

The Meaning of the Intercessory Ministry of Jesus in the Heavenly Sanctuary

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My Childhood Experience

As a small boy, I visited the Catholic church in my town. It was a typical catholic European tall building. Inside everything was very different for me, because I grew up in the Adventist (Protestant) tradition. Everywhere were pictures, ornaments, and statues. I was surprised and fascinated. In the air was frankincense (quite a nice smell!). People were kneeling in front of different statues and were praying. Later I discovered that they were praying to Mary, St. Peter, St. Paul, St. John, and many other “saints.” At the bottom of each statue on a small tablet was written with big letters: “*Ora pro nobis!*” which means “Intercede for us!”

I was shocked and confused. I went to my father and bombarded him with my many questions...

I think that at that time my journey of searching began, my quest for discovering the meaning of the Intercessory Ministry of Jesus for us.

1 Timothy 2:3~6

“This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For **there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus**, who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time.”



Isaiah 53:12

“Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. **For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.**”



Romans 8:34

“Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who **died**—more than that, who **was raised** to life—is at the right hand of God and **is also interceding for us.**”

We believe in a LIVING God!



Hebrews 4:15

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.”

Hebrews 7:25

“Therefore **he is able to save completely** those who come to God through him, because he **always** lives **to intercede for them.**”

Daniel 8:1 1 (Prophetical Vision)

- “It (the Little Horn) set itself up to be as great as **the Prince** of the host; **it took away the daily** [*tamid*] **from him**, and the place of his sanctuary was brought low.”
- Activity of the Little Horn:
 - ~ usurping TAMID (= daily services) from the Prince of princes



Usage of TAMID

It always describes the daily activities in the sanctuary performed by the priest in the courtyard or the holy place, but it *never describes* the yearly service in the Most Holy Place on the Day of Atonement.



- **Attack on** the intercessory ministry of the Messiah in the Heavenly Sanctuary!

How?

- **Replacement of** Christ's priestly ministry **by** the priest's daily service during the mass, the confessions of sins to the priests, veneration of the relics of the saints, pilgrimages to "holy" places, and the prayers to Mary and the saints.



- My own experience with an old Catholic priest in Rome in 1977.

- “You will never get the two powers I have as a catholic priest!”

1. “During the mass, I have the power to call Jesus down on the altar, and He is physically present there (transubstantiation).”

2. “I have the authority to forgive sins and declare to people that their sins are forgiven.”

In July 2009 **Senator Ted Kennedy** asked **Pope Benedict XVI** for help while dying of cancer (died at the end of August 2009). He asked the pontiff to pray for him as he struggled with a brain tumor.

Two weeks later, Kennedy received a response from the Vatican. The letter is striking. Cardinal McCarrick read the pontiff's response in part during Kennedy's funeral, as follows:

"Commending you and the members of your family to the loving intervention of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Holy Father cordially imparts his apostolic blessing as a pledge of wisdom, comfort, and strength in the Lord."

People do not know how to imagine or understand the intercessory ministry of Jesus on their behalf.

Philip Yancey

- Philip Yancey openly declares:

“I have concluded, in fact, that the Ascension represents my greatest struggle of faith—not whether it happened, but why. It challenges me more than the problem of pain, more than the difficulty of harmonizing science and the Bible, more than belief in the Resurrection and other miracles. ... For me what has happened since Jesus’ departure strikes at the core of my faith. Would it not be better if the Ascension had never happened? If Jesus had stayed on earth, he could answer our questions, solve our doubts, mediate our disputes of doctrine and policy... By ascending, Jesus took the risk of being forgotten.” Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew* (New York: Walker and Company, 1995), 297~299.

Jesus Our Intercessor

The Bible is very positive in affirming that **we have an Intercessor in heaven—Jesus Christ!**

He is our Mediator! We need Him!

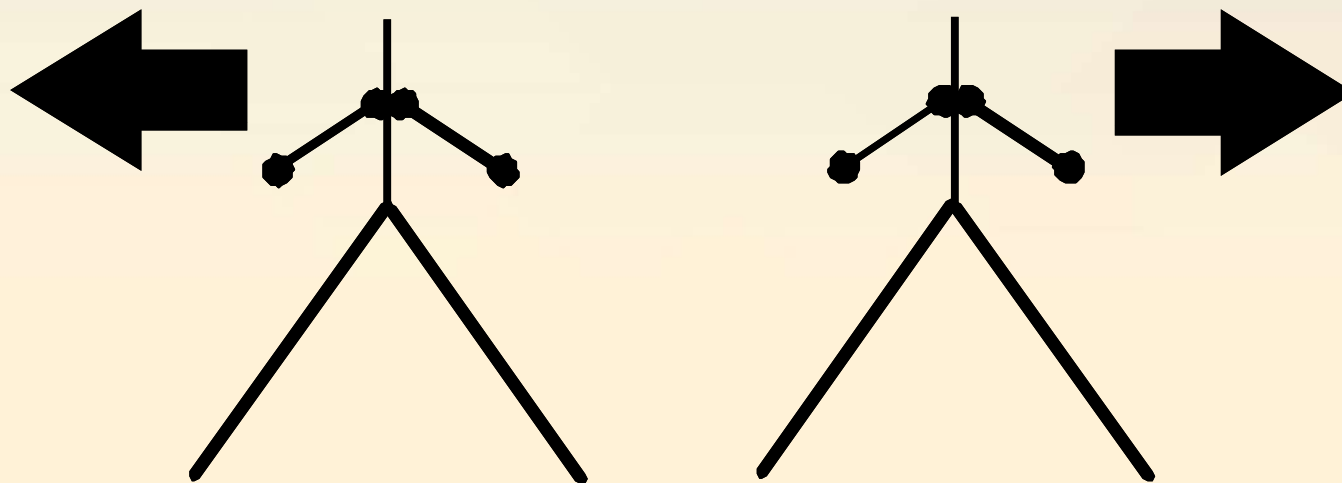
He lives for us!



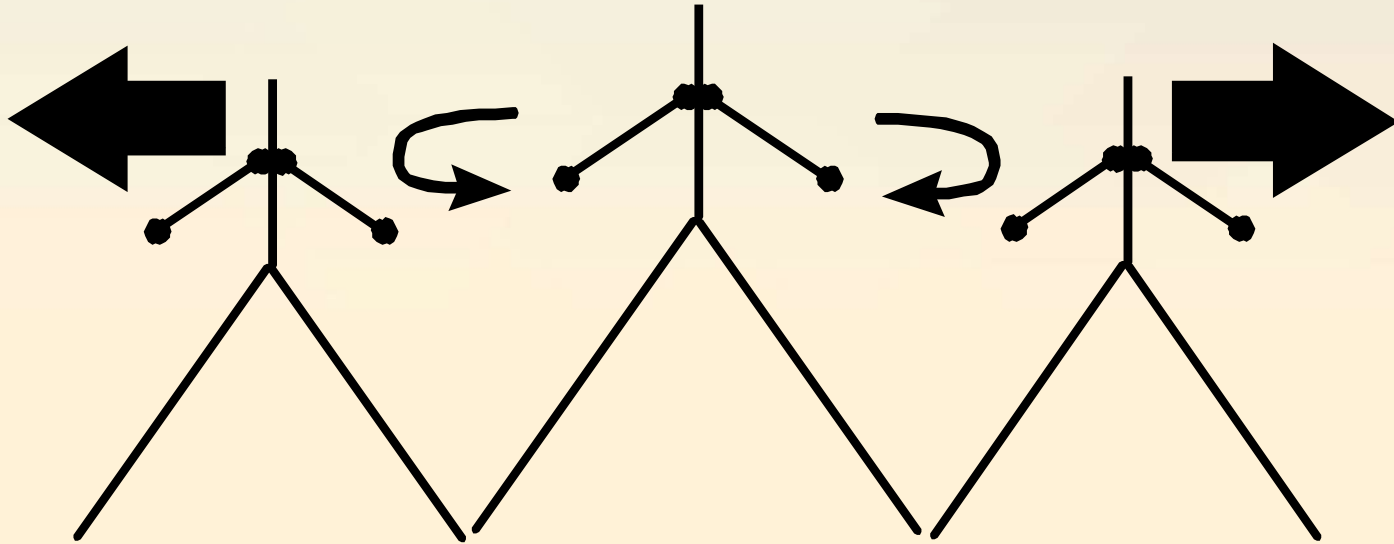
What is really the meaning of Jesus' Intercessory Ministry for us in the heavenly sanctuary?

Why do we need His Intercession on our behalf?

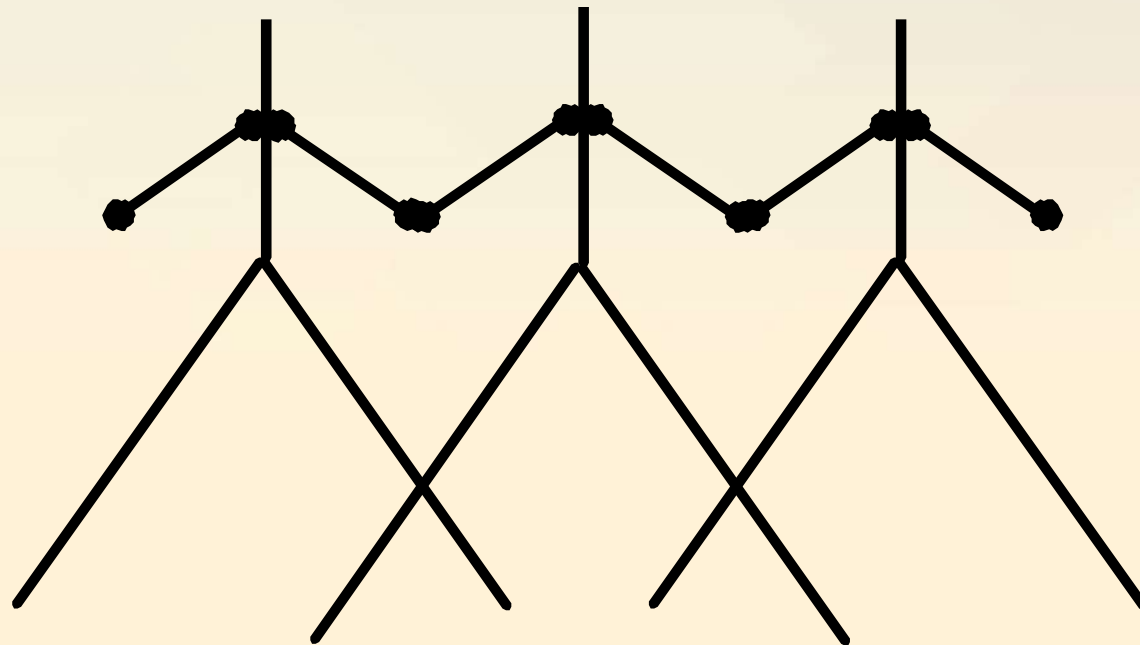
Common and Popular Model of Mediation



Go in Between



Reconciliation



Consequences for Our Understanding

If we project this meaning into the biblical message, then we will get the following results:

God, the Father is angry with humans (of course, they are sinners!), and He needs **to be appeased, calmed down** in order to give grace...

Thus, Jesus Christ comes as an Intercessor, the Mediator, and He prays for us! And our Father will **no longer be so strict and harsh and will bless a little bit His children.**

Consequences for Popular Understanding

Then Jesus **needs “some” help!** He is not powerful enough when dealing with the Father, because it is not easy to persuade the demanding and angry God to have mercy on us sinners...

Therefore helpers will come: First Mary, then Saints Peter, Paul, John, Thomas ... they all must come and beg and pray and intercede ...

No wonder people are confused!

If this were a true biblical teaching about Jesus' intercessory ministry for us in the heavenly sanctuary, **then I would become an atheist.**

But I am so glad that **our God is different!**

We have actually started by describing what Jesus
intercessory ministry is not!

What the Intercessory Ministry of Jesus Christ Does Not Mean?

What the Intercessory Ministry of Jesus Christ Does Not Mean:

- To beg or plead our Heavenly Father to show mercy to humans.

What the Intercessory Ministry of Jesus Christ Does Not Mean:

- To beg or plead with our Heavenly Father to show mercy to humans.
- To change Father's feelings towards us.

What the Intercessory Ministry of Jesus Christ Does Not Mean:

- To beg our Heavenly Father to show mercy to humans.
- To change Father's feelings towards us.
- To appease an angry God.

What the Intercessory Ministry of Jesus Christ Does Not Mean:

- To beg our Heavenly Father to show mercy to humans.
- To change Father's feelings towards us
- To appease an angry God.

Illustration:

Jesus and Heavenly Father are not involved in a **celestial arm wrestle** to show favor to humans.

Our God is different!!!



And You and I can connect to this different God because He is beautiful, gracious, loving, and holy!

Why is He different?

Because (Biblical Support):

1. Jesus does not need to beg our Heavenly Father to love us—John 16:26–27:

“In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf.”

Why not?

John 16:27

“No, **the Father himself loves you** because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.”

Why is He different?

Because:

2. Jesus does not need to change the Father's attitude toward us— “For God so loved the world that He gave His only and unique Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

Why is He different?



Because:

3. **We humans need to be reconciled with God and not vice versa!** This is our message of reconciliation as God's ambassadors: "**Be (you people) reconcile with God**" (2 Cor 5:19)!

Jesus is reconciling us with God, and not God with humanity!

The Necessary Prerequisite

The precondition and necessary qualification of Jesus' intercession was **His death on the cross!** Because of His voluntary and substitutionary death for us He qualifies to be our Intercessor!

In other words: Jesus Christ is our Intercessor because He died for us. What was accomplished on the cross **needs to be applied, realized, actualized in our lives!!!**

We need to enjoy the benefits of His death for us!

Expansion of the Cross!

Christ's present ministry is actually an extension of His accomplished work for us on Calvary!

The light from the cross shines in the heavenly sanctuary!

His death on the cross made His ministry of intercession possible. This is a prerequisite!



EGW: *Great Controversy*, 489

“The intercession of Christ in man's behalf in the sanctuary above is as essential to the plan of salvation as was His death upon the cross. By His death He began that work which after His resurrection He ascended to complete in heaven. ... There the light from the cross of Calvary is reflected.”

A Mercy Seat = Atoning Sacrifice

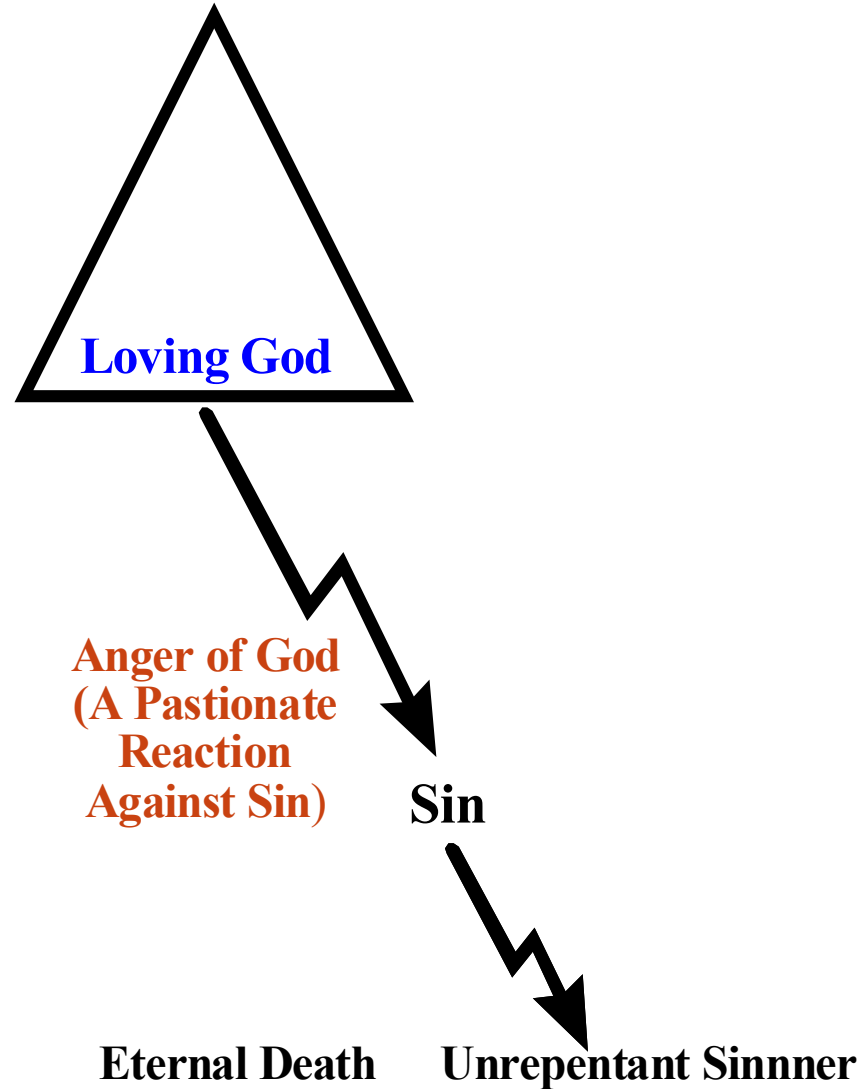
Jesus Christ is the *“kapporet” or “hillasterion” (“mercy seat”)*—Rom 1:18; John 3:36; Rom 3:25.

God's anger = God's antagonistic, intolerant, unchanging, irreconcilable, burning reaction toward sin, and His passionate attitude toward everything which is irreversibly associated with sin, because sin destroys what is good, valuable, and beautiful. It's the other side of God's love!

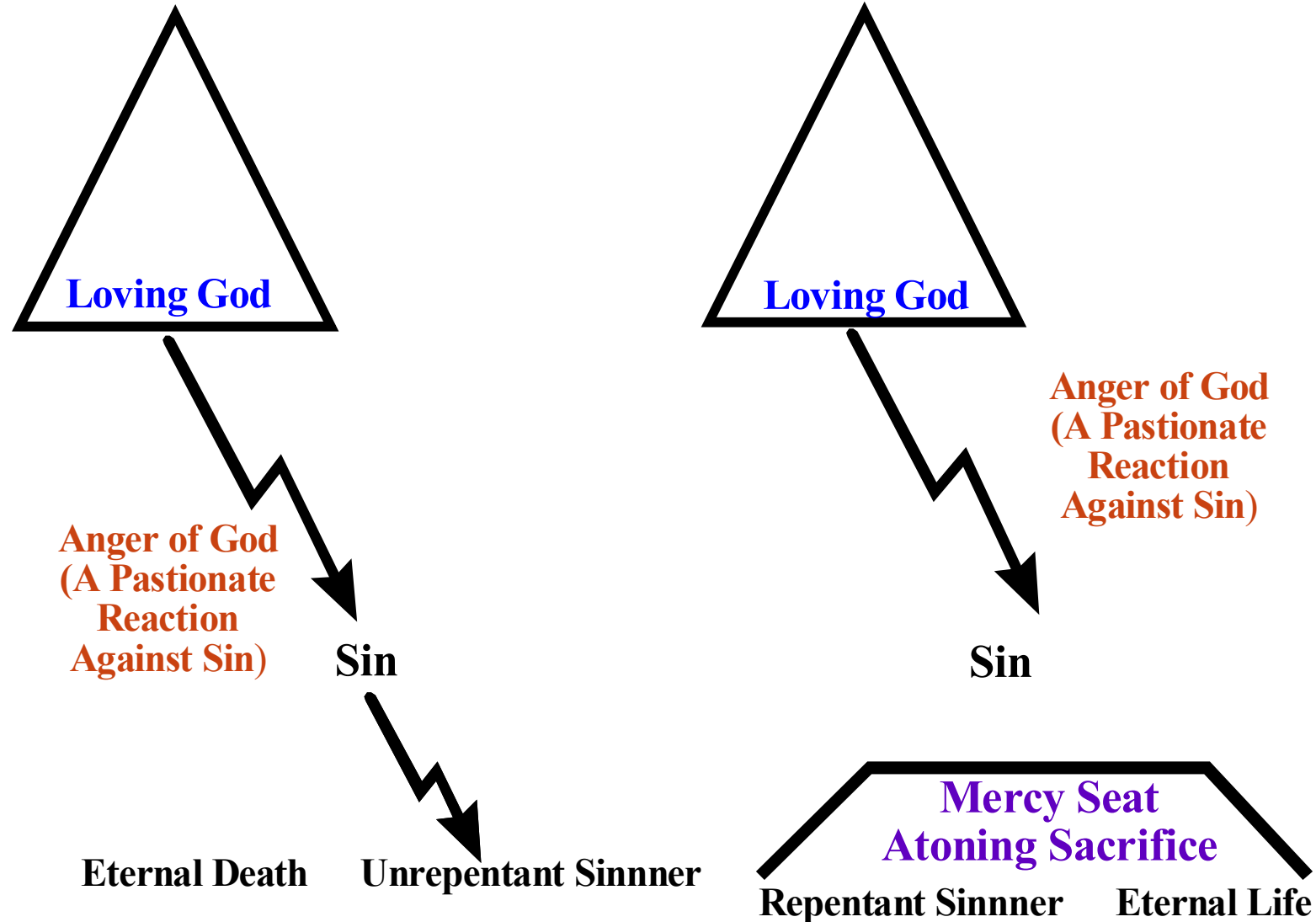
God finds the solution—He is the solution to the problem of sin! He is the mercy seat, the atoning sacrifice who covers all repentant sinners with His righteousness—all sinners who are in deep sorrow that they transgressed the law of God and openly, honestly, and sincerely confess his/her sins.

God's anger is a passionate reaction against sin in order to save humans. He cannot see how we suffer in sin! He wants to save us!

God's Reaction toward the Sin Problem



God's Solution for the Sin Problem



2 Cor 5:18-19

“All this is from **God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ** and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, **not counting men's sins against them**. And he has **committed to us the message of reconciliation.**”

Linguistic Background to the Intercessory Ministry of Jesus

A. Hebrew word for “intercede”—*paga*‘: basic meaning is to “meet,” “encounter.”

B. The Greek verb *entynchano* = to “meet,”
“encounter”; as in Hebrew, only context will tell if
the meaning is positive or negative.

C. The notion of *parakletos* = one who is called to help (1 John 2:1).

What Does the Intercessory Ministry of Jesus Christ Mean?

1. Jesus meets with the Heavenly Father in order to help us in our everyday struggles with ourselves: selfishness, self-centeredness (egocentricity), temptations, problems, and evil – to serve other with love.

**What was the first result of Jesus'
Intercessory Ministry?**

The First Result: The Pentecost



The first tangible result of the meeting between the Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ on our behalf was that **the Holy Spirit was given to believers**—see **Acts 2**.

All heaven is united to help us in our struggles with sin, Satan and temptations.

What Does the Intercessory Ministry of Jesus Christ Mean?

2. Jesus justifies and saves.

When we come humbly to Jesus and confess our sins, He forgives our sins; He accepts us as we are; He identifies with us; He applies to us His merits; He covers us with His righteousness (justifies); and He saves us completely.

Hebrews 7:25

“Therefore **he is able to save completely** those who come to God through him, because he **always** lives **to intercede for them.**”

JESUS SAVES COMPLETELY!

Could you give any examples of how God identifies with us?

Jesus identifies with us, and saves us completely.

- **Matthew 25:40, 45:**

“The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, **whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.**’...

‘whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’”

- Acts 9:4, 5:

“He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, ‘Saul, Saul, **why do you persecute me?**’

‘Who are you, Lord?’ Saul asked.

‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.’”

- Zechariah 2:8:

“Whoever touches you touches the apple of his eye.”



Jesus identified with us when He took upon Himself our human nature, and then particularly when He died for us!

What we deserved He took upon Himself (punishment for our sins), **and what He deserved He gives it freely to us** (eternal life)!!!

Jesus as our Intercessor is our Savior! He is applying to us what He has accomplished for us on the cross almost 2000 years ago!

What Does the Intercessory Ministry of Jesus Christ Mean?



3. **Jesus Christ changes us, transforms** us into His image by the power of His Spirit, His grace, and His Word.

“Therefore, **if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.** The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” (2 Cor 5:17 ESV)

Romans 12:2

“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.” (ESV)

2 Corinthians 3:18

“And we all, with unveiled face, **beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image** from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.” (ESV)

What Does the Intercessory Ministry of Jesus Christ Mean?

4. Jesus vindicates us against the accusations of Satan.

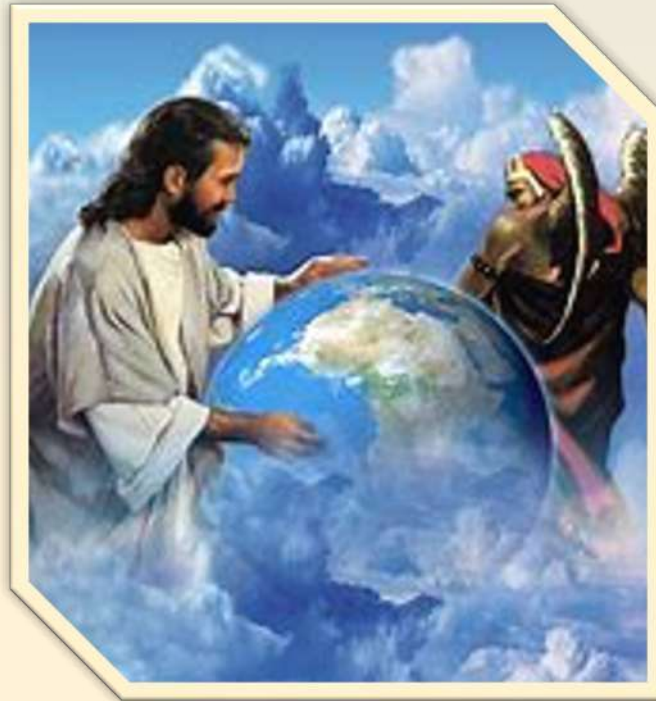
Revelation 12:10–11:

“... **the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them** before our God day and night, has been hurled down.

They overcome him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.”

See also Job 1:8–9; 2:4; 42.

Jesus Christ personally stands against Satan's accusations. He is the Victor. Our victory is in Him!



- When Jesus hung on the cross, Satan hoped that he could win.
- When Jesus cried: “It is finished,” Satan was finished! When Jesus died, Satan lost forever! He is our defeated enemy!

The Meaning of the Intercessory Ministry of Jesus for us:

1. Jesus **meets** with the Heavenly Father to **help** us in our everyday struggles with our problems, sin, temptations, and selfishness.
2. Jesus **justifies and saves** us completely.
3. Jesus **changes and transforms** us.
4. Jesus **vindicates and protects** us against the accusations of Satan.

Two myths/misunderstandings in Adventism

First myth/misunderstanding:

1. After the time of probation ends, we will live without an Intercessor, i.e., we will be on our own.

Proponents of this claim that we will live without Christ, without His help.

- **Mixture of truth and a lie!**

Jesus said:

“Without me you can do nothing!” (John 15:5)

“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20 NIV)

- If you are left on your own after probation is closed, then you will be in big trouble!
- After probation ends the forces of evil are released, and if you are without Christ's Presence, then you are without any protection, and you will not be able to go through it!
- We are always dependent upon God!

Jacob's Struggle – Genesis 32

- Jacob was not alone.
- At that time Jacob was closer to Christ in that struggle than ever before!
- He received a new identity (a new name).
- Peniel = The Face of God

- We will live without the specific Intercessory ministry of Jesus as our Intercessor, but we will *never live* without Christ!

Second Myth/Misunderstanding in Adventism:

2. The Holy Spirit is gradually moving away from our world, therefore we will be left without Him at the very end.

- The Holy Spirit moves gradually away from the wicked world, from the stubborn sinners, BUT, He is not leaving God's faithful followers; He is not leaving the planet earth!
- See, *Testimonies to Ministers* 431; 9T11; 6T408; *Evangelism* 31~32; *Great Controversy* 614~615.

- At the end, the Holy Spirit is given in even greater portion to the faithful followers of Christ!

Matthew 25:1~10

¹Then the kingdom of heaven will be like **ten virgins** who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. ² Five of them were **foolish**, and five were **wise**. ³ For when the foolish took their lamps, they took **no oil with them**, ⁴ but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. ⁵ As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. ⁶ **But at midnight there was a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.'** ⁷ Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' ⁹ But the wise answered, saying, 'Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.' ¹⁰ And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. ¹¹ Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' ¹² But he answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' ¹³ **Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.** (ESV)

These Two Groups of Believers Have Plenty of Things in Common

- They have lamps, light, basic oil, waiting for a bridegroom, fell asleep, etc.
- Only one significant difference:
 - OIL IN ABUNDANCE

The Meaning of the Oil

- The oil represents not only the Holy Spirit, but **the transforming power of the Holy Spirit** (see Zech 4:1-6).
- It is the oil who makes the lamp to produce light!
- It is the Holy Spirit who changes our lives, our characters that we can reflect God's character of love, that we can be the light of the world.
- The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal 5:22).

Early Writings, 86

“At that time the ‘latter rain,’ or refreshing from the presence of the Lord, will come, (1) **to give power to the loud voice** of the third angel, and (2) **prepare the saints to stand in the period** when the seven last plagues shall be poured out.”

Never without Christ or the Holy Spirit!

Remember, after the close of probation you will live without Christ's intercessory ministry, but **never one moment without Christ! His role as Savior and Vindicator has ended (no more need for forgiveness of sins!).**

He will be always with His people (Matthew 28:1~20; John 15:5).

It will be the Holy Spirit who will carry us victoriously through the final short period of crisis (Matthew 25:1~10).

Sealed with the Apocalyptic Seal!

- At that time all God's good and faithful servants, all devoted believers, all children of God will be **sealed by the seal of God**. This seal **secures their redemption and provides protection** in the final days of our human history.

I hope I will not shock you to say that

- There are two seals of God (not one as I previously thought)!

- Let me explain it on the basis of the biblical text: “Thus says the Lord...”

Sealed: When and by Whom

- There is not one but **two seals of God, and only** when you have received the first one, can you get the second one.
- They are complementary!
- It is like **the early and latter rain** – the outpouring of the Holy Spirit: during Pentecost (given until today) and in the very last days just prior to the close of probation time.

Two Seals of the Living God

These two seals are **different**, given at **different times**, but **complementary**.

The first seal is received **at the beginning** of our spiritual journey with our gracious and awesome Lord and the second one **at the very end of time** just prior to the close of probation.

- Where do we find the biblical data for these biblical facts?

The First Seal of God

- Eph 1:13-14

“And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, **you were marked in him with a seal**, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession-- to the praise of his glory.”

- Eph 4:30

“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom **you were sealed** for the day of redemption.”

1. The Seal of the Gospel

- This seal is **received after** we accept Jesus as our personal Savior – a guarantee of our redemption.
- Paul plainly states that at the moment one gives his/her life to Jesus and believes in Him the Holy Spirit seals (Greek verb: *sphragizō*) that believer in Christ for the day of redemption.

The Greek expression (*esphragisthēte*) occurs **only twice in the New Testament**, namely in **Eph 1:13 and 4:30, and always in relation to believing in Christ**. Pay attention to Paul's affirmation that the sealing by the Holy Spirit is a past event in both texts: "You were sealed." **Believers in Christ are sealed by the Holy Spirit for the future event of total redemption**. No one can put a seal on himself or herself. It is **God's action for us** in which there is no "but" or "perhaps." By staying in Christ, we have this assurance of salvation for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and the final judgment (1 John 2:28; 4:17).

- It is a verb indicative **aurist passive** second person plural, which means **“you were sealed” or “marked”** (from *sphragizō* = to seal, secure with a seal, mark with a seal, set apart by a seal, affix to be true, acknowledged, proved) and is speaking about a community of faith, believers in Christ Jesus.

Sequence

The sequence of thoughts in the Ephesians' passage is clear:

- (1) we **heard** the word of truth, the Gospel of salvation;
- (2) we **believed** in God, Jesus Christ;
- (3) we have been **sealed** by the Holy Spirit;
- (4) the Holy **Spirit is given** to us as a **deposit** (Greek: *arrabon*, Eph 1:14; 2 Cor 1:22) or as a firstfruit (Greek: *aparchē*, Rom 8:23–24), which means He is a pledge and guarantor of our salvation/redemption.

The Second Seal

“Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, **having the seal [sfragis] of the living God**. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea: ‘Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees **until we put a seal** on the foreheads of the servants of our God.’ Then I heard the number of those who **were sealed**: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel.”
(Rev 7:2-4 NIV)

2. Apocalyptic Seal of God

When: Prior to the close of probation;
and before the final crisis related to the
seven last plagues sent on the wicked
world.

Like a Final Inspection of the New House
before Moving into It

- This seal is like **a final stamp** on the finished document. Its purpose is not focused on salvation or redemption but has to do with **protection**. Ezekiel 9 clearly demonstrates that only those who are sealed are protected from impending destruction.

- In the book of Revelation, those who have the seal of God are **protected** from the last seven plagues before the outpouring of the wrath of God. The commands were similar: “Do not touch anyone who has the mark” (Ezek 9:6) and John records the order for four angels: “Do not harm” (Rev 7:3). **The seal of God shields God’s people in the time of the outpouring of the divine judgment of condemnation.**

This second seal **confirms** their faithfulness in following the Lamb and God's leadership in their life, doing His will, keeping His commandments, and living according to His revealed Word (Rev 12:17; 13:10; 14:4–5, 12; 17:14; 19:10). They were sealed by the Spirit at the time of their **acceptance** of Jesus Christ as their Savior, but, according to the book of Revelation, they will have continued walking with God in order to receive the final eschatological seal of God at the close of the time and to be able to go through the final showdown and stand before the Son of Man (Luke 21:36).

Different but Complementary

1. The first seal may be called the **“seal of the Gospel”** and the second one, **“the apocalyptic seal.”**

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Different but Complementary

1. The first seal may be called the **“seal of the Gospel”** and the second one, **“the apocalyptic seal.”**
2. The first is a **seal of salvation** and the second is the **seal of protection**.
3. One seal is a **seal of acceptance**, and the other is a **seal of final ratification**.
4. The first seal is **declarative**, and the second one is **affirmative**.

Different but Complementary

- 5. The first seal is received after **acceptance of Christ now** as a personal Savior, the second seal is a **confirmation our staying in Christ at the end of time.**

Different but Complementary

6. They each are irreplaceable and **cannot be exchanged**. The sealing is done by the Holy Spirit.

Different but Complementary

7. Although the seal of the Gospel **can be broken** by rebellion and unrepentance, the apocalyptic seal **is permanent**.

“This call for the patience of the saints,” perseverance, endurance ...

Important Question

When will precisely the believer who will be alive at the second coming of Christ receive the apocalyptic seal of the living God?

Does the Bible teach that the cases of the living can be brought before God any time in the pre-Advent judgment before the close of probation?

- If our names can be presented to the heavenly court at any time, it looks like it would be **unfair**. God appears **hard, unjust, and arbitrary**. Why should He finalize on a person's destiny prior to the close of probation, since life has not ended and that person still possesses the power of choice?

- On the basis of biblical teaching which is expanded in the Ellen G. White writings, one may assert that the apocalyptic seal is only given to God's faithful followers after the final global crisis but immediately prior the close of probation. At that time the image of the beast is formed and the forceful demands of that power are presented.

EGW: Letter 11, 1890

“The image of the beast will be formed before probation closes; for it is to be the great test for the people of God, by which their eternal destiny will be decided. . . . **This is the test that the people of God must have before they are sealed.** All who prove their loyalty to God by observing His law, and refusing to accept a spurious Sabbath, will rank under the banner of the Lord God Jehovah, and **will receive the seal of the living God.** Those who yield the truth of heavenly origin and accept the Sunday Sabbath, will receive the mark of the beast.” (7 BC 976)

- **The apocalyptic sealing will not occur at just any time** for those who will be alive when the final events of the human history will take place but **only after** the Sunday law is issued, and people make their decision for or against God. The Sabbath-Sunday controversy will be an outward expression of either loyalty and love for God or obedience to the ungodly powers aimed against Him, His law, and His people.

The Seal of God

Not only the opposite of the mark of the beast!

True characteristics of the believers:

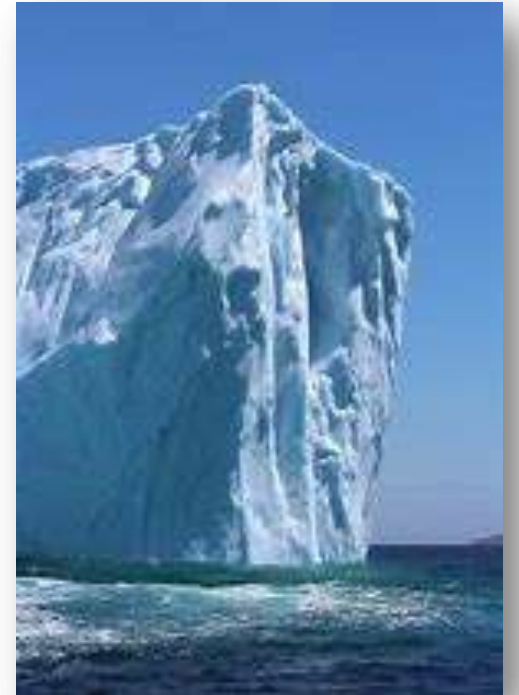
Ezekiel 20:12, 20

“Also I gave them **my Sabbaths** as a sign between us, so they would know that I the LORD made them holy.”

“Keep **my Sabbaths** holy, that they may be a sign between us. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.”

Like an Iceberg

- Only 10% is visible on the surface
- Imagine a picture of an iceberg
 - 10%
 - 90%



- **Sabbath** is only the visible tip of the iceberg.



Sabbath = Immanuel

- Sabbath is not only opposite to Sunday
- It is about the presence of the Lord
- It is about living in total dependency on God
- It is not only about not working on Sabbath
- It is not enough not to work on Sabbath
- The most important is to cultivate genuine relationship with God and people
- Sabbath without Christ is an empty exercise – like sky without the sun, or water without fish
- Sabbath without relationship with God is dead, without abundant life
- Creation is about enjoyment of the gift of life
- It is a joyful experience of God's presence
- Not only to keep, but live the Sabbath!

Like a Pyramid

Sabbath is on the top, but there is much more to it:

Rev 14:12

“This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus.”
(NIV)

“Here is the patience of the saints; here *are* those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.” (NKJV)



The true sign of God's people

John 13:34-35

""A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. **By this all men will know** that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

- Faith, trust
- Love
- Hope
- Obedience, morality
- Truthfulness
- Endurance
- Relational Holiness

- Each side of the pyramid
- On each side of the pyramid has different virtues of the saints:
 - Faith (trust), obedience, endurance, love, holiness



What is the Mark of the Beast?

- **Opposite of Rev 14:12**

- Lack of the patience of the saints (long suffering of the people of God)
- Superficial holiness
- Counterfeit of the true faith
- External, surface obedience to the commandments of God
- Changing of the day of rest
- At the end time - **Sunday** is the visible sign of life living without true relationship with God; it's a refusal of living in harmony with the light of truth God provides

When does Sunday become the Mark of the Beast?

- Has anyone already received it?

When does Sunday become the Mark of the Beast?

- Has anyone already received it?
- NO! Not yet!

Manuscript 51, 1899

(Evangelism 234-235)

“The change of the Sabbath is the sign or mark of the authority of the Romish church... The mark of the beast is the papal sabbath, which has been accepted by the world in the place of the day of God’s appointment.

No one has yet received the mark of the beast. The testing time has not yet come. There are true Christians in every church, not excepting the Roman Catholic communion. None are condemned until they have had the light and have seen the obligation of the fourth commandment. But **when the decree shall go forth enforcing the counterfeit sabbath, and the loud cry of the third angel shall warn men** against the worship of the beast and his image, the line will be clearly drawn between the false and the true. **Then those who still continue in transgression will receive the mark of the best.”**

Manuscript 51, 1899

(Evangelism 234-235) - continuation

“With rapid steps we are approaching this period. **When Protestant churches shall unite with the secular power to sustain a false religion, for opposing which their ancestors endured the fiercest persecution, then will the papal sabbath be enforced by the combined authority of church and state.** There will be a national apostasy, which will end only in national ruin.”

Manuscript 118, 1899

- Ellen White explicitly proclaims: “Sunday keeping is not yet the mark of the beast, and will not be **until the decree goes forth causing men to worship this idol sabbath**. The time will come when this day will be the test, but **that time has not come yet**” (Ellen G. White, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7: 977).

Today: Time of Preparation and Proclamation of Truth

- Accept God's Light and Mercy
- Live authentic life with God
- Serve unselfishly to people

Conclusion

Jesus' statements

- “Therefore **keep watch**, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.” (Mat 24:42 NIV)
- “So you also must **be ready**, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.” (Mat 24:44 NIV)

Key: To be sealed with the First Seal – the Seal of the Gospel

- **Only those who** received the **first** seal can experience getting the **second** one. Only those who were sealed by the Gospel seal can at the end of time be marked by the eschatological seal which will **protect** them in the time of trouble and when probation is closed. It is a seal of life in the midst of destruction and ruin; it is a seal of **final redemption** (see Ezekiel 9).

- We need to stay with Christ (“in the Lord”) – we need not only to “marry” Christ, but **stay married** to Him.

Steps to Christ, 62

- “If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Savior, then, sinful as your life may have been for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ’s character stands in place of your character and you are accepted before God just as if you had never sinned.”

Steps to Christ, 57-58

Ellen White also explains that our character is built on our daily decisions and habits:

“The character is revealed, not by occasional good deeds and occasional misdeeds, but by the tendency of the habitual words and acts.”

“If you are right with God today, you are ready if Christ should come today.”

Ellen G. White, *In Heavenly Places* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1967), 227.

- God does not want to keep people from heaven. He is not **a goalie** trying to protect His kingdom, allowing only a few to enter. He wants all to be saved (1 Tim 2:3–4), because He has no delight in the death of the wicked (Ezek 18:23, 32). Punishment is a strange act for Him (Isa 28:21b) because He is the God of life (Deut 30:20).

Isa 30:18

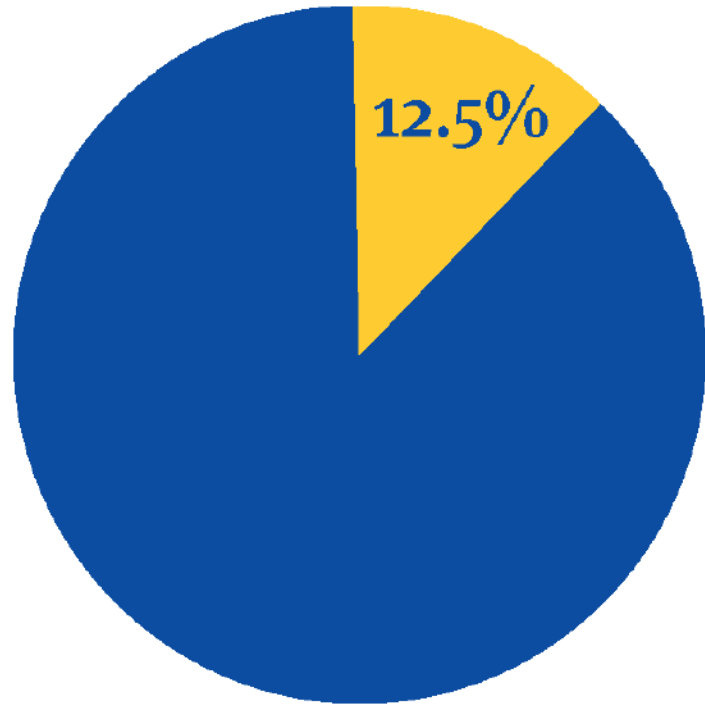
- Isaiah expressed the Lord's desire exceptionally well: "Yet **the LORD longs to be gracious to you;** therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!"

Illustration: Water lily...

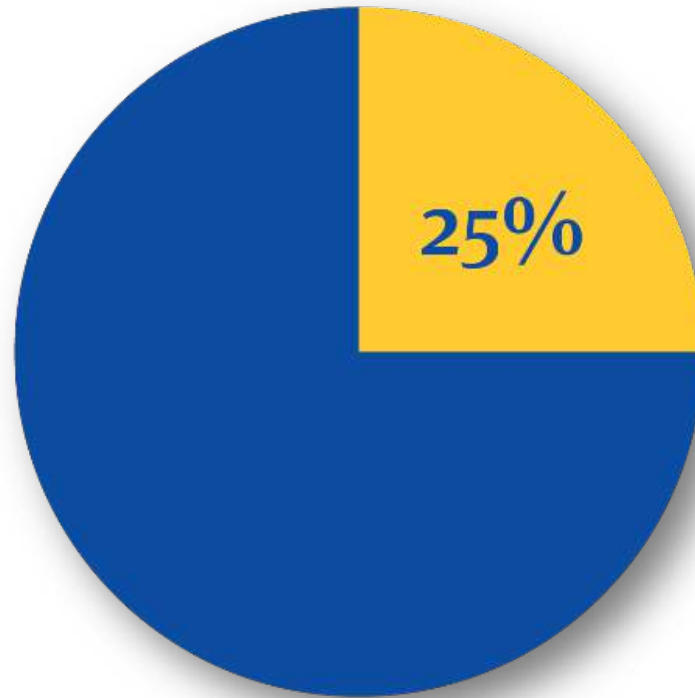
- **EGW:** “With **rapid steps** we are approaching this period...”



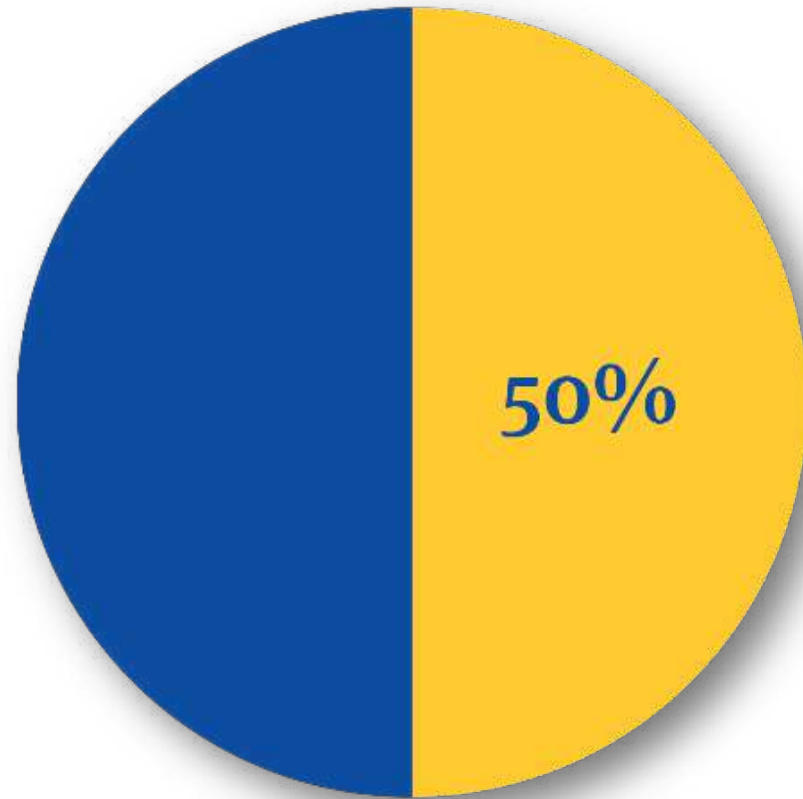
47th Day



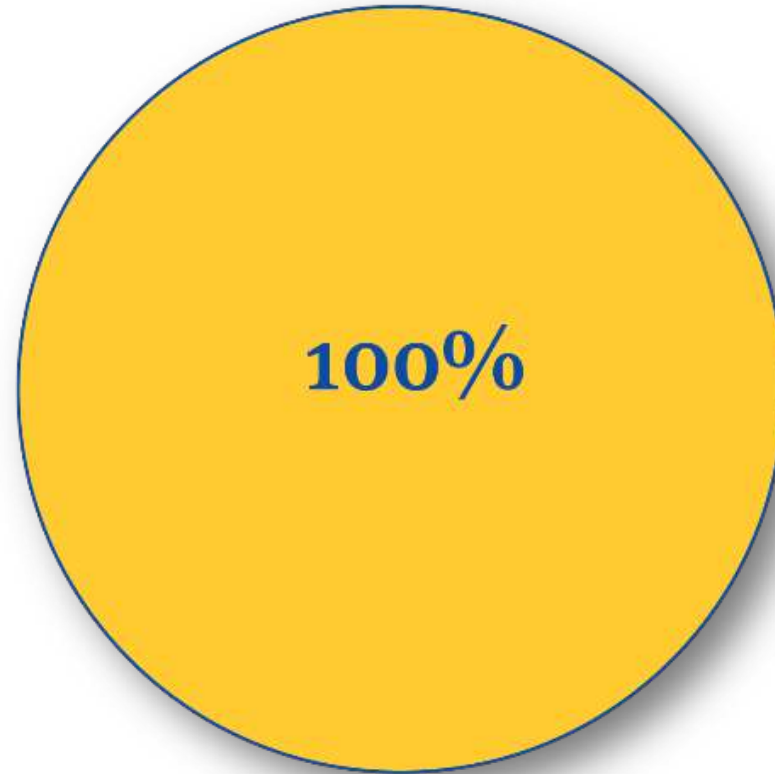
48th Day

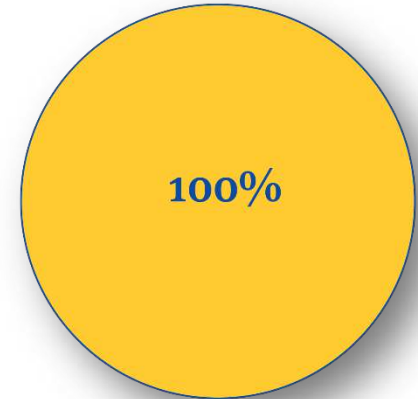
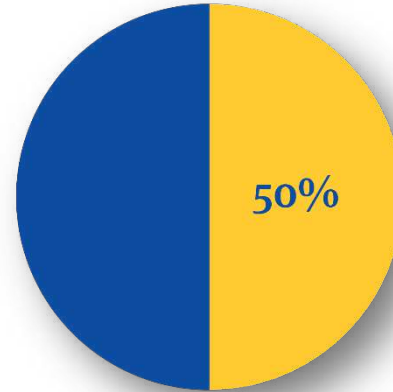
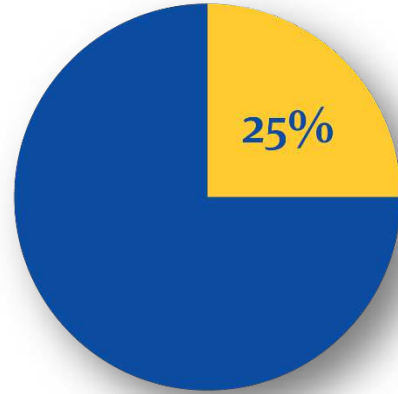
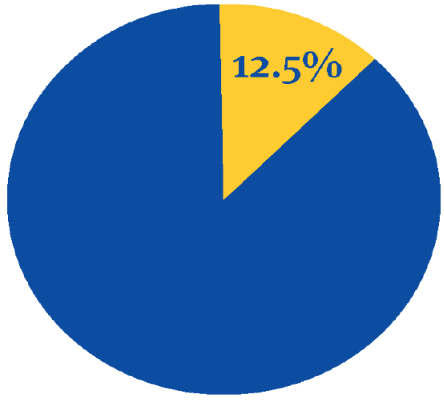


49th Day



50th Day: The end is fast approaching!
Jesus is coming soon!





Isa 25:9

- “It will be said on that day, **‘Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.’**” (ESV)



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Jiří Moskala, “The Meaning of the Intercessory Ministry of Jesus Christ on our Behalf in the Heavenly Sanctuary,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 28, no. 1 (Spring 2017): 3-25.

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