

# lesson eight

NOVEMBER 17–23

## Unity in **Faith**

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*“ Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved’ ” (Acts 4:12, NKJV).*



The amount of time that Jesus spent in prayer and communication with God shows how important it is for us to do the same.

## Introduction

# *Playing by the Rules*

Acts 4:12

Soccer is a popular game that attracts the attention of both young and old across the world, even in the dingiest corners of remote villages. However, soccer is a game of rules. For players in national, regional, or world leagues, the game comes with a set of rules that each player must adhere to in order to participate successfully.

### **We are united in faith as one people with a common goal.**

If you are a player and you do not know the basic rules of the game, you may not know how to play the game successfully either. For that reason, many books and journals have been published about the secrets of playing great soccer, goal-keeping skills, and more. Honestly, the game of soccer would be so unfair without rules. Every year, the Fédération Internationale de Football (FIFA) in association with the International Football Association Board (IFAB), publishes “Laws of the Game.”

The laws guide players on various issues, including the field of play, the soccer ball, the number of players, the equipment required, and many others. Currently, every player on the field must observe 17 laws for playing a successful soccer game. The laws of soccer define what the fans believe in, just as much as we as church members have doctrinal beliefs to define what we believe in.

The laws unite players for a specific course. Players might come from different backgrounds, but once on the field, they follow the rules together for a common goal. On matters of salvation, God provides the rules of the game. The Bible provides a detailed account of what God expects of us. More important, Christ is our referee, and He ensures that we follow the rules of the game.

As Christians, we have a common goal to follow the rules of salvation in the template that Christ provides in the Bible. We might come from different races, countries, and regions of the world, but we are united in faith as one people with a common goal: to reap the rewards of God’s everlasting kingdom through observance of Bible teachings. This is possible when we remain loyal to Christ and follow the rules of the game.

In a game of soccer, the referee makes the final decision. Any player who questions the referee’s decision “can be disciplined further simply for dissent.”<sup>1</sup> In the game of salvation, Christ has the last word. Fortunately, He is able to accept us as His own regardless of our backgrounds. This week, we study biblical pillars that shape our beliefs and define our course as Adventists around the world.

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1. “What Are the Rules? The 17 Laws of Soccer Explained,” Syosset Soccer Club, 2016, <http://www.syossetsoccer.org/home/683808.html>.

Acts 10:43

## Evidence *Remission of Sins for Everyone*

For nearly two thousand years, the knowledge of the true God circulated within the Jewish nation. However, God originally intended to bring all humanity to Him regardless of race or background. God had a heart for both the Jews and the Gentiles. His plan, from the beginning of time, was to incorporate the Gentiles into the Jewish church. Yet there was a force of prejudice among the early Christians who thought that the gospel belonged only to the Jewish nation.

### **God had a heart for both the Jews and the Gentiles.**

On their part, the prophets echoed the intention of God (see Rom. 10:18–20; 9:25–27), and Christ confirmed God’s intention (see Matt. 8:11, 12; John 10:16). Our goal as Christians in this age is to preach the message of salvation to “all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19, NABRE).

With this message in mind, two issues come out clearly:

*Christ is the author of salvation.* Regardless of our worship style, regardless of our participation in church, regardless of how attentive we are to the spiritual welfare of our families, these things do not grant us an express ticket to salvation. We obtain salvation only through the name and merits of Christ, whom God sent as the final sacrifice for our sins. Christ, through His death, reconciled us to God. Our acceptance with God comes through Christ only.

When the apostle Peter visited the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:25–29), he took the gospel to a Gentile, a nonmember of the Jewish household. By this step, Peter fulfilled the instruction to take the gospel to every nation (Matt. 28:19). He fulfilled the commission to share that remission of sins and salvation are possible for every person who believes in Christ (John 3:16).

*Faith is the means of attaining salvation.* We come to Christ as sinners so that we can obtain the remission of our sins. We obtain salvation freely through the blood and righteousness of Christ. We cannot buy salvation—we receive the blessing from Christ.

This does not mean that we should disobey God or Christ willfully. It simply drives home the point that God does not accept us because of our obedience or because of some good works that we do. Neither does Christ show favor to us based on our obedience. Instead, our salvation springs from the death of Christ and the forgiveness of our sins. The means to obtain salvation is to surrender to Christ as a sinner, and obedience is just a fruit of that allegiance. Through Christ, our salvation is guaranteed as long as we believe, regardless of our backgrounds.

# Logos *Pillars of Our Unity*

Exod. 20:8–12;  
Acts 10:43;  
1 Cor. 15:51–54;  
1 Thess. 4:13–18;  
Heb. 8:6

## **Salvation in Jesus (Acts 10:43)**

The plan of salvation has existed with God from the beginning of time. God had a plan to deliver His people from sin and from spiritual oblivion. This could happen only through Christ. Through faith in Christ, we are saved from eternal death, which is the ultimate consequence of sin. Christ provided the perfect sacrifice for the atonement of our sins.

In the beginning, God created a perfect universe, full of harmony and love. However, the rebellion in the Garden of Eden brought separation from God. But God, in His infinite love and mercy, brought a way to reconcile humanity to Himself. Nothing could pay for the punishment of sin except the perfect sacrifice of Christ.

We believe that the plan of salvation stems from God's love for us. We have the assurance of salvation through faith in Christ. As Adventist Christians, we affirm the belief that "Christ was set forth in the purposes of God, in the types, figures, and sacrifices of the law, and in the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament, as he that should obtain the remission of sins by his blood, without which there is no remission."<sup>1</sup>

## **Second Coming of Christ (1 Thess. 4:13–18)**

The second coming of Christ gives hope to a hopeless world. Without it, there would be no purpose in being a Christian. The Bible, in several instances, gives us the assurance that Christ can come anytime. Therefore, our level of preparedness is quite important. The apostle Paul, led by the Holy Spirit, sheds light on the subject. The Thessalonians knew that Christ would come back someday. However, they were worried about their loved ones who would sleep before the return of the Savior.

Paul sought to answer their questions, focusing on the status of believers who would pass away before Christ returns. Paul affirms that there is a difference in the way believers and nonbelievers grieve (1 Thess. 4:13). By faith in Christ, we have a blessed hope that upon His grand return, we shall be able to rejoice with Him, together with our loved ones who slept earlier. Resurrection is a sure promise (1 Cor. 15:51–54).

Our role is to encourage fellow believers with the message of hope when death strikes. We should reassure them that when our hearts stop beating, we retreat into a momentary rest as we wait for the final trumpet. As much as we feel the pain of death, the hope of Christ's second coming expels any doubt from our minds.

## **Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary (Heb. 8:6)**

The book of Hebrews provides a detailed account of what Christ has been

doing since He ascended to heaven. Christ continues His intercessory ministry in the heavenly sanctuary (Heb. 7:20–28). He is our High Priest in heaven. In traditional Judaism, the high priest performed the role in cleansing sinners.

However, human high priests were limited in their operations by several challenges. First, they were human by nature and, therefore, prone to sin. Besides, their activities were valid only as long as they lived. Death and old age could scuttle their operations. On the contrary, Christ lives forever and, therefore, has a lasting priesthood. As Adventists, we believe in a heavenly sanctuary in which Christ reviews our lives to make it possible for each believer to benefit from His atoning sacrifice.

In the earthly sanctuary, the high priest entered the Most Holy Place with the blood of animals to perform the atoning sacrifice. In the heavenly sanctuary, Christ has entered the Most Holy Place with His own blood to stand in the gap between God and humanity. The intercessory ministry confirms the covenant of grace and love, in which Christ is the chief mediator because only His sacrifice can satisfy God's justice.

### ***Remembering the Sabbath (Exod. 20:8–11)***

The Sabbath is the fourth commandment of God. Unlike other commandments before or after it, the instruction of the fourth commandment starts with the word *remember*.

We need no extra knowledge to know that God initiated the Sabbath at the beginning of time (Gen. 2:2, 3). God wants us, as His children, to devote the Sabbath day to His service. Yet He expects us to observe the day unconditionally. Jewish leaders during Christ's time used the Sabbath to suit their own definitions of working on the Sabbath (Mark 2:23, 24).

Christ fulfilled the law of the Sabbath when He allowed acts of benevolence on the Sabbath. This does not mean that we engage in acts of luxury, self-indulgence, or vanity on the Sabbath. "Trading, paying wages, settling accounts, writing letters of business, worldly studies, trifling visits, journeys, or light conversation, are not keeping this day holy to the Lord. . . . The Sabbath of the Lord should be a day of rest from worldly labor, and a rest in the service of God."<sup>2</sup>

### **REACT**

1. Knowing that Christ can return any time, how can we best prepare ourselves, even as we continue living in this world?

2. As a young adult Adventist, how does Christ's intercessory work affirm your faith?

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1. "Verse-by-Verse Bible Commentary: Acts 10:43," *John Gill's Exposition of the Whole Bible*, StudyLight.org, accessed November 7, 2017, <https://www.studylight.org/commentary/acts/10-43.html>.

2. "Ten Commandments Exodus Chapter 20:1-17," accessed November 7, 2017, [http://www.4the10.net/commandments/exodus\\_20\\_moses\\_ten\\_commandments.htm](http://www.4the10.net/commandments/exodus_20_moses_ten_commandments.htm).

# Testimony

## *The Plan of Redemption*

| 1 John 2:2

The Spirit of prophecy, through Ellen White, offers important insights regarding the roadmap for humanity's salvation. *Patriarchs and Prophets* states, "The fall of man filled all heaven with sorrow. The world that God had made was blighted with the curse of sin and inhabited by beings doomed to misery and death. There appeared no escape for those who had transgressed the law. Angels ceased their songs of praise. Throughout the heavenly courts there was mourning for the ruin that sin had wrought.

### **"Angels ceased their songs of praise."**

"The Son of God, heaven's glorious Commander, was touched with pity for the fallen race. His heart was moved with infinite compassion as the woes of the lost world rose up before Him. But divine love had conceived a plan whereby man might be redeemed. The broken law of God demanded the life of the sinner. In all the universe there was but one who could, in behalf of man, satisfy its claims. Since the divine law is as sacred as God Himself, only one equal with God could make atonement for its transgression.

"None but Christ could redeem fallen man from the curse of the law and bring him again into harmony with Heaven. Christ would take upon Himself the guilt and shame of sin—sin so offensive to a holy God that it must separate the Father and His Son. Christ would reach to the depths of misery to rescue the ruined race.

"Before the Father He pleaded in the sinner's behalf, while the host of heaven awaited the result with an intensity of interest that words cannot express. Long continued was that mysterious communing—"the counsel of peace" (Zechariah 6:13) for the fallen sons of men. The plan of salvation had been laid before the creation of the earth; for Christ is 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world' (Revelation 13:8); yet it was a struggle, even with the King of the universe, to yield up His Son to die for the guilty race. But 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' John 3:16."<sup>1</sup>

### **REACT**

1. What is the price of your salvation?
2. What advice can you give to a friend who has not accepted Christ as his or her personal Savior?

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 63.

Matt. 24:26, 27

## How-to *A Diligent Wait*

The subject of the second coming of Christ has been active since Christ ascended to heaven. Nearly two thousand years have elapsed, and Christ hasn't come back yet. Inspired by the subject, F. E. Belden wrote the song "We Know Not the Hour" (*Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, no. 604), which highlights what we already know about the coming of Christ. All the same, based on Bible records, Christians are convinced that the Second Coming draws nearer with each passing day.

### **The subject of the second coming of Christ has been active since Christ ascended to heaven.**

However, with the long wait, many people have dropped out along the way. In addition, Satan is aware of Christ's advent. The prince of darkness tries by every means to make the subject as cloudy as possible. False prophets have appeared, some with their own version of Christ's second coming. As Christians in this era, we are called to focus on what the Bible says about this event. The day might be as near as *now* or as far as several years ahead. The following biblical facts confirm our belief in Christ's return:

- One in every 30 verses of the Bible says something about Christ's return.
- The New Testament refers to the second coming of Christ more than three hundred times.
- Twenty-three books of the New Testament mention something about Christ's second coming.
- Christ Himself and prophets such as Job, Moses, Isaiah, Daniel, and Jeremiah spoke about the second coming of Christ.

With these confirmations and more, we can be confident that the day of Christ's second coming is worth the wait. Therefore, how can we keep our focus on the subject without yielding to pressure from the enemy?

*Arm yourself with the facts.* The Second Advent will be precise and public. Anything short of these standards is an enemy trap.

*Know that Satan is afraid.* When Christ comes, He will pronounce the final judgment on the fate of Satan and the world. Obviously, the enemy and his agents are headed for total destruction, while the righteous elect join Christ in God's kingdom.

*Keep away from scoffers.* Many people doubt that Christ will come back. Such people lurk around to distract believers. The Bible advises us to keep away from such people (2 Pet. 3:3–17; Matt. 24:26).

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## Opinion

*The Blessings of the Sabbath*

Ezek. 20:12

The Bible explains that God gave His people the Sabbath as a covenant, “a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them” (Ezek. 20:12). For the people of Israel, the Sabbath was a day of both physical and spiritual rest. It was a day reserved for people to break out of their daily labor routine to have some physical rest. In addition, the Sabbath was a day to commune with God, to take their spiritual burdens to God in prayer and thanksgiving. This, in turn, led to spiritual rest.

No doubt, the Sabbath brings spiritual blessings today. First, it is a symbol of unity for us as a church. The Sabbath institution unites us across the world, regardless of our geographical barriers. It is a reminder that we serve a sovereign God who created the universe. Exodus 31:16, 17 confirms that the Sabbath is a lasting agreement between God and His people.

### **The Sabbath institution unites us across the world.**

The principles of keeping the Sabbath are clear, as outlined in Isaiah 58:13, 14:

*We are not to follow our own ways on the Sabbath.* Academic affairs, sports, employment, business, or other engagements for the sake of livelihood should be suspended to give way to God’s business.

*We are not to engage in our own pleasure on the Sabbath.* Fifty years ago, Bill McDowell wrote, “Your desire, delight, that which you take extra pleasure in doing—hunting, fishing, golfing, swimming, cards, movies, boating. . . . Whatever your pleasure, or leisure-time activity is, you should not engage in it on the Sabbath.”<sup>1</sup>

*We are not to speak our own words on the Sabbath.* Sabbath keeping is all-inclusive, embracing mental, physical, and spiritual aspects of our lives. We are to use these faculties to praise God on the Sabbath.

### **REACT**

1. What can you do to help improve your Sabbath observance?
2. What is your definition of a restorative Sabbath?
3. Where do you draw the line between what you should and should not do on the Sabbath?

1. Bill McDowell, “Keep God’s Sabbath HOLY!” *Good News* magazine, March 1968, p. 17, <http://www.hwalibrary.com/cgi-bin/get/hwa.cgi?action=getmagazine&Infold=1387809515&GetMag=GN&byYear=1968&page=&return=magazines>.

1 John 4:9, 10

## Exploration *United in Faith*

### CONCLUDE

*Merriam-Webster* English dictionary defines *belief* as “a state or habit of mind in which trust or confidence is placed in some person or thing.” As Adventists, we have deep-seated beliefs that define us as a church. The beliefs correspond to key Bible teachings. They shape our lives and inform our understanding of the Bible. They direct our actions as Adventists. As we wait for Christ’s return to take us home, we hang on to the beliefs and to God’s Word as our guides for showing love to God and our fellow believers.

### CONSIDER

- Developing a meme of Acts 4:12, “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (NKJV). Share this idea on your social media platforms.
- Journaling on what it really takes to keep the Sabbath holy.
- Performing a play on the second coming of Christ. What role would you like to play and why?
- Writing a short poem in your native language, entitled “My Daily Dose of Salvation.” The objective is to portray your love for Christ the Savior. Recite the poem in the evening before you go to bed and in the morning when you wake up.
- Drawing a structure of the heavenly sanctuary. Use color to denote the Most Holy Place and reflect what Christ does there for you as a person.
- Drawing three different images of the same person: one image to represent the person during life before death, another image to represent the person in death, and the third image to represent the person on the resurrection day. What are the differences and similarities between the images?
- Singing “Holy Sabbath Day of Rest” (*Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, no. 381, by L. E. C. Joers). Mark the words and reflect on the special rest you derive from the Sabbath as an individual.

### CONNECT

J. L. Shuler, *God’s Everlasting Sign* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing, 1972).

Humberto M. Rasi and Nancy J. Vyhmeister, *Always Prepared* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press®, 2012).

Roger J. Morneau, *A Trip Into the Supernatural* (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Research Center, 1991), DVD.