

The Biblical Worldview



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Luke 2:52; Matt. 4:23; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; Ps. 24:3, 4; Acts 8:4–24; 1 John 3:1–3.*

Memory Text: “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (*1 Thessalonians 5:23, NKJV*).

The book of Revelation speaks of two major “globalizations” prior to the second coming of Christ. Revelation 13 describes the globalization of *error*, when “all the world” will marvel and follow the beast from the sea (*Rev. 13:3, 7, 8, 12, 16, NKJV*). Revelation 14 highlights the globalization of *truth*, when the “everlasting gospel” will be preached “to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people” (*Rev. 14:6, 7, NKJV*). During those “distressing times” (*2 Tim. 3:1, NRSV*), “every wind of doctrine” will be blowing (*Eph. 4:14, NKJV*), and people will “turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths” (*2 Tim. 4:4, NRSV*). “Through the two great errors, the immortality of the soul and Sunday sacredness, Satan will bring the people under his deceptions. While the former lays the foundation of spiritualism, the latter creates a bond of sympathy with Rome.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 588.

Until these final events unfold, we must remain firm in our belief in all the truth that we have, which includes the nature of humanity and of death, as we seek to be guided by the Holy Spirit with the purpose of being ready for Christ’s glorious appearing.

* Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 17.

The Model of Jesus

Read Luke 2:52. What four dimensions of Jesus' growth are mentioned in this passage?

Jesus was the perfect Human Being, and His growth comprised all basic dimensions of human existence. According to Luke 2:52, “Jesus grew in wisdom [mentally] and stature [physically], and in favor with God [spiritually] and man [socially]” (NIV). “His mind was active and penetrating, with a thoughtfulness and wisdom beyond His years. Yet, His character was beautiful in its symmetry. The powers of mind and body developed gradually, in keeping with the laws of childhood. As a child, Jesus manifested a peculiar loveliness of disposition. His willing hands were ever ready to serve others. He manifested a patience that nothing could disturb, and a truthfulness that would never sacrifice integrity. In principle firm as a rock, His life revealed the grace of unselfish courtesy.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 68, 69.

Read Matthew 4:23. How can the threefold ministry of Jesus—to teach, to preach, and to heal—be carried on by us effectively today?

If we recognize that a human being is an integrated and indivisible person, then we cannot restrict our religion to spiritual matters only. The truth actually embraces our whole being, covers our entire life span, and comprises all dimensions of our life. Our physical and spiritual elements are so powerfully integrated that they really cannot be separated. And though, as fallen beings, we will never be equal to the depiction of Jesus as presented above, we are by God's grace to emulate it because “to restore in man the image of his Maker, to bring him back to the perfection in which he was created, to promote the development of body, mind, and soul” (Ellen G. White, *Education*, pp. 15, 16) is the work of redemption. This is what God seeks to do in His people as part of the process to prepare them for His return.

In contrasting ourselves to Jesus, we could easily be discouraged by the difference. How, then, does focusing on the Cross and what it means protect us from being disheartened by what we see in ourselves as compared to what we see in Jesus?

The Body as a Temple

The dualistic theory of a mortal body with an immortal soul has generated various theories about the human body. For example, for ancient Greek philosophers, the human body was the prison of the soul, which was liberated by death. In an echo of this pagan concept, many Christians today believe that the body is the temporal housing of the immortal soul, which will be reintegrated with the body at the resurrection. By contrast, pantheists make the human body divine; they believe that God and the universe are one and the same. For them, all things are God and the human body is part of the one single, integrated, and universal divine substance. Surrounded by conflicting theories on the subject, we must stand firm on what the Bible teaches regarding the nature of humanity.

Read 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17; 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; and 1 Corinthians 10:31. How can the understanding that our bodies are “the temple of God” and “the temple of the Holy Spirit” positively influence our lifestyle?

Both Adam and Eve were created in God’s own image and likeness (*Gen. 1:26, 27*), which was reflected not only in their character but also in their physical aspect. Because that image was marred and even hidden by the presence of sin, the work of redemption is to restore human beings, including their physical health, to their original condition, to the degree possible for beings unable to partake of the tree of life.

This restoration is a lifetime process that will be completed only at Christ’s second coming, when the corruptible puts on incorruption and the mortal becomes immortal (*1 Cor. 15:53, 54*).

The apostle John wrote to his friend Gaius, “Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, just as it is well with your soul” (*3 John 1:2, NRSV*).

If we recognize that a human being is an indivisible entity, and that religion embraces all aspects of human life, then we should consider the protection of our physical health also to be a religious duty. We should be guided by the inspired principle “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (*1 Cor. 10:31, NKJV*). But remember that we still live in a world where good people can do their best and yet suffer the consequences of a sinful human nature and a sinful environment. So, we should trust in God and do our best, and we leave the results with God.

The Mind of Christ

Some people believe that by changing the environment the individual will be transformed. Definitely, we should avoid places and circumstances that can make us more vulnerable to temptation (*Ps. 1:1, Prov. 5:1–8*). But our problem with temptation and sin can be solved only by the transformation of our own hearts (or minds). Christ touched the core of the issue when He stated, “ ‘For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly’ ” (*Mark 7:21, 22, NIV*). This means that our minds need to be transformed in order for our behavior to be changed.

Read the following texts: **1 Corinthians 2:16; Psalm 24:3, 4; Romans 12:2; Philippians 4:8; and Colossians 3:2.** What does it mean to have the “mind of Christ”?

The Lord had promised that under the “ ‘new covenant’ ” He would put His law in the minds of His people and write it on their hearts (*Jer. 31:31–33, compare with Heb. 8:8–10, Heb. 10:16*). It is no surprise, then, that in the Sermon on the Mount, Christ broadened and deepened the meaning of God’s commandments to the level of thoughts and intentions (*see Matt. 5:17–48*). So, we can gain victory over temptation only by God’s transforming grace and, at the level of thoughts and intentions, we should claim that promise to stop sinful thoughts.

We will always have sinful natures until Jesus comes. But if we are in Christ, we are fully covered by His righteousness. Although we *are not yet* perfect, we are *considered* already perfect in Him (*Phil. 3:12–15*). “When we are united to Christ, we have the mind of Christ. Purity and love shine forth in the character, meekness and truth control the life. The very expression of the countenance is changed. Christ abiding in the soul exerts a transforming power, and the outward aspect bears witness to the peace and joy that reign within.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 337.

Only by a daily surrender, a daily death to self, a daily determined effort, by faith, to be obedient to Jesus can we have this kind of transformation in our lives.

Imagine what your life would be like if you could stop even sinful thoughts. How different would your life be? What is the only potential way to have this become your experience?

The Guidance of the Spirit

The Holy Spirit is God's powerful Agent who pours out the love of God into our hearts (*Rom. 5:5*), leads us into a true saving experience (*John 16:7–11*), guides us into all the truth (*John 16:13*), and empowers us to fulfill the gospel mission (*Acts 1:8*). Because it is the Holy Spirit who counteracts the degenerating work of Satan, it is no surprise that Satan tries by all means to distort our understanding of the nature and work of the Holy Spirit. While some deny His personality, others emphasize the gifts of the Spirit over His transforming power.

Read Acts 8:4–24. Simon the sorcerer of Samaria wanted to receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit without *being* regenerated by the Spirit. How is this very same attitude still being manifested in our day?

The children of God are those who are being guided by the Holy Spirit (*Rom. 8:14*) into all the truth of God's Word (*John 16:13, John 17:17*). Jesus warned in clear terms, “ ‘Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?” Then I will tell them plainly, “I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!” ’ ” (*Matt. 7:21–23, NIV*). This means that the Holy Spirit never guides anyone away from God's Word—which He Himself inspired—but rather always leads us into conformity to that Word.

The same Holy Spirit that guides us into all the truth also empowers us in leading others into that wonderful truth (*Matt. 28:18–20, Acts 1:8*). While fulfilling our sacred mission, we have His special assistance. So, morning by morning, we must kneel before the Lord and renew our vows of consecration to Him. If we do this, He will grant us the presence of His Spirit, with His reviving, sanctifying power.

We must, however, be open to His leading by making conscious choices, every day, to do what we know is right and avoid what we know is wrong. That is, only by seeking, in our God-given strength, to live as we should will we be open to receiving that power of the Holy Spirit in our lives, which God promises us.

Why is it so important, morning after morning, to pray ourselves into an openness to the Holy Spirit's leading in our lives?

Ready for His Appearing

We live in a frenetic world with too many artificial needs and eye-catching distractions. If we are not careful, these can take all our time and pervert our priorities. This is not just another by-product of our globalized cyber world; Christians in every age, to one degree or another, have to be on guard against Satan's attempts to distract them from what really matters in this life.

Who, if not careful, is not in danger of looking away from the Lord and dwelling on worldly, carnal things, things that, in the end, cannot ultimately satisfy us, and that, in the end, can lead to our spiritual ruin?

Read 2 Peter 3:14 and 1 John 3:1–3. What difference do you see between *preparing* ourselves for the Second Coming and *being ready* for that glorious event?

Often the notion of an *ongoing preparation* for the Second Coming becomes an excuse for procrastination. This notion can easily lead one to relax under the evil servant's assumption, “ ‘My master is delaying his coming’ ” (Matt. 24:48, NKJV).

Read Psalm 95:7, 8; Hebrews 3:7, 8, 15; and Hebrews 4:7. What are these verses saying to us about being ready right now?

From the biblical perspective, the time of salvation is always “today” and never tomorrow (see Ps. 95:7, 8; Heb. 3:7, 8, 15; Heb. 4:7). And further: unless a major conversion experience takes place, we will continue to be what we are right now. Time itself does not convert the unconverted. If anything, unless one is continually growing in grace, and pressing on ahead in faith, the tendency would be to fall away, to become hardened, skeptical, cynical, even disbelieving.

From this perspective we can say that every single day of our life is our life in miniature. So, by God's grace, we should plan for the future but should live each day ready for the return of Jesus—especially because, given the contingencies of this life, today could be our last day.

How can you, today, be ready for the return of Jesus were He to return today? Discuss your answer in class on Sabbath.

Further Thought: Read Ellen G. White, “Mind Cure,” pp. 241–259, in *The Ministry of Healing*; “True and False Theories Contrasted,” pp. 7–16, in *The Sanctified Life*.

“The great controversy is nearing its end. Every report of calamity by sea or land is a testimony to the fact that the end of all things is at hand. Wars and rumors of wars declare it. Is there a Christian whose pulse does not beat with quickened action as he anticipates the great events opening before us? The Lord is coming. We hear the footsteps of an approaching God.”—Ellen G. White, *Maranatha*, p. 220.

“Live the life of faith day by day. Do not become anxious and distressed about the time of trouble, and thus have a time of trouble beforehand. Do not keep thinking, ‘I am afraid I shall not stand in the great testing day.’ You are to live for the present, for this day only. Tomorrow is not yours. Today you are to maintain the victory over self. Today you are to live a life of prayer. Today you are to fight the good fight of faith. Today you are to believe that God blesses you. And as you gain the victory over darkness and unbelief, you will meet the requirements of the Master, and will become a blessing to those around you.”—Ellen G. White, “The Light of the World,” *Signs of the Times*, October 20, 1887.

“The Lord is soon to come, and we must be prepared to meet Him in peace. Let us be determined to do all in our power to impart light to those around us. We are not to be sad, but cheerful, and we are to keep the Lord Jesus ever before us. . . . We must be ready and waiting for His appearing. Oh, how glorious it will be to see Him, and be welcomed as His redeemed ones! Long have we waited, but our faith is not to become weak. If we can but see the King in His beauty, we shall be forever and forever blessed. I feel as if I must cry aloud, ‘Homeward bound.’ We are nearing the time when Christ will come with power and great glory, to take His ransomed ones to their eternal home.”—Ellen G. White, *Heaven*, pp. 165, 166.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ How can the notion of the person—body, soul, and spirit as an indivisible whole—help us better understand the all-encompassing scope of religion and the importance of our personal lifestyle?
- ❷ All true revivals and reformations are *theocentric* (centered in God) and never *anthropocentric* (centered in human behavior). How does the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (see *Luke 18:9–14*) illustrate this principle?
- ❸ In class, discuss your answer to Thursday’s final question. How can you know if you are ready, and can you have assurance without being presumptuous?

Jesus Versus the Dragon

By ANDREW MCCHESENEY

Something strange happened to Kue in northern Laos in late 2020. Her body, and especially her belly, started to swell. Her worried husband, Cheng, took her to the local shaman, who informed them that a dragon had impregnated Kue and intended to take her away to an underwater world. “You need to give animal sacrifices to appease the dragon and to call back Kue’s spirit,” the shaman said solemnly.

Cheng gave the shaman everything he demanded, but Kue got worse. Cheng turned to traditional healers for treatments over the next two months, but nothing helped. He spent everything on shamans and traditional healers, but Kue’s health continued to deteriorate.

Finally, Cheng thought about asking a Christian pastor to pray for Kue.

Two Seventh-day Adventist leaders happened to be visiting Kue’s village at the time and, after praying for her, decided to send her to a hospital in Laos’s capital, Vientiane. At the hospital, the physician diagnosed Kue with nephrotic syndrome, a kidney disorder whose symptoms include swelling linked to excess fluid retention. But after a week in the hospital, Kue sank into a coma and was placed on life support. She was transferred to the intensive care unit, where the doctor gave her a fifty-fifty chance of survival. He asked who would pay the high medical bills to keep her under his care.

Cheng spoke with his relatives, but they did not have the money. The Adventist leaders, who brought Kue to the capital and paid her initial hospital bills, also lacked funds. Faced with high bills and no assurance Kue would recover, Cheng made the difficult decision to remove her from life support and bring her home. “It was painful to send her back home to die, but there was nothing we could do for her,” a church leader said later. “The only hope left was that God would show mercy and perform a miracle for her.”

Days after returning home, Cheng called the Adventist district pastor to ask him to pray for Kue in their home. The pastor, who arrived with several Bible workers, lived far away. He decided to stay for a few days so he also could assist with the funeral. As the family waited for Kue to die, the pastor and Bible workers fasted and prayed daily. Instead of dying, Kue improved. She began to breathe easily on her own, and the swelling subsided. By May 2021, she was walking without help. Today, Kue is a living testimony to the people of northern Laos that there is a God in heaven.



Thank you for your Sabbath School mission offerings that support the spread of the gospel in Laos and around the world.

Key Texts: *Genesis 2:7, Luke 2:52, Romans 8:4–14, 1 Corinthians 2:16, Philippians 2:5*

Part I: Overview

The biblical worldview counters the Greek philosophy of dualism, which posits that body is bad but spirit is good. Dualism claims that in a mortal body, an eternal soul is enslaved, which will be liberated at the point of every person's death, at which point he or she will live eternally.

This view contradicts the plain biblical teaching wherein God created everything very good, including our bodies. We were created in dependence upon God; thus, we were made without inherent immortality. Life is not in us but given to us from outside, and as we live in close relationship with God, this life is maintained forever. God made human beings as living souls (*Gen. 2:7*). Immortality is not in us but constantly supplied to us from the Lord Himself, an external Source.

The biblical worldview of human nature is a unity of all aspects of our existence, namely, physical, mental/intellectual, emotional, volitional, spiritual, and social, aspects that do not exist separately or independently from each other. All are put together by our Creator God in a marvelous and unseparated unity, and everything needs to be sanctified by God (*1 Thess. 5:23*). When a person dies, there is no activity in any of these aspects (*Eccles. 9:5, 6*).

Our being is a unit, and God desires to change our being. To achieve this transformation, He speaks to us. Ellen G. White stresses that the Lord communicates with us through our brain: "The brain nerves which communicate with the entire system are the only medium through which Heaven can communicate to man and affect his inmost life."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 347. It is very crucial to have the mind of Christ in order to understand His Word. When the Word of God dwells in us and constantly guides us, then our mind can be transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit. "We can attain to an understanding of God's word only through the illumination of that Spirit by which the word was given."—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 109. Paul explains: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (*Rom. 12:2, ESV*).

Part II: Commentary

Life According to the Spirit

The spiritual dimension of our lives is of the utmost importance and must

be properly cultivated. To aid in our understanding and undertaking of this task, the apostle Paul sharply contrasts life according to the flesh and life according to the Spirit (*Rom. 8:4–6*). The flesh and the Spirit stand in opposition: the carnal nature of humanity versus the spiritual nature, which is regenerated by the Holy Spirit (*Rom. 8:9–11*). Cultivating our spiritual lives requires attention to all facets of our existence, including our attitudes and motives. We must choose between God and His values or sin and self, by which we gratify the lusts of the flesh, such as lust, greed, envy, anger, pride, and dominance. Paul assures us that those who allow God to change them, who set their minds on the things of the Spirit and on the things above (*Col. 3:2*), are led by the Spirit. These believers are God’s children (*Rom. 8:5, 14*). Ezekiel speaks about the choice of either living with a heart of stone or with a heart of flesh (*Ezek. 36:26; i.e., being sensitive to God’s voice, willing to change, and open to helping people in need*). Only the heavenly Surgeon can successfully perform this transplantation of the human heart.

The Body—Physical Aspect

Humans are flesh (*Gen. 6:3*); they also are dust, taken from the ground, and to dust they return (*Gen. 3:19*). This axiom means we are fragile and mortal. Yet, Paul encourages believers to be filled with the Spirit in order to serve and glorify God in their body: “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body” (*1 Cor. 6:19, 20, ESV*). Also, Paul explains what our goal in life should be: “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (*1 Cor. 10:31, ESV*).

Soul/Heart—Emotional, Intellectual, and Volitional Aspects

The Hebrew Bible underlines the notion of heart in many verses. God states that He will transform human hearts by His teachings, grace, and Spirit: “ ‘I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts’ ” (*Jer. 31:33, ESV*). “ ‘And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules’ ” (*Ezek. 36:27, ESV*). In the Bible, the heart represents more than just a physical organ that pumps blood—it symbolizes a seat of the emotions, a place where we decide things, where we feel, and where we think. It represents our inner life, the deep-down life of our motives, goals, and desires.

Social Aspect

We were created as social people; no person is an isolated island unto himself. We were created with that social dimension. Social life is a very important aspect of our existence, and to have a healthy balance in life, we need to cultivate meaningful relationships with other people and serve others as Christ did (*Matt. 20:28*). It was well manifested in

the childhood of Jesus—how He progressed and comprehensively grew in life: “And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man” (*Luke 2:52, ESV*). Christ’s life was in balance as all aspects of His personality—the mental, physical, spiritual, and social dimensions—developed in perfect harmony.

The Mind of Christ

The apostle Paul makes it clear that every believer should be a spiritual person. We can have the mind of Christ only when we discern spiritual things spiritually and are guided by the Spirit of God (*Rom. 8:14*). “ ‘For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ’ ” (*1 Cor. 2:16, ESV*). In this way we can have glimpses into God’s mind so that we may know His thinking.

“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus” (*Phil. 2:5, ESV*). The New International Version translates this phrase: “Have the same mindset as Christ Jesus” (*Phil. 2:5, NIV*). The New Living Translation and some other translations explain this term correctly as attitude: “You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had” (*Phil. 2:5, NLT*). We need to think according to God’s way. Jesus rebuked Peter for his earthly thinking: “ ‘You aren’t thinking the way God thinks, but the way humans think’ ” (*Matt. 16:23, GW*).

Anthropological Studies and Neuroscience

Recent studies in theological anthropology present excellent new views on the mortality of the whole human being. Research confirms the biblical teaching. David P. Gushee declares: “Unlike the Greek notion that the body decays while the self floats off to heaven, a biblical (especially a Jewish) understanding seems to envision no such separable existence between body and soul or spirit. When we die, all of us dies.”—*Only Human: Christian Reflections on the Journey Toward Wholeness* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2005), p. 49.

Nancey Murphy embraces physical and relational functions of our existence and stresses human moral responsibility. Instead of a soul, she uses the notion of self: “The term *self* is used in a variety of ways in psychology and philosophy. What is at issue here is not the question of what it means to be a self. Rather the issue is that of having a self-concept.”—“Nonreductive Physicalism,” in *In Search of the Soul: Four Views of the Mind-Body Problem*, ed. Joel B. Green and Stuart L. Palmer (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), p. 124. Murphy claims that humans are physical and that “it is the brain that does the work once attributed to the mind or soul.”—*In Search of the Soul: Four Views of the Mind-Body Problem*, p. 132. What a stunning confirmation of what Ellen G. White stated (see citation in Overview).

Joel Green, using his background in neuroscience and biblical studies, states that we need a better understanding of biblical anthropology. He argues for the biblical wholistic view of humanity. He stresses that humans are a unit and do not possess an ontologically distinct soul; therefore, he rightly denies that after physical death, the soul lives in an “intermediate state.”—*Body, Soul, and Human Life: The Nature of Humanity in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), pp. 177–180. Green ends his study with the hope of resurrection and powerfully declares: “Nothing in the created human being is intrinsically immortal. Resurrection and embodied afterlife are God’s doing, divine gift.”—*Body, Soul, and Human Life*, p. 175.

F. F. Bruce fittingly declares: “In biblical usage immortality belongs inherently to God alone; otherwise it belongs only to those to whom God gives it. Again, where human beings are concerned, immortality in the Bible is predicated of the body, not of the soul.

“In our western culture, thought and language about immortality have been largely determined by Plato’s doctrine of the immortality of the soul. But any attempt to combine Plato’s doctrine with the teaching of the Bible can lead only to confusion. For Plato did not mean by immortality what the biblical writers mean by it, and what Plato meant by the soul is not what the biblical writers mean by the soul.

“For the Christian, the hope of immortality is bound up with the resurrection of Christ.”—“Foreword,” in George Wisbrock, *Death and the Soul* (Oakbrook, IL: ZOE-Life Books, 1990), p. i.

Part III: Life Application

- 1. Imagine that your friend is discouraged, disappointed, and depressed. How can you help him or her gain confidence in life and hope?**

- 2. Individualism, self-centeredness, and selfishness kill all meaningful relationships, which are built on trust and sacrifice. How can you build a relevant social life with the people around you?**

3. Ellen G. White declares: “If we thought and talked more of Jesus, and less of self, we should have far more of His presence. . . . Christ and Him crucified should be the theme of contemplation, of conversation, and of our most joyful emotion.”—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 102–104. How can we share Christ in a practical way when we eat or socialize with people?

4. How can you obtain the mind of Christ? On what does it depend, and how can it be developed?

5. Since God communicates with us through sensitive nerves in our brain, how can we protect and cultivate them?
