forget you. See, I have written your name on my hand. Jerusalem, I always think about your walls.’ ”

“In that text, Jerusalem represents God’s people. They may think God has forgotten them, but He never will. Mrs. White tells us that although enemies may put God’s people in prison, they won’t be able to cut them off from communicating with God. She says that angels will come to God’s people as they’re in their prison cells and will cheer them up and bring them songs in the night to encourage them.”

“That makes things sound a lot better,” said Michael.

“Other things will be happening in the world too. Revelation describes plagues that will come on the earth. One plague will be the sun becoming very hot. Read what Revelation 16:8, 9 says about that.”

Michael read, “The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun.

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The sun was given power to burn the people with fire. They were burned by the great heat, and they cursed the name of God. God is the One who had control over these troubles. But the people refused to change their hearts and lives and give glory to God.”

“Now read Joel 1:10-12.”

“The fields are ruined. Even the ground is dried up. The grain is destroyed. The new wine is dried up. And the olive oil runs out. Be sad, farmers. Cry loudly, you who grow grapes. Cry for the wheat and the barley. Cry because the harvest in the field is lost. The vines have become dry. And the fig trees are dying. The pomegranate trees, the date palm trees and the apple trees have dried up. All the trees in the field have died. And the happiness of the people has died, too.”

Then Mother found Amos 8:3 and read, “ ‘On that day the palace songs will become funeral songs,’ says the Lord God. ‘There will be dead bodies thrown everywhere!’ ” “So you see what a wreck the earth will become.”

“How can anyone stay alive through all of this?” Michael wanted to know.

“Mrs. White tells us that these plagues will not be happening everywhere at the same time,” said Mother. “So although they will all happen somewhere, they won’t all be happening to the whole world.”

“Oh,” said Michael. “Maybe one place will have an earthquake and another place will have a famine, and so on.”

“Right,” said Mother. “Habakkuk 3:17, 18 tells us what our attitude should be during this time. ‘Fig trees may not grow figs. There may be no grapes on the vines. There may be no olives growing on the trees. There may be no food growing in the fields. There may be no sheep in the pens. There may be no cattle in the barns. But I will still be glad in the Lord. I will rejoice in God my Savior.’ ”

“That’s a good encouragement text,” said Michael. “We should make a big poster of that so all of God’s people can hang it up in their rooms and learn it.”

“That’s a very good idea,” Mother said. “Other special Bible texts

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that will help us during this hard time are Psalm 91 and Psalm 127. In fact, it would be good to memorize these two Psalms; they can get us through many difficult times.”

“With all of these terrible things happening,” said Michael, “the world is going to come to an end pretty fast, isn’t it?”

“Yes,” said Mother. “Mrs. White tells us that the end will come more quickly than most people expected. But God’s people will be safe. Listen to Psalm 27:5 from the New International Version. ‘For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle and set me high upon a rock.’ God’s advice is to come hide with Him in His tabernacle during these hard times.”

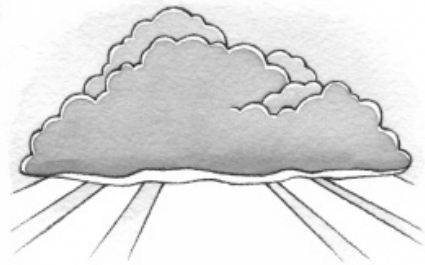
“How do we do that?” asked Michael. “Moses’ tabernacle isn’t around anymore. And neither is the temple the Jews built in Jerusalem.”

“You’re right,” said Mother. “You have studied your history! But there’s a heavenly sanctuary too. And no matter where we are or what kind of trouble we are in, we can close our eyes, and inside our minds we can be in the heavenly sanctuary with Jesus. We can hide there with Him no matter what is going on around us.”

“That’s neat,” said Michael. “What a cool way to hide!”

10

Jesus Is Coming!



“During all our hard time,” began Mother, “God has promised us a song in the night.”

“Does that mean we’ll be happy even in terribly bad times?” said Michael.

“Well,” said Mother, “at least it means that God will give us courage. Isaiah 30:29 says, ‘You will sing happy songs as on the nights you begin a festival. You will be happy as people listening to flutes as they go to the mountain of the Lord. The Lord is the Rock of Israel.’ ”

“But how will we be able to sing happy songs during such awful experiences?” asked Michael. “Even if God is with us?”

“God revealed to Mrs. White some interesting things about those last days on earth,” said Mother. “Maybe they will answer your question.

“God showed her that just before Jesus comes, thick blackness will blanket the entire earth. People will be afraid and stumble around in the darkness. Then a rainbow will slice through the heavens. It will encircle each little praying group. God’s people will hear His voice

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saying 'Look up!' They will see the rainbow, and they will see Jesus. Their time of deliverance has come! This will be a thrilling time for them and a terrifying time for everyone else.

"Everything in nature will be turned upside down. Nothing will be right. Streams will flow backwards. Dark clouds will clash together against each other. God's voice will say, 'It is done.' His voice shakes the entire earth. It is the most enormous earthquake ever experienced. The sky itself seems to snap open and closed. The mountains shake. Rocks are scattered everywhere. There is a huge roar. The sea whips up in fury. A hurricane shrieks. The earth heaves and swells, its crust is breaking up. Mountain chains start sinking. Inhabited islands disappear. Seaports sink under the water. At the same time, prison walls fall down, and God's people, who have been held captive, are set free."

"That sounds awesome!" said Michael. "No wonder people who don't understand what is happening are terrified."

"Suddenly they start understanding what is happening," said Mother, "and they realize too late that all this time they have been fighting against God. The graves open, and certain people are raised to life. All God's people, who have died since 1844, are resurrected to see Him return in glory. So are those who crucified Him and some of His greatest enemies through the ages. They are raised to life to see Jesus come just as He said He would. This second group will look the same as they did when they died.

"On the other hand, although God's people will be resurrected the same height as they were when they died, they will have all the freshness and energy of a young person, without any blemishes or deformities."

"So Grandma Jo will still be short," said Michael, "but she'll have hair again."

"Right," said Mother, smiling. "Jesus is going to take his people home with Him. They will get to eat from the tree of life and grow up into the humans they could have been if they had not lived on such a sinful, polluted earth."

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“Grandma Jo will get tall!” Michael said.

“And so will you,” said Mother.

“All right!” said Michael. “I’ve always hated being short.”

“Through the dark, black clouds a brilliant star appears,” Mother continued. “A marvelous change comes over God’s people who have been waiting for Jesus to come. A short time ago their faces were pale and anxious. Now they are glowing with wonder and love. The clouds sweep back, and everyone—righteous and wicked—sees a hand holding tables of stone. They are open so all can read God’s commandments. Those who have been disobeying God’s law and paying no attention to it are terrified.

“Then God’s voice speaks and pronounces a blessing on His Sabbath keepers. There’s a shout of victory. Next a small, black cloud appears—about half the size of a man’s hand. God’s people know this is the sign that Jesus is coming. They watch as the cloud comes nearer and nearer and grows brighter and more glorious. The sky becomes brilliant with thousands and thousands of angels. Soon everyone can see Jesus Himself in the cloud, shining brighter than the sun at noon. The wicked are beside themselves with fear, and even God’s faithful people look around them and start to shake. ‘Who can stand?’ they ask.”

“Do they mean who can stand up because of the earthquake and all the commotion going on in the earth?” Michael asked.

“I think they mean who is good enough to stand before such a powerful God,” said Mother. “Because Jesus’ voice answers them and says, ‘My grace is sufficient for you.’ Then the angels begin singing, and joy fills the hearts of God’s people.

“The wicked people try to hide from Jesus; they begin shouting for the rocks and mountains to fall on them and cover them up. Those who once laughed at Jesus when He hung on the cross are silent now. Priests and rulers remember the part they played in His crucifixion, and in terror they try to hide.

“Then Jesus calls out to all His faithful people who have been

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sleeping through the years in death. ‘Awake! Awake!’ He shouts. ‘Get up, you who are sleeping in the ground!’ And they do arise—all the righteous people who have ever lived are raised to life, from Adam right down to the present. They will never die again. Little children who have died will be carried by the angels and placed in their mother’s arms.

“Also, the good people, who are alive on the earth when Jesus comes and who never died, will be changed in less time than it takes to blink your eye. God will give us immortality; we will never die.”

“Wow!” said Michael. “I can hardly wait.”

“Me too,” agreed Mother. “Friends and loved ones who have been separated by death will be together again. The people who have died loving God and believing in Him will rise into the air first. Then we who are alive will be caught up with them and will all move toward heaven together.”

“Will we just float through the air,” asked Michael, “or do we go to heaven in a space ship or something?”

“I don’t know,” said Mother. “Mrs. White talks about us going to heaven in a chariot that sings ‘holy, holy, holy’ as it goes upward toward heaven. She calls it a ‘cloudy chariot.’ I’m not sure what that means, but she says the chariot sings as it moves along and that angels will go with it and sing too. Of course, neither John in Revelation nor Mrs. White in the 1800s would have known how to describe a space-ship. So a ‘chariot’ could mean a lot of things. But whatever it is, we know that it will be a lot more sophisticated than anything humans have ever built.”

“Sure,” said Michael, “because God is smarter than any humans ever have been.”

“Mrs. White tells us that before entering the city of God, we will all gather and stand in a huge square with Jesus in the middle.”

“I bet we’ll all be able to see Him from where we’re standing,” said Michael.

“Definitely,” said Mother. “And Jesus will hand us emblems of our victory.”

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“What are ‘emblems of victory?’” asked Michael.

“Well,” said Mother. “Here on earth sometimes we give statues or awards or cups to people who have achieved something outstanding.”

“Oh, I get it,” said Michael. “Like blue ribbons and stuff. It means that we’re winners.”

“Yes,” said Mother, “something like that. I don’t know just what these emblems of victory will be. Jesus will also give us a royal insignia because we are royalty, sons and daughters of the King of the universe. And He will give us crowns. We are also told that He will give us a new name.”

“That’s great for people who never liked their name,” said Michael.

“I think,” said Mother, “that we will each have a special name that will be a secret between Jesus and us. Because He knows us better than anyone else, He will be able to give us a name that really fits our personality and the experiences we have had with Him. Our crowns will say ‘Holiness to the Lord’ on them. Jesus will also give us a palm branch and a harp.”

Michael started laughing.

“What’s so funny?” asked Mother.

“Well, since I play the trombone, I sometimes tease people who play stringed instruments. I’ve always said wind instruments were the coolest. But it sounds like when I go to heaven, I’m going to be playing a stringed instrument after all.”

Mother laughed too. “Yes,” she said, “but it will be the neatest stringed instrument you have ever seen!”

“Then Jesus will open the gate and welcome us to the city. He will be welcoming Adam too. Mrs. White tells us that He’s going to take Adam back to his Garden of Eden. Jesus has saved the very garden that He created for Adam in the first place. Adam will walk around the garden and recognize the very same trees that he took care of way back in the beginning before everything was ruined by sin. Jesus will lead Adam over to the tree of life and feed him from it. Adam had to leave Eden because God didn’t want him to eat from the tree of life

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and make sin last forever. But now that sin has gone, he can eat from it and live forever with Jesus.”

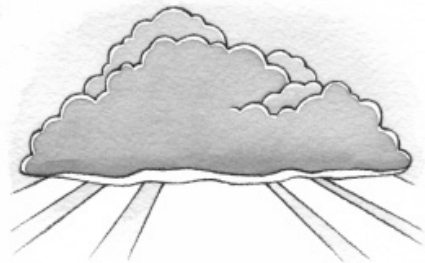
“Wow!” said Michael. “It’s like everything is put back the way it was before sin happened.”

“That’s right,” said Mom. “Adam will be so excited. He will throw his crown at Jesus’ feet and hug Him. Then we’ll all sing praises to Jesus. And we humans from earth will sing the song of deliverance. The Bible calls it the song of Moses and the Lamb. The angels will have to stop singing then because no one else can really understand what we know. No one else has been forgiven and loved as much as we have been.”

“I can almost see the city,” said Michael, “and hear the music. Just think, we’ll get to see Jesus!”

11

The War Is Over!



“This is the last chapter of the story, isn’t it?” exclaimed Michael.

Mother nodded. “At the end of the thousand years, we will have had the opportunity to ask all the questions we want. We’ll understand why things have happened as they have. But God still needs to finish things up. Satan is still ‘in jail’ on the destroyed earth, and the people who chose not to follow God’s way are lying dead on the earth. The rest of us have become grown-up saints by this time.”

“Wow,” said Michael, “imagine how we’ll grow and become healthy in a perfect place like that. And we’ll eat from the tree of life!”

“Yes,” said Mother. “Now it is time for Jesus’ third advent.”

“A third advent?” asked Michael.

“Yes,” said Mother. “His first advent was when He came as a baby to Bethlehem. The second advent will be when He comes to take us to heaven with Him. And the third advent will be when He comes back to earth with us and the New Jerusalem for the final judgment that will permanently end the controversy. Zechariah 14:4, 9 describe what happens when Jesus comes back to earth the third time.”

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"I'll read it," said Michael. "On that day he will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem. The Mount of Olives will split in two. A deep valley will run east and west. Half the mountain will move north. And half will move south. . . .

"Then the Lord will be king over the whole world. At that time there will be only one Lord. And his name will be the only name."

"You see," said Mother, "this time Jesus won't just come in the clouds. He will actually touch down on the Mount of Olives in Israel and split it wide open to form a plain. All the people who chose not to follow Him and who were destroyed when He came the second time will now come back to life. They will have the same diseases and look the same as they did when they died."

"If they had a second chance now," asked Michael, "do you think they would choose any differently?"

"No," said Mother. "God gave everyone enough time to make up their minds for sure. They would make the same choices even if they were given another chance."

"Imagine how they'll look," interrupted Michael. "There'll be giants from before Noah's flood, and all of the really bad people like Hitler and Genghis Khan will be there too."

"And they will be just as rebellious when they come back to life as they were before," said Mother. "Satan will lead them to plan an attack. Skillful workers will make weapons. Military leaders will organize everyone into companies and divisions. It will be the largest army in earth's history."

"What will they plan to attack?" Michael wanted to know.

"They will plan to attack the New Jerusalem with Jesus in it," said Mother. "The battle isn't over yet. They will still be fighting God."

"You'd think they would realize by now that they can't win," Michael said.

"Apparently not," said Mother. "Jesus will command that the gates to the New Jerusalem be closed. Satan's forces will surround the city for the final battle. 'We can take it!' they shout. And they will begin their attack with military precision."

THE WAR IS OVER!

“Will we be scared?” asked Michael.

“Oh no,” said Mother. “We have already learned that God can take care of us no matter what. Inside the city we will be singing. All of us know that we are not there because of anything we did, or our own goodness. We will be there by God’s goodness and the mercy He showed in sending His Son to die in place of us.

“Then high above the walls where everyone inside and outside can see, Jesus will be crowned the King of kings with supreme majesty and power. Then He will pronounce the sentence against those who rebelled against His government and oppressed His people. The Bible says the books of heaven will be opened. The people surrounding the city will be conscious of every sin they ever committed. Above God’s throne will appear something like a giant video screen. Everyone will see his own life. The heavenly movie archives will show the whole story from Adam’s fall to Jesus’ perfect life and the people who tortured Him to death. The movie will continue right down to the last day of earth’s history. The wicked people will be horrified, but they won’t be able to turn away. They will have to continue watching themselves and all the terrible things they have done.”

“Awful!” said Michael. “King Herod will have to watch all those babies being killed.”

“And another King Herod will have to see himself cause John the Baptist’s death,” said Mother.

“And Pilate will have to watch himself reject Jesus all over again. And the soldiers who killed Him and the Jews who were shouting and teasing Him,” added Michael.

“But remember,” said Mother, “some of them repented afterwards and became Jesus’ followers. Emperor Nero will be there. He will see all of those he tortured and killed who are now singing inside the Holy City. As all of these memories play on the heavenly video screens, sinners will realize that Satan has been a failure. The whole conflict from the beginning has been about Satan’s need to justify himself. He tried to prove that God’s government was responsible

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for his rebellion and that God was to blame for all of the sadness and suffering in the world. But as everyone watches the records, they will realize how wrong he was. They will see what they have missed by being slaves to Satan instead of choosing to be the children of God.

“Jesus will look around at His people inside the city, all of them renewed in His image. In a voice loud enough for everyone inside and outside to hear, Jesus will say, ‘Look at the ones I bought with My own blood. I died so that they could live with me forever.’ Then all of us will sing a song of praise to Jesus.”

“What happens next?” asked Michael.

“Every person outside the walls, from the simplest to the greatest, will bow down and acknowledge that God is just and that Satan is wrong. Even Satan will admit that.

“But then,” continued Mother, “Satan will make one last effort to capture the city. He will urge all the wicked people to fight. But now they are all angry with him. Let’s read what the Bible tells us in Ezekiel 28:6-8 and 16-19.”

Michael read, “So this is what the Lord God says: You think you are wise like a god. But I will bring foreign people against you. They will be the cruelest nation. They will pull out their swords and destroy all that your wisdom has built. And they will dishonor your greatness. They will kill you. You will die a terrible death like those who are killed at sea. . . .

“Because you traded with countries far away, you learned to be cruel, and you sinned. So I threw you down in disgrace from the mountain of God. And the living creature who guarded you forced you out from among the gems of fire. You became too proud because of your beauty. You ruined your wisdom because of your greatness. I threw you down to the ground. Your example taught a lesson to other kings. You dishonored your places of worship through your many sins and dishonest trade. So I set your city on fire. And it burned up. I turned you into ashes on the ground for all those watching to see. All the nations who knew you are shocked about you. Your punishment was

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so terrible. And you are gone forever.” “Is this talking about Satan?” asked Michael.

“Yes,” said Mother, “And remember that all the confessed and forgiven sins of God’s people have been transferred onto Satan, just as was pictured by the scapegoat in the wilderness. Satan will be punished not only for his sins but for the sins of God’s forgiven people whom he deceived.

“Fire will come down from heaven and burn up everything that is left of sin. This sounds terrible, but really Jesus is doing the most merciful thing He can. These people would be miserable in God’s new world. They would hate living where everyone is pure and happy. And they would just cause more trouble.

Because of his terrible sins and all the suffering he caused on the earth, Satan will be the last one to die. But sin and sinners will finally be gone. The only reminder we will have of sin and the terrible things that have happened will be the scars on Jesus’ hands and feet and side. Those will be there forever.”

“Is that the end?” asked Michael.

“Not yet,” said Mother. “Then Jesus will recreate our earth.”

“Like He did in Genesis?” asked Michael.

“Maybe,” said Mother. “Except this time we will be able to watch Him. Several Bible verses tell us what life will be like in this new world. Revelation 21:4 says, ‘He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, sadness, crying, or pain. All the old ways are gone.’ Now you read Isaiah 62:3.”

Michael read, “You will be like a beautiful crown in the Lord’s hand. You will be like a king’s crown in your God’s hand.”

Then Mother read Isaiah 65:19. “I will rejoice over Jerusalem. I will be delighted with my people. There will never again be crying and sadness in that city.” “Now, Michael, you read what Revelation 21:11, 24 says about God’s city, the new Jerusalem.”

“It was shining with the glory of God. It was shining bright like a very expensive jewel, like a jasper. It was clear as crystal. . . . By

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its light the people of the world will walk. The kings of the earth will bring their glory into it.”

“Mrs. White says that we will be able to fly and visit other worlds,” said Mother.

“Really fly?” asked Michael. “That will be so cool! What else will we do?”

“We’ll be able to build houses. Imagine being able to design and build just the kind of place you’d like to live in—and being able to live there forever! We’ll plant gardens and eat the things we grow. We’ll never get tired or sick or discouraged or sad. We’ll have all the energy to do anything we want to—and all the time we need to carry out any project we start. We’ll get to travel, even to other worlds, and we can tell them about how Jesus saved us and how wonderful He is. Salvation will be something we will have experienced that no one else in the universe will be able to understand as we do. We’ll be able to study nature and learn all kinds of new things.

“Actually,” said Mother, “we can’t begin to imagine how amazing life on the new earth is going to be. It will be far better than our best thoughts about it. In God’s new world, everything will grow and get better—knowledge, love, reverence, and happiness. And the more we get to know God, the more we will love Him. We will be happier and happier and happier.

“Now the controversy will finally be over. The battle will be finished. The war will be won. Everything will finally be settled, and it will be proved once and for all that God is love.”

“That’s the best story in the world. I’m so glad it is true,” said Michael. “It answers all my questions.”

“I’m sure you will think of more questions,” said Mother, “and many of them I won’t be able to answer.”

“But Jesus will, someday,” said Michael. “And I am going to be there to ask them.”

