

The background of the slide is a photograph of a sunset. The sun is a bright yellow-orange orb on the horizon, with rays of light fanning out. The sky is a gradient of blue and orange, with some wispy clouds. In the foreground, there is a dark silhouette of a hill. On top of the hill, there are three crosses of different sizes. The largest cross is in the center, flanked by two smaller crosses. The overall mood is contemplative and spiritual.

Adventist Soteriology: How Does God Save Us?

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Two Questions

- (1) How does God save us?
- (2) How can one be saved?





Theology as Worship

The (Great Controversy) Story of Redemption

- God (in Christ) became man:
 - suffered torture and death
 - perfectly demonstrated God's righteousness and love
 - defeated the devil's charges, to save the world
- The sanctuary system of sacrifices prefigured God's remedy to sin – Christ's work of atonement.





What is Atonement?

- Atonement is God's way of repairing the relationship between God and humans – ruptured by sin, reconciling the world to Himself.
- God can do this, however, only in ways consistent with His perfect justice and love – for God “cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim 2:13).
- “God set forth [Christ] as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness . . . to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Rom 3:25-26; cf. 5:8).

Why was Christ's death needed for atonement?



God *cannot* forgive sin without atonement because doing so would itself be unjust (and God cannot deny Himself, 2 Tim 2:13).



Since God “cannot lie” (Titus 1:2) and His promises are unbreakable (Heb 6:18) , God could not simply cancel or break His perfect law of unselfish love



To overlook sin or change His law to accommodate it would mean God's moral law was arbitrary and unjust in the first place, as Satan alleged.

God's Perfect Law of Unselfish Love

“The law of God is as sacred as God Himself. It is a revelation of His will, a transcript of His character, the expression of divine love and wisdom. The harmony of creation depends upon the perfect conformity of all beings, of everything, animate and inanimate, to the law of the Creator.”

- Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 52.





How does Christ save us?

- Scripture presents the atonement as multi-faceted.
- The Adventist understanding of salvation is wholistic (like the rest of our theology).



Christ's work of atonement is:

(1) **substitutionary** (Isa 53:6; Rom 5:8; 1 Per 2:24; 3:18; Eph 5:2; Gal 3:13; Heb 9:28; cf. Exod 34:7; 2 Cor 5:14).

(2) **sacrificial** (Rom 3:25; 8:3-4; 1 Cor 5:7; Heb 9:22; cf. 9:12).

(3) one of **ransom** and **redemption** (Eph 1:7; 1 Tim 2:6; Tit 2:14; cf. Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45; Rom 3:24; Heb 9:12, 15; 1 Pet 1:18-19), involving **expiation** (i.e., removal of guilt), **justification**, and **reconciliation** (e.g., Rom 3:24-25; 8:1-4).

(4) **exemplary** (John 14:9; 1 Pet 2:21).

(5) **victorious over the power of Satan** and his dominion (Gen 3:15; Rev 12:7-9; 1 John 3:8; Heb 2:14; Rev 20:2, 10).

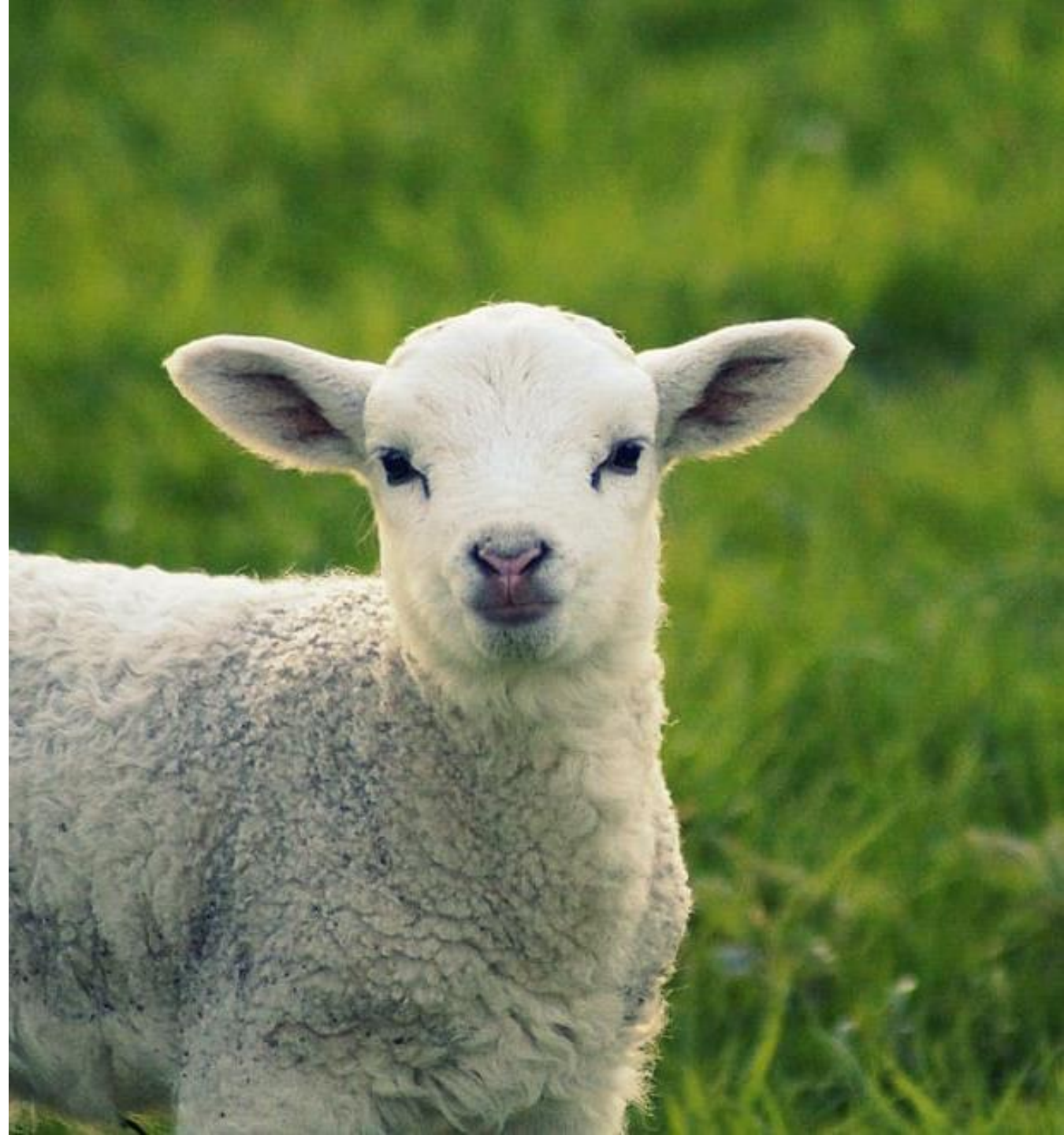


A Substitutionary Atonement

- Christ died for us as our substitute
 - “Christ died for us” as our substitute (e.g., Isa 53:6; Rom 5:8; 1 Pet 2:21, 24; Eph 5:2; Gal 3:13; Heb 9:28; cf. 2 Cor 5:14, 21).
 - Christ “died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God” (1 Pet 3:18; cf. Rom 4:25; 1 Tim 2:6; 1 John 4:10; 1 Cor 5:7).
- “Upon Christ as our substitute and surety was laid the iniquity of us all. He was counted a transgressor, that He might redeem us from the condemnation of the law.” Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages*, 753.

A Sacrificial Atonement

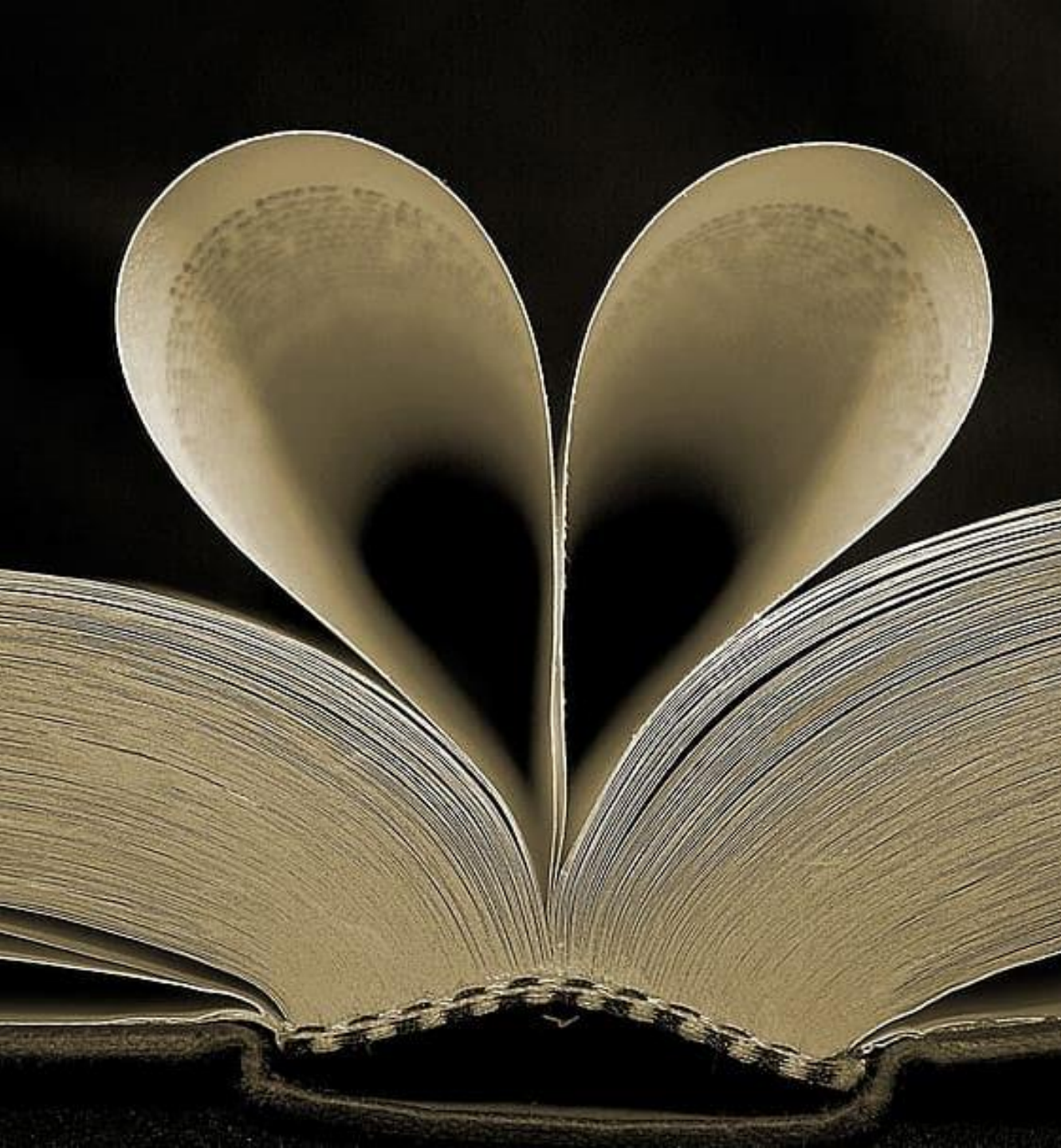
- Christ sacrificed His life as an offering for sinners.
 - See Rom 3:25; 8:3-4; 1 Cor 5:7; Heb 9:22; cf. 9:12
- Christ “is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:22).
- Christ is our “Passover” lamb who “has been sacrificed” for us (1 Cor 5:7); “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29; cf. 1 Pet 1:19; Rev 5; 13:8).
- Utterly unlike pagan sacrifices





Atonement as Ransom and Redemption

- Christ deals with sinners’ “debts,” which they could never resolve by themselves – making amends (expiation)
 - See Eph 1:7; 1 Tim 2:6; Tit 2:14; cf. Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45; Rom 3:24; Heb 9:12, 15; 1 Pet 1:18-19.
- Christ “gave Himself as a ransom for all” (1 Tim 2:6; cf. Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45).
- Christ “gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed” (Tit 2:14).
- To provide redemption for someone (in the literal sense) is to make a payment on their behalf.
- This imagery arises from the Hebrew background of ransom payments to free people from bondage and/or cover debts they could not pay (Exod 21:7-11; Job 6:23; Ruth).



A Demonstration and Example of Unselfish Love

- Christ's work of atonement is exemplary, meaning Christ set an example of what God is like and how humans should relate to God (John 14:9; 1 Pet 2:21).
- "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8).
- Christ "suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps" (1 Pet 2:21).



Christus Victor

- Christ's work of atonement is victorious over the power of Satan and his dominion
 - Gen 3:15; Rev 12:7-9; 1 John 3:8; Heb 2:14; Rev 20:2, 10.
- The "Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8).
- "... that through death he might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives" (Heb 2:14-15; cf. Gen 3:15)

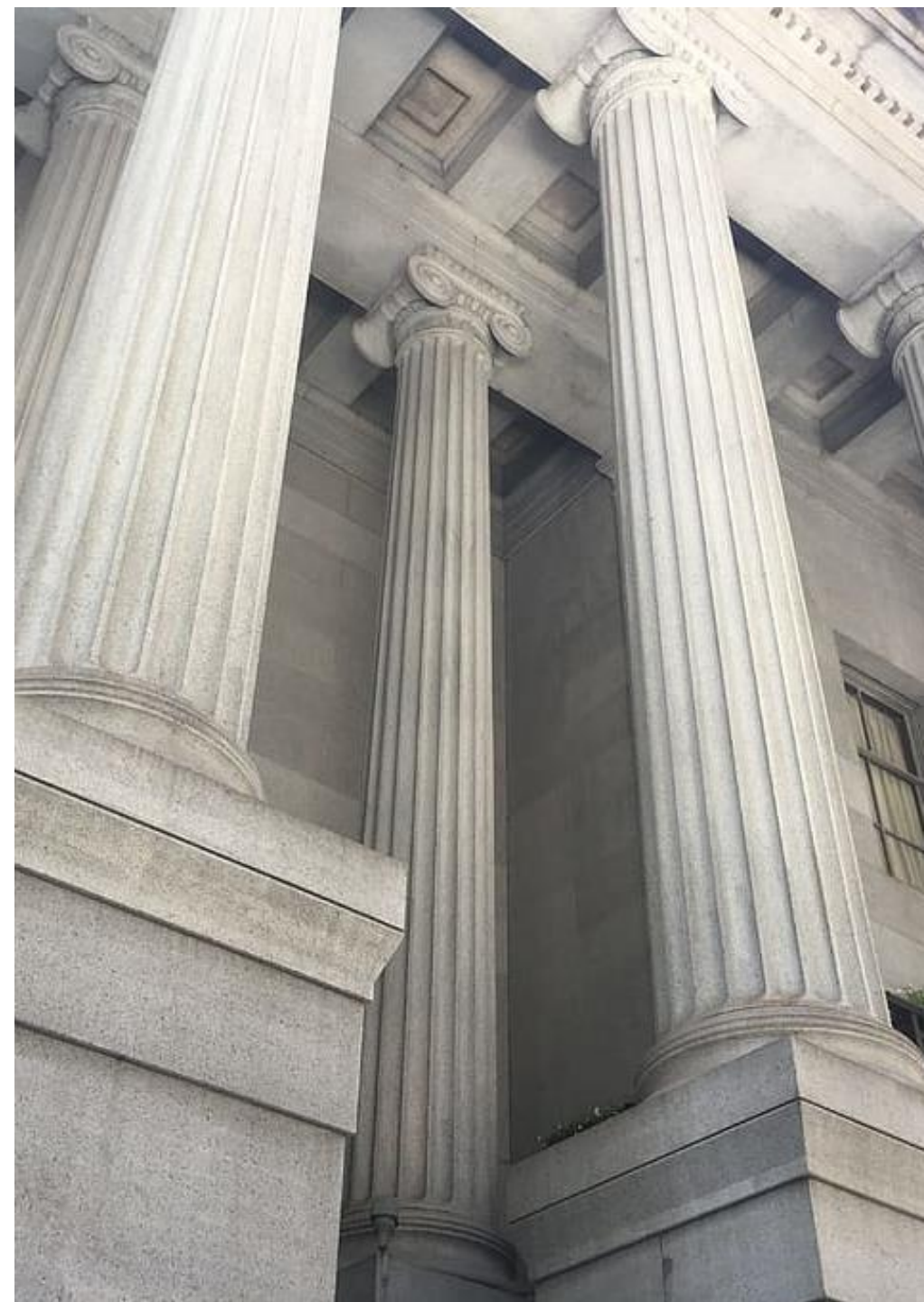
Cosmic Conflict Context as Key

- Ties together the other facets, helping us understand why God (morally) could not simply overlook evil, but saving sinners required atonement.
- God triumphs over Satan's slanderous lies against God's character and government and his accusations against God's people in the heavenly court.
 - (Satan claims God cannot justly save such sinners, see Zech 3:1-5; Jude 9; Rev 12:10; cf. Job 1-2).
 - "Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night. And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony" (Rev. 12:10–11).



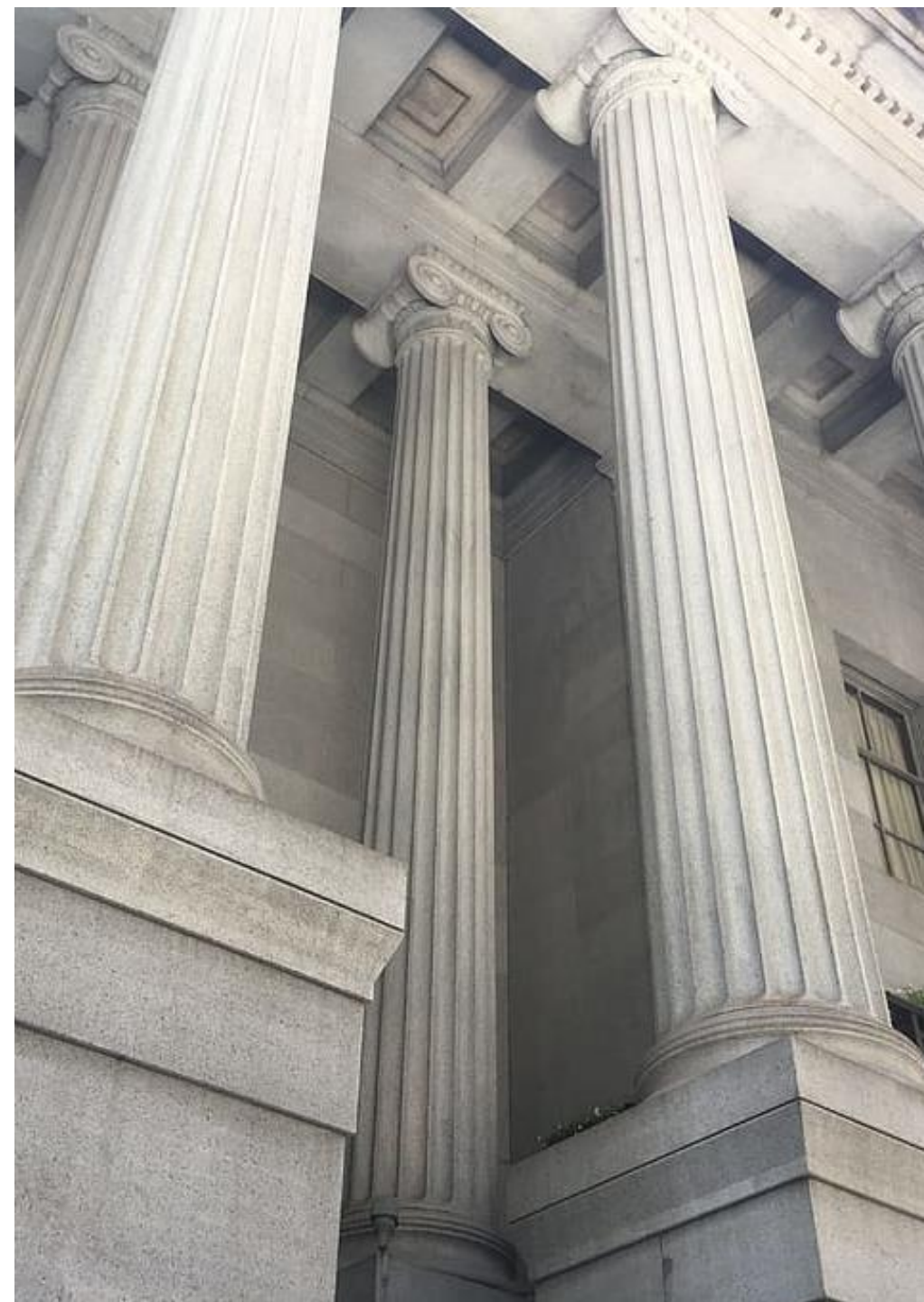
Cosmic Conflict Context as Key

- The phase of atonement completed at the cross was the prerequisite for Christ's atoning ministry in the heavenly sanctuary (Heb 8:1-6; 9:11-12) and the eventual eradication of the devil, death, and evil (see Rev 21).
- After the cross, sessions in the heavenly court continue (see Rev 4-5), with judgment in the heavenly court to take place prior to Christ's Second Coming (Dan 7:9-10; Rev 14:7—the pre-Advent, investigative judgment)



Cosmic Conflict Context as Key

- Questions:
 - Is God truly just in saving humans, whose sins merit death?
 - Is God just with regard to who is saved?
 - Has God truly done all He could do to save the lost, with perfect justice for all concerned?
- God answers these questions via the cross **and** Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary
 - (via the pre-Advent judgment, Dan 7:9-10; Rev 14:7 and the post-Advent judgment described in Revelation 20:4-5; cf. John 5:28-29, 1 Cor 6:3).
 - When Christ comes again all cases will have been decided such that Christ can justly "reward each according to his works" (Matt 16:27; cf. Rev 20:12; 22:12).





Christ's work of atonement is multifaceted:


(1) **substitutionary** (Isa 53:6; Rom 5:8; 1 Per 2:24; 3:18; Eph 5:2; Gal 3:13; Heb 9:28; cf. Exod 34:7; 2 Cor 5:14).

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A close-up photograph of a person's hand being painted with blue paint. The paint is thick and textured, covering the palm and fingers. Another hand is visible, holding a brush or applicator, applying the paint. The background is blurred, showing other people and paint containers, suggesting a group activity or art project.

How Can One Be Saved?

The Process of Salvation



The Process of Salvation

- (1) **Universal Provision by God:** Christ provides universal provision for the salvation of all, including you and me.
- (2) **God Graciously reaches out to us prior to anything we do:** God reaches out to humans first and draws us to himself.
- (3) **Repentance:** The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin and the kindness of God leads us to repentance.
- (4) **Faith:** God moves us to place saving faith in Christ, surrendering to Him in total allegiance.
- (5) **Justification:** God justifies us (declares us forgiven of our sins).
- (6) **Sanctification:** God sanctifies us (makes us holy, righteous, and loving over time).
- (7) **Glorification:** God will finally glorify us (make us perfect, change us from corruptible to incorruptible).



Universal Provision

- God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” and “gave Himself as a ransom for all” (1 Tim 2:4, 6; 4:10; cf. John 3:16; 12:32; Titus 2:11).
- God “is patient toward” us, “not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance” (2 Pet 3:9; cf. Matt 12:14; Ezek 18:23, 32; 33:11).
- Jesus Himself “is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2, NRSV).

God's Gracious Work Precedes Human Response

- Christ promised to “draw all people to myself” (John 12:32).
 - As a good shepherd seeks after every lost sheep, God seeks after each person (Matt 18:12-14; Luke 15:3-7; cf. John 10:11, 16; Ezek 34:11-12, 16).
- “We love because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19).
- “Only by love is love awakened.” Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 22.



Salvation by Faith: Trust, Allegiance, and Repentance

- **Faith (trust/allegiance):**
 - “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31; cf. John 3:16; Rom 5:6-11; 10:9; 1 Cor 1:23-24).
 - Involves trust in and allegiance
 - Savior *and* Lord
- **Repentance**
 - genuine sorrow for sin and willingness to turn from sin through God’s power (Acts 2:37-38; 3:19; 2 Cor 7:10).





Justification

- Justification is God's declaration of a sinner's righteousness, accompanied by the removal of guilt by His work of atonement.
- Justification includes:
 - acquittal (Rom 5:16)
 - reckoning righteous (Rom 4:1-5, 22-24)
 - gift of new life (Rom 5:18)
 - exchange of lordships (Rom 3:21-4:25)
 - the promise of a future reality of righteousness (1 John 3:2).



Justification

- “. . . justified by faith apart from works of the Law” (Rom 3:28).
- Yet, justification does not nullify the Law (Rom 3:31).
- “Christ has made a way of escape for us If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, 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 not sinned” (SC 62).



Sanctification

- Sanctification is the process by which believers become more and more like Christ, growing in love and holiness toward more fully reflecting Christ's character
- Justification is a declaration of God made in a moment, sanctification is the work of a lifetime, yet both are by faith--"the one who is righteous will live by faith" (Rom 1:17, NRSV; cf. Gal 3:11).
- "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins [justification] and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness [sanctification]" (1 John 1:9).
- They always go together. Cannot have one without the other.



Sanctification

- One is not saved by any works, nor does one accrue merit, but in the end there is a judgment *according to works* (e.g., Matt 7:2; 12:36-37; 16:27; Rom 2:5-8; 14:12 ;2 Cor 5:10; 1 Pet 1:17; Rev 2:23; 20:12; 22:12), which manifests where one's allegiance truly resides.
- "We do not earn salvation by our obedience; for salvation is the free gift of God, to be received by faith. But obedience is the fruit of faith."
 - Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, 61.
 - Justified by faith, judged according to works.
 - The experience of salvation is one of freedom from slavery to sin/darkness (Col 1:13).



Glorification

- God will finally glorify us
- “Now we are children of God,” but “when he appears, we will be like Him” (1 John 3:2).
- “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Cor 15:51-53, NKJV; cf. 1 John 3:2).



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Sanctuary doctrine

- This all makes sense in the context of the great controversy, with special emphasis on the sanctuary.
- Adventist soteriology is inseparable from a right understanding of the sanctuary, which itself is central to the cosmic conflict worldview that Scripture presents.
- The sanctuary doctrine is not an appendage to our theology—it is a crucial pillar, a beautiful constellation of teachings that I am convinced we must not neglect relative to discipling the minds of our people—especially our young people.







The Last Message of Mercy

- "The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love. The children of God are to manifest His glory. In their own life and character they are to reveal what the grace of God has done for them."
 - Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 415-16.