

PURPOSE

Reflections is the official newsletter of the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference. It seeks to share information concerning doctrinal and theological developments among Adventists and to foster doctrinal and theological unity in the world church. Its intended audience is church administrators, church leaders, pastors, and teachers.

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NEWS AND COMMENTS

BRI'S NEW WEBSITE

The BRI website has been updated and redesigned. Although this was done before the General Conference Session in St. Louis, we still had some problems. By now the website should be working well. We have not only chosen a new look but have also added new features. We are in the process of adding more documents which may be beneficial for you. Please, check out our website regularly. The address is either <http://biblicalresearch.gc.adventist.org> or <http://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org>.

Ekkehardt Mueller, BRI

BRI BROCHURES AND CD-ROM

BRI has printed five brochures in the new "Biblical Research Institute Releases" Series: (1) *Interpreting the Beast of Revelation 17: A Suggestion* by Ekkehardt Mueller (14 pp.); (2) *In Christ: Union with Him as Savior and Lord in Paul* by Ivan T. Blazen (15 pp.); (3) *Israelite Festivals and the Christian Church* by Ángel Manuel Rodríguez (18 pp.), (4) *The Nature of Christ: The Soteriological Question* by Kwabena

Donkor (18 pp.); and (5) *The Time Prophecies in Daniel 12* by Gerhard Pfandl (9 pp.). These five brochures are sold for US\$2.00. We have also prepared a CD-ROM with crucial articles on biblical and theological topics. The CD contains more than 150 articles. A number of them are found on our website, but we have added many more not placed there. The CD is sold for US\$3.00. You may want to take advantage of these tremendous resource materials for an extraordinary low price. Please, send us your order and we will ship these materials to you (prices include shipping).

Ekkehardt Mueller, BRI

NEW BOOK ON BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

BRI has released a new publication: *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*. The editor is the well-known Adventist scholar, George W. Reid, former director of BRI; the associate editor is Gerhard Pfandl, Associate Director of BRI. The book was written by seventeen international Adventist scholars addressing important questions related to the nature and authority of the Bible, its revelation and inspiration, and the proper method for its interpretation. The Biblical Research Committee worked on the project for three years. This volume will be useful to religion teachers, pastors, and interested church members. It can be used as a reading text for courses on biblical interpretation. The book contains discussions of principles of biblical interpretation that reflect the Adventist high view of Scripture. It can be

used by students of the Bible throughout the world church. In order to reach as many people as possible the editors made great efforts to eliminate theological terminology and technical vocabulary. Although that was not always possible, they basically achieved their goal. We offer this volume to the world church praying that it will be a blessing to its readers and that it will contribute to a renewed interest in the study of the Word of God. Until the end of February the book will be sold for the introductory price of US\$7.00. The regular price will be US\$12.95. You may order through our website, by sending us an e-mail, or calling us at our office.

Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, BRI

NEW FUNDAMENTAL BELIEF

During the General Conference Session in Saint Louis, Missouri, a new fundamental belief was added to the Adventist Statement of Fundamental Beliefs. The process of study and consultation covered a period of over two years. A decision of this nature required the participation of the world church in the process of formulating the new statement. The discussions during the Session indicated that thinking globally on doctrinal and theological issues, and finding the proper language to express that thinking, is indeed a challenge for a world church. But the church did very well and was able to express itself with freedom and in Christian unity. It demonstrated that when the church is firmly grounded in the Scriptures and guided by the presence of the Holy Spirit it can move as one body, united to Christ in the message and mission He entrusted to it.

The new statement is valuable to the church in at least four ways. First, it reaffirms the Adventist understanding of the cross of Christ and His sacrificial death as central and indispensable in the resolution of the cosmic conflict. In fact, it is the only means of freedom from the forces of evil. Second, it raises the topic of freedom from spiritual hostile powers to a new level of importance within the church. This is necessary due to the remarkable increase of the presence and influence of spiritualism around the world. Third, it also reaffirms the need for a deep personal communion and fellowship with the resurrected Lord. Therefore, it declares irrelevant and totally unnecessary any type of subjection to evil spiritual beings. Fourth, the addition of a new fundamental belief to the body of doctrines of the church reminds us that the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs is indeed a living document. It reflects the dynamic nature of Adventist thinking, message, and mission.

Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, BRI

THE 1260 DAYS IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Some Adventists are reconsidering the church's system of prophetic interpretation, promoting a mixture of historicism and futurism. Occasionally they argue that the prophetic periods of

Revelation are referring to different events and that in some cases they should be interpreted as future literal days. Jon Paulien examined the prophetic periods in Revelation in order to determine exegetically whether they are all referring to the same historical period or not. Here we share with you the results of his careful analysis of the biblical evidence.

There are five texts in the book of Revelation that include a time period covering 1260 days in one form or another. Two of these texts specifically utilize the phrase "1260 days" (Rev 11:3 and 12:6), two others the phrase "42 months" (Rev 11:2 and 13:5), and the fifth the enigmatic "time, times, and half a time" of Daniel 7:25 (Rev 12:14, cf. Dan 12:7).

Chapters 12 and 13 of Revelation contain repeated references to Daniel 7. There are also strong allusions to Daniel 12 in Revelation 10.¹ So the use of this time period in Revelation is based on Daniel 7:25 (cf. Dan 12:7) more than it is on Elijah's drought or the length of Jesus' ministry. It is exegetically appropriate, therefore, to study all seven 1260-day texts in Daniel and Revelation together, as Adventists have done in the past.

I. Revelation 11

The first two occurrences of the 1260 days are found immediately following Revelation 10:8-11. In Revelation 11 John continues to be engaged (Rev 11:1-2) and addressed (11:3ff.) by a voice in heaven (Rev 10:8). The standpoint from which John experiences chapter 11 may be his own. Since the 42 months and 1260 days are expressed in the future tense, these periods of time were future from the standpoint of John.

The two witnesses themselves are introduced in Revelation 11:3-6. The introduction includes a description of their appearance and of their characteristics and actions in the present (11:4-6) and in the future tenses (11:3). Whatever interpretation we place on the two witnesses, they had some role already in John's first century context. At some later point in history, they would "prophesy" for 1260 days, clothed in sackcloth. Then they would experience death, resurrection, and ascension (11:7-13). The response to this ascension by the "remnant" in the great city (fear and giving glory to God—Rev 11:13) is the response called for in the first angel's message of Revelation 14:7. So this response would seem to be an end-time event, just before the sounding of the seventh trumpet.

II. Character Sequences in Revelation 12

Adventists have traditionally understood Revelation 12 to offer an apocalyptic prophecy of three sequential stages of Christian history. The first stage is the Christ-event back in the first century (Rev 12:1-5). The third is the final battle between the dragon and the Remnant (12:17). The second is the vast middle period of 1260 years (Rev 12:6, 14) of papal supremacy in the Middle Ages and beyond (Rev 12:6, 13-16). Support for this view can be

found in the way two of the characters in the narrative go through successive experiences over time.

First of all, a woman appears in heaven, clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head (12:1). The woman of Revelation 12 has a “pedigree” that carries back well into the time of the Old Testament prophets.² But in verse 5 she acts in the context of the vision, giving birth to a male child who is generally recognized to be a symbol of Jesus. After she gives birth to the child (12:5) she is seen fleeing into the desert for “1260 days” (12:6). So the experience of the woman in Revelation 12:1-6 is actually depicted in three stages: (1) the time of her appearance and pregnancy; (2) the time of giving birth; and (3) the time of fleeing into the desert.

The second character to be introduced in this chapter is the dragon (Rev 12:3-4), who represents Satan (Rev 12:9). Scholars widely recognize that the dragon’s attack on the male child in Revelation 12:5 represents Herod’s attempt to destroy the Christ child (Matt 2:1-18).³ Prior to his attack on the male child, the tail of the dragon sweeps a third of the stars out of the sky and flings them to earth (Rev 12:4). After his attack on the male child, the dragon pursues the woman into the desert (12:13-16) and eventually makes war with the remnant of her seed (12:17). So the dragon in chapter 12 is actually described in terms of four successive stages: (1) his attack on a third of the stars (12:4); (2) his attack on the male child (12:4-5, 7-9); (3) his attack against the woman herself (12:13-16); and finally (4) his war against the remnant (12:17). The first of these stages is prior to the action of the vision, which begins with the dragon’s threat against the male child.

III. Three Phases of Action in Revelation 12

- (1) *The Time of the First Advent.* Stage one of the visionary sequence of Revelation 12, then, focuses on the dragon’s attack against the male child in verse 5. When the male child reaches heaven war breaks out there, with the result that the dragon and his angels lose their place in heaven and are hurled down to earth (12:7-9). When did this casting out of heaven take place? Verse 10 clearly addresses the same point in time as the war of verses 7-9. So the first phase of the visionary sequence runs from the incarnation of Jesus through the expulsion of Satan from heaven.⁴
- (2) *The Broad Sweep of Christian History.* Revelation 12, verses 6 and 12, both seem to mark a transition between the time of Jesus’ first-century mission, on earth in verse 5 and in heaven in verse 10, and the woman’s exile into the desert. Since the language of Revelation 12:6 (1260 days) and 12:14 (time, times, and half a time) is clearly parallel, and both follow events related to the first century, it is likely that they cover the same historical period.

- (3) *The Final Attack on the Remnant.* Revelation 12:17 is not only the conclusion to chapter 12, it serves as a summary introduction to Revelation’s portrayal of a great final crisis at the conclusion of earth’s history (Rev 13-14). It indicates that there are two sides in the final conflict, represented by the dragon and the remnant of the woman’s seed.

In Revelation 12, therefore, one can detect three stages of Christian history running from the time of Jesus and John to the end of all things. When we note that at least two of the main characters in the chapter were active in the time before the birth of Jesus (which we will call Stage Zero below), there are a total of four successive stages of history. These can be summarized as follows:

- 1) Stage Zero: Before the Time of the Vision (12:1-4)
 - The original war in heaven (4)
 - The dragon embodies the kingdoms of the earth (3)
 - The woman represents God’s true people (1-2)
- 2) Stage One: The Time of Jesus and John (12:5, 7-12)
 - The woman gives birth to the male child (5)
 - He is snatched up to heaven (5)
 - War in heaven (7-9)
 - Enthronement and victory (10-11)
 - Transition (12)
- 3) Stage Two: The Serpent Attacks the Woman (12:6, 13-16)
 - The dragon pursues the woman (13)
 - She flees into the desert and is protected 1260 days (6, 14)
 - The serpent spews water to sweep her away (15)
 - The earth helps the woman (16)
- 4) Stage Three: The Dragon and the Remnant, (Rev 12:17, etc.)
 - The dragon is angry and goes away to make war (12:17)
 - He calls up allies for the conflict (13:1-7, 11)
 - The unholy trinity deceives and persecutes (13:8-10, 12-18)
 - The remnant responds (14:1-13)
 - The return of Jesus (14:14-20)

The two 1260-day texts of Revelation 12, then, both occur in Stage Two, the central period of Christian history. They characterize something important about the history between the first-century mission of Jesus and the final battle at the end. This median location in time after the writing of Revelation parallels the situation of the two occurrences in chapter 11. This is further evidence that all five occurrences of “1260 days” are a reference to the same period of history.

IV. Revelation 13

Revelation 13 outlines in more detail the dragon’s final war against the remnant of the woman’s seed (Rev 12:17). This could suggest that the reference to “42 months” in Revelation 13:5 belongs to the final battle and is, therefore, not to be equated with the four earlier references. However, a little noticed feature of chapter 13 is the way the tenses of the main verbs shift at significant points throughout the chapter. These tenses need to be read in the context of the final attack of Revelation 12:17. Two beasts (from the sea and the earth) are first introduced using verbs in the past tense (aorist, imperfect, and perfect indicatives—Rev 13:1-7; 13:11).⁵ In New Testament Greek, aorist indicative verbs express action as a point of time in the past. The actions described in these introductions, therefore, occur prior to the dragon’s final war against the remnant (Rev 12:17; 13:8-10, 12-18).

In each of the two scenes (Rev 13:1-10 and 11-18), then, the Greek of Revelation 13 moves from an intro-

ductory description in the past tense (Rev 13:1-7; 13:11) to a mixture of present and future tenses (Rev 13:8-10; 13:12-18), describing the actions of these two beasts in the context of the final attack of Revelation 12:17. So two stages of history are clearly marked off by the Greek tenses signaling events prior to the dragon’s war (past tense) and the events of the war itself (present and future tenses).⁶

Revelation 13, therefore, does not contain all four stages of the dragon’s war, as described in Revelation 12. It offers information related to the last two stages of his activity, listed as Stage Two and Stage Three in the chart for Revelation 12. The past tense portions of Revelation 13 correspond to Stage Two, the events preceding the final battle. The present and future tenses of the main verbs in chapter 13 correspond to the final attack on the remnant, first mentioned in Revelation 12:17. Note the relationship between Revelation 12 and 13 in the following chart:

Relation of Revelation 12 and 13⁷

	Rev 12	Rev 13	
Stage One	Dragon vs. <u>Male Child</u> (5)		
	Enthronement of Christ (7-12)		
Stage Two	1260 days (13-15)	42 months (1-7)	Past tenses in chapter 13
	Earth helps woman (16)	Beast from the earth (11)	
Stage Three	Dragon vs. Remnant (17)	Worldwide worship of the Beast (8-10, 12-18)	Present and future tenses in chapter 13

The 42-month period of Revelation 13:5, therefore, is not part of the final battle (Stage Three) of Christian history. The beast from the sea “was given authority” to rule for 42 months. The sea beast’s activity does not move into the present or future tenses until verse 8. As part of Stage Two, then, the 42 months of Revelation 13:5 belong

to the middle period of church history, between the events of the first advent of Jesus and the events leading up to His second coming. Note the comparison of all three chapters in Revelation where 1260-day passages occur. They are firmly entrenched at the heart of the Christian era, not at its edges.

Rev 11	Rev 12	Rev 13
10:8 - 11:1 Time of John	12:1-5, 7-12 Time of Jesus	---
11:1-13 42 months 1260 days	12:6, 13-16 1260 days Time, times and half a time	13:1-7, 11 42 months
11:15-18 Final events: Wrath and judgment	12:17 Final events: Remnant	13:8-10, 12-18 Final events: Image and mark Present and future

V. Conclusion

The traditional Seventh-day Adventist historicist perspective is that the five 1260-day prophecies of Revelation 11-13 all refer to the same period of history, the middle period of Christian history between the time of John and the events of the end. This perspective is exegetically

sound. While John gives no evidence that he is aware of 2000 years of Christian history, his prophetic message clearly marks out the three stages of that history and the central role of the 1260 days within it.

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¹Compare Rev 10:5-6 with Dan 12:4-7.

²Rev 12:1-2 is based on the Old Testament image of a virtuous woman as a symbol of faithful Israel (Isa 26:16-27; 54:5; 66:7-14; Hos 2:14-20).

³Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 639; and J. Ramsey Michaels, *Revelation*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 147.

⁴While the heavenly war of Rev 12:7-9 is set in the context of Jesus' ascension to heaven in AD 31, it echoes an earlier war described briefly in Rev 12:4 (the dragon's attack on the stars of heaven). That war took place before the creation of earth (Rev 13:8).

⁵I am referring to the main verbs, of course, not verbs in subordinate clauses, whose tense is not relevant to the point.

⁶Rev 13:1-7 = past tense; Rev 13:8-10 = present and future tenses; Rev 13:11 = past tense; Rev 13:12-18 = present and future tenses.

⁷I am indebted to the chart by Hans LaRondelle in "The End-Time Message in Historical Perspective," *Ministry*, December, 1996, 13.

FOCUS ON SCRIPTURE

1 PETER 3:18-22

1 Peter 3:18-22 belongs to the more difficult passages in the NT. It has received various interpretations throughout church history. Some have concluded from this passage that there is an immortal soul, that people have a second chance of salvation after death, and/or that Jesus descended into hell and came up again. Others have questioned these interpretations.

I. Context

The first epistle of Peter contains a strong emphasis on suffering. The term *paschō* (to suffer) appears twelve times in the epistle and the term *pathēmata* (suffering) four times. No NT document uses the word family "suffering" more frequently than 1 Peter. The topic of suffering is found in all five chapters. But Peter also presents the Christian hope (e.g., 1:3) and stresses exemplary Christian behavior and conduct (e.g., 2:15; 3:1-2). He wants to encourage his audience to live a holy life in spite of suffering, knowing that Christians have a wonderful hope.

The epistle contains several christological passages which can motivate Christians to follow Jesus even under difficult circumstances. In 1:18-19 they are told that they were redeemed by the blood of Jesus. The passage 2:21-25 stresses that Jesus suffered for them, bore their sins, and healed them. Now He is their shepherd and bishop. Therefore, they should die to sin and live to righteousness. Another important christological section is the passage under investigation. While the first two passages emphasize how Jesus suffered and remind the reader that Jesus brought about salvation, the third passage points to the far-reaching consequences of salvation and stresses Jesus' kingship.

Peter's first epistle contains several christological passages which motivate Christians to follow Jesus even under difficult circumstances.

II. Textual Analysis

1 Peter 3:18-22 is preceded and followed by a paragraph dealing with suffering. Therefore, it is very appropriate that Jesus is introduced as the one who has also suffered and was even put to death "so that He might bring us to God." Jesus is an example of suffering unjustly. Yet he is also Savior and King, who has been glorified, as His followers one day will be.

1. Structure of the Passage

"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit . . . who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him"(3:18,22). Verse 18 refers to Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection. Verse 21b again mentions the resurrection. Verse 22 continues and reports about Jesus' ascension and his reign. So verses 18, 21b and 22 form a parenthesis in which another section is inserted. While verse 18 stresses more strongly the earthly part of the life of Jesus, verses 21b and 22 deal with the heavenly aspect. The insertion mentions Jesus' proclamation (verses 19-20) and salvation through baptism (verse 21). These concepts are connected through the terms "Noah" and "water." The passage as a whole tells believers: Since Jesus has done so much for you—He has saved you and He now reigns—do not get discouraged or desperate if you have to suffer. In Christ you belong to the side that has gained the victory.

2. The First Part of the Parenthesis: Jesus' on Earth (verse 18)¹

Verse 18 contains two pairs of contrasts: "the righteous" vs. "the unrighteous" and "put to death in the flesh" vs. "made alive in the spirit." The term "for" connects this passage to the preceding verses and furnishes a reason

why Christians should conduct themselves as suggested in chapter 3. Verse 18 maintains that in Jesus God has taken the initiative for humankind's salvation. He has solved the sin problem. Jesus has suffered² for sins; the righteous has died for the unrighteous. He became a substitute for humans, and yet He himself was innocent. Jesus has suffered once for all for sins. His suffering and death are unique and unrepeatable.

He was "put to death in the flesh and was made alive in the spirit." What do these expressions "flesh" and "spirit" mean? They remind Bible students of 1 Peter 4:6; Romans 1:3-4; 9:5; and 1 Timothy 3:16: Jesus was born as a descendant of David according to the flesh. They bring to mind 1 Corinthians 15:44-45: "It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. . ." The expression "flesh" talks about the earthly sphere of Jesus' existence while the expression "spirit" refers to his heavenly dimension.³ Jesus died according to His earthly existence, but He was raised according to his spiritual existence. In both cases "flesh" and "spirit" depict the whole Christ looked at from different perspectives. Jesus has suffered in order to lead us to God.

3. *The Insertion (verses 19-21)*

a. *Proclamation to the Spirits (verses 19-20)*

Verse 19 begins with *en hō* oftentimes translated "in which" or "through/by whom." There are four possibilities to interpret this phrase: (1) It refers to "spirit" in the preceding verse ("in which"); (2) it refers to the entire verse 18 ("under these circumstances"); (3) it has a temporal meaning ("on which occasion"); and (4) it is a relative causal conjunction ("for which reason"). Because *en hō* follows so closely "made alive in the spirit" the first possibility is preferable.

Who are these disobedient spirits who already lived in the time of Noah? Interpretations vary. Some suggest that they refer to those who have died in the flood or that they are disembodied human souls. Others think of fallen angels or believers during Old Testament times. The term "spirits" in the plural occurs thirty-four times in the New Testament. About twenty of these thirty-four refer to demons, two or three to angels (all in Hebrews), four to the seven spirits of God (all in Revelation), about five to human spirits, and one to spiritual gifts (in 1 Cor). According to verse 20 these spirits were disobedient. Therefore they cannot be God's spirits, angels, or spiritual gifts. Only two options remain: They could be demons or humans. Since the expression is predominantly used for demons and rarely for humans, one can assume that the spirits are demons. There is an interesting parallel in 2 Peter 2:4-5. This passage talks about fallen angels, i.e., demons, their abode, Noah, and salvation through the flood. Obviously, the spirits are fallen angels.

1 Peter 3:19 states "Jesus went." Some derive from this term that Jesus went down to hell to the demons, but

the Greek term *poreuomai* (to go) does not indicate that Jesus descended to hell nor is the concept of hell found in 1 Peter 3. The very same term *poreuomai* is used in verse 22: Jesus went into heaven. Here—within the same passage—it stands for his ascension. Therefore one should not talk about Jesus' descent to hell. It is best to understand the term in the same way in both verses: Jesus ascended to heaven. During His ascension He proclaimed His message.

What is the prison? "Prison" in the Bible is not only used literally but also symbolically. Babylon became the prison of each unclean spirit—Rev 18:2. According to Revelation 20, during the Millennium, the devil is in prison. Probably it is used in a symbolic sense here too. Symbolically the angels are imprisoned and must expect judgement.

To these fallen angels the Lord speaks. The term *kērussō* normally refers to the proclamation of Jesus (Acts 9:20), the gospel (Matt 9:35), the kingdom of God (Acts 28:31), and the call to repent (Matt 4:17). The combination of "to go" and "preach" is not only found in 1 Peter 3:19, but also in the Gospel of Mark—the commission to the Twelve in Matt 10:7 and the Great

The evil powers are defeated. Jesus proclaims His triumph. He who suffered innocently is Lord of everything and everyone.

Commission in Mark 16:15—and in Jonah 1:2 and 3:2 where Jonah is called to go and preach to Nineveh a message of judgment. Jesus rises from the tomb. On his way to heaven He addresses the fallen angels, the demons, and proclaims what is good news for His followers but judgement for the demons: "I, Jesus Christ, am the conqueror. I have gained the victory" (see Col 2:15). The evil powers are defeated. Jesus proclaims His triumph. He who suffered innocently is Lord of everything and everyone.

b. *Salvation through Water (verse 20-21a)*

God in His patience did not want anyone to perish in the flood. But although people had the necessary knowledge, only a few stepped inside the ark. So it is today. Many are lost. A few are saved. But Jesus' victory is seen when people are saved. Noah and his family may have suffered from the ridicule and scorn of their contemporaries, but God saved them. God's children are never alone. The topic of 1 Peter 3:18-22 is to encourage suffering Christians by reminding them: (1) Jesus is risen; (2) Jesus proclaims His triumph over the demons; and (3) Jesus saves.

The waters of the flood, which killed the ungodly, carried the ark and preserved the life of the eight humans. Noah and his family survived, because *eis hēn* . . . *diesōthēsan di' hudatos*, (in which . . . were saved through water). According to Blass/Debrunner oftentimes *en* (in) should be read where *eis* (into) is found.⁴ Therefore we can translate: "in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water" taking the *di' hydatos* (through water) instrumental rather than local. They were saved through the

water. Peter's audience had heard about spirits in verse 19, namely the demons who already in the past were disobedient. In verse 20 these are contrasted with "souls," humans. Both groups are affected by Christ's victory.

Water is destructive but also life-supporting. While it drowned Noah's contemporaries, it saved him and his family. It killed what was sinful and purified the world. So also baptism. Jesus saves us through the water of baptism. What is sinful is destroyed. A new being arises. If a person who had been baptized has to suffer and even might be killed, his or her baptism actually means victory over death and destruction. Peter says "baptism saves you." Baptism is vital. We cannot think highly enough of baptism. But it is not baptism in itself, which is to be praised, it is God's action in baptism. Therefore, Peter quickly adds "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Baptism is not a sacrament which works automatically, independent of the receiver. It brings salvation because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, baptism is not just an external ceremony. Through baptism the human being has been raised to newness of life. Peter talks about a good conscience. The believer has found peace with God. The sin problem has been solved. He or she has committed himself or herself to the Lord. Back then God saved Noah through the waters of the flood; today He saves us in baptism.

Baptism is vital. We cannot think highly enough of baptism.

killed, his or her baptism actually means victory over death and destruction. Peter says "baptism

4. *The Second Part of the Parenthesis: Jesus' in Heaven (verse 21b-22)*

Jesus at the right hand of God is not only found in 1 Peter 3:22 but also in Romans 8:34 where it is said that he intercedes for us. This is very important for suffering and persecuted Christians. They do not only need a glorified Lord but also one that intercedes for them. The passage under investigation reaches its climax in the universal reign of Christ. All angels and powers and authorities, negative as well as positive, are subjected to him. He reigns with universal power, He is the king.

Christ's resurrection is followed by His ascension. This in turn is followed by His enthronement. The ascension is important for the church, because it reminds her of the words of the angels that He will return and take His people with him. 1 Peter 3:18-22 concludes with a depiction of Jesus' triumph, victory, and dominion, a concept that will be repeated in 4:11 and 5:11.

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¹Commentaries that can be consulted include Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 239-274; and J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary 49 (Waco: Word Books, Publisher, 1988), 194-222.

²The reading "suffered" is to be preferred to the reading "died," although it includes death.

³Cf. 1 Pet 4:6 where a similar statement is made about other humans referring to their earthly existence and their immortal resurrection bodies.

⁴Friedrich Blass and Albert Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 110, state: "No NT writer except Mt. is entirely free from the replacement of *en* by *eis* in a local sense." In 1 Pet 5:12 a second case is found within the same document.

SCRIPTURE APPLIED—A BIBLE STUDY

CHRIST'S SECOND COMING

The idea of the end of the world or the invasion of planet earth by extraterrestrial beings has repeatedly been the topic of popular films. Already in 1974 a film about the second coming of Christ in the form of a documentary frightened hundreds of Canadians. Obviously many viewers regarded the broadcast as reality. In the film, which most of the time played in a TV station, reports about earthquakes, floods, and other disasters followed each other. The TV station received numerous calls from terrified viewers who in spite of the announcement that the film was pure fiction wanted to know whether or not the portrayed events were true.

Scripture tells us that indeed there will be an invasion, but it will be the second coming of Jesus Christ—John 14:1-3. It is important to know about it and to be prepared.

I. *How Does Jesus Come Again?*

Jesus pointed us to five characteristics of His second coming—Matt 24:30-31:

- (1) He will come personally and visibly for all those who live (Rev 1:7).
- (2) He will come on the clouds.
- (3) He will come with power and great glory.
- (4) He will come audibly.
- (5) He will come with his angels.

Furthermore, at Jesus' second coming the first resurrection will take place—1 Cor 15:22-23. These characteristics are given so that we may not be deceived by an imitation—Matt 24:23-26; 2 Thess 2:8-9.

II. *Why Does Jesus Come Again?*

Many people may not want Jesus to come back again. They are doing well, and they enjoy life. Others can hardly wait for Christ's return.

- (1) Jesus will come again because he has promised he would (John 14:1-3).
- (2) He will come again to complete the plan of salvation which includes our resurrection, our being with God, and eternal life on a new earth—John 5:25-29; Rev 21:1-5. This will bring earth's history to an end and will mark the transition to eternity.
- (3) He will come again to bring His reward—Rev 22:12 and to judge the nations—1 Tim 4:1, 8; Matt 25:31-46.

The “reward” cannot be earned, but has two dimensions:

- (a) Final salvation—1 Thess 4:15-17
- (b) Destruction—1 Thess 5:1-3; Luke 17:26-30; Rev 6:15-17

This will result in a separation between people, including the Christian community, families, and marriages—Matt 24:40-41; 25:31-33.

III. *When Does Jesus Come Again?*

- (1) Only God knows the time—Matt 24:36, 44.
- (2) Nevertheless people have set various dates:
 - (a) Among Catholic Christians were Apollinaris the Younger suggesting A.D. 490, Hippolyt A.D. 500, and others who suggested the years 1000, 1010, 1260, 1651 etc.
 - (b) Among Protestants were M. Luther (but for a short period only), A. Bengel, M. Stiefel. The latter suggested October 10, 1533, 8:00 am as the time of Christ’s second coming.
 - (c) The Millerite Movement came up with October 22, 1844.
 - (d) Other denominations/Christians suggested various dates in the 20th century (e.g., 1914, 1975).
- (3) The other extreme is not to count on Jesus’ second coming at all or to postpone it in one’s mind indefinitely—Matt 24:48.

IV. *Being Ready*

- (1) It is important to be ready all the time—Matt 24:42-44. We are ready, when our life belongs to Jesus and we live with him constantly. Martin Luther talked about expecting the day of the Second Coming with joy. And he continued: Whoever is not ready and does not desire the day, does not understand the Lord’s prayer nor can he wholeheartedly pray it.
- (2) God’s children are looking forward to Jesus’ return, because only then is salvation complete—Rev 22:20. Are you looking forward to it?

The teaching of Christ’s second coming is one of the doctrines most frequently expressed in the New Testament. It wants to shape the way we are living our lives today.

Ekkehardt Mueller, BRI

BOOK NOTES

William H. Shea, *Daniel: A Reader’s Guide*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2005. 288 pp. US\$16.99.

This volume on Daniel is a reprint of the two volumes W. H. Shea wrote for the Abundant Life Bible Amplifier Series ten years ago. The body of the earlier work has remained unchanged. The new volume has a new introduction and the specific characteristics of the Abundant Life Bible Amplifier Series such as “Getting into the Word,” “Applying the Word,” “Further Study of the Word” etc.

have been deleted; reducing the work from 420 pages to the present 288 pages.

The unusual feature of this commentary on Daniel, unchanged from the previous work, is the structure of the book. Generally, commentaries on Daniel start at chapter one and follow the canonical order of the chapters until the end of chapter twelve. Shea, however, has chapter one followed by chapters four and five, three and six, and two and seven. This is a thematic order in the form of a chiasm rather than a chronological order. Similarly, in the prophetic section of the book chapter nine is studied first, followed by chapters eight and seven.

The book is firmly based on the historicist principle of prophetic interpretation and is replete with historical details that help the reader place the stories and prophecies in their context, and it explains in understandable language some of the difficulties in the book. For example, on the basis of the verse pattern in Daniel 9:25, 26 “the prince who is to come” in verse 26 is identified as the Messiah rather than as Titus, as is usually done. Shea also provides a convincing case why the death of Stephen should be seen as the end of the seventy weeks in Daniel 9. Adventist have always believed it, but Shea is the first one to base this event on a theological foundation by analyzing Stephen’s speech in Acts 7 as a “covenant lawsuit” speech that sealed up vision and prophecy.

This book should be in the library of every English-speaking Adventist minister and church member because “as we near the close of this world’s history, the prophecies recorded by Daniel demand our special attention, as they relate to the very time in which we are living” (Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 547-548).

Gerhard Pfandl, BRI

George Javor. *Evidences for Creation: Natural Mysteries Evolution Cannot Explain*. Hagerstown, MD. Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2005. 141 pp. US\$12.99.

George Javor has taught biochemistry to medical students for many years. These years of teaching have prepared him to explain with clarity and authority the themes of biochemistry as they relate to the question of life’s origin. Not surprisingly his new book does an excellent job of explaining and applying aspects of biochemistry salient to creation.

The book is divided into three sections dealing with themes from cosmology, biology and biochemistry. Of these, the section on biochemistry stands out. The cosmology and biology sections contain interesting information which may be salient to the question of creation and evolution, but the chapters are so brief that large leaps in logic are encouraged. For example, most Christians who object to human cloning will not find the basis of their objections addressed in Chapter 11, “Cloning and the Christian.” The final sentence gives a taste of what is being said, “We believe that it is God’s desire that the increased scientific

knowledge of the end-time should be exclusively for the benefit of humanity” (89). Most Christians would be happy to see increased scientific knowledge benefit the rest of the creation along with humanity.

There is much to praise about this book. There are also shortcomings. Several of the seventeen chapters would benefit from competent copy editing. Furthermore, the chapters do not come across as cohesive parts of the same document. But possibly the most valuable point George Javor makes is that, while chemicals naturally tend toward a state of equilibrium, life is a state of chemical disequilibrium. From a biochemist’s perspective, we are dead when we reach equilibrium.

The final chapters on *Evidences for Creation* do an excellent job of explaining this in terms an educated layman can understand. They go on to lay out clearly the implications of this view of life. Unlike the arguments against Darwinian evolution in earlier chapters, life as a state of chemical disequilibrium is a genuinely positive evidence for creation. Because chemical disequilibrium is laid out so clearly, these final chapters make *Evidences for Creation* worthy of a place in the libraries of pastors and others who are not scientists, but wish to understand the biochemical evidence for creation.

Timothy G. Standish, GRI

Harold G. Coffin, Robert H. Brown, and L. James Gibson. *Origin by Design*. Hagerstown, MD. Review and Herald, 2005. 464 pp. US\$29.99.

The newly revised edition of *Origin by Design* provides encouragement for those Christians who believe that the Biblical account of earth’s history is the ultimate authority against which all theories of origins should be tested.

Although none of the authors are geologists, paleontologists, or theologians, the years they have spent working at the Geoscience Research Institute as research scientists and educators has provided them with a fundamental knowledge of the issues presented in these areas (Sections I, II & III). The book is remarkable in that there is a considerable amount of data and numerous specific deposits cited that provide evidence consistent with the Genesis Flood. However, this broad overview will cause trained geologists and paleontologists to take exception to their arguments because the authors address only a few of the deposits that do not fit the prevalent theories. To their credit it must be mentioned that the authors have clearly

stated, “. . . we lack the proof to conclusively establish the validity of a world catastrophe by water.”

Chapter 24 on “The Origin of Humans” makes brief comments on the basic groups purportedly either in or out of the human lineage. However, the authors miss a golden opportunity to discuss the variety of theories within paleoanthropology.

In Section IV, it is doubtful that geologists and geochronologists would find the arguments (which do have some merit) regarding radiometric dating convincing because they believe they can explain the objections raised by the authors. Unfortunately, the authors do not address the concordant dates within the fossil record that correlate well with the fossil dates worldwide and for a good reason: We do not have an answer for this particular information. The book ends with Section V and a discussion of the major biological issues, areas in which two of the authors are very well trained.

The book is well written and an interesting read. It seems designed, not to refute all arguments, but to provide thought provoking information and to promote the biblical account of earth history.

Elaine G. Kennedy,
formerly at GRI

Gerald A. Klingbeil, ed., *Misión y contextualización: llevar el mensaje bíblico a un mundo multicultural*. Serie monográfica de estudios bíblicos y teológicos de la Universidad Adventista del Plata (SMEBT) 2. Libertador San Martín, Argentina. Editorial Universidad Adventista del Plata, 2005. 410 pp. US\$29.95.

River Plate Adventist University Press has published the second volume of its Monograph series. The volume focuses on *Mission and Contextualization* and contains nineteen original contributions from international scholars. Six of the articles are published in English with the remaining thirteen being written in Spanish. To facilitate penetration of the work in the international market, every chapter is preceded by a concise English and Spanish abstract. The work is divided into five main divisions, involving methodological questions, historical studies, exegetical issues, theological studies and practical application. Eisenbrauns publisher and bookseller (www.eisenbrauns.com) has agreed to function as the exclusive distributor of the monograph series for Europe and the USA, thus facilitating the acquisition of the volume outside of South America.

Gerald Klingbeil, AIAS

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