

Response To: "The Investigative Judgment: A Bible Based Doctrine?"

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I. Introduction

This article summarizes some of the more recent attacks to the Adventist doctrine of the sanctuary by persons who formerly worked for the church. Two specific individuals are mentioned and quoted throughout this document, namely Desmond Ford and Raymond F. Cottrell. Neither of them represents or speaks for the church or on behalf of Adventist theologians and the church does not consider them to be representative of Adventist beliefs. Anthony A. Hoekema, a non-Adventist critic, is also quoted to attack the Adventist position.

The main burden of the article addresses the biblical foundation or lack of foundation for the teaching of the investigative judgment. Using arguments from the theologians cited above, the article concludes that the doctrine is not biblical because there is no link between Daniel 8:14 and Leviticus 16 and because the context of Daniel 8:14 does not support the Adventist interpretation. These questions have been studied in depth by Adventist scholars and, based on careful study of the Scriptures, satisfactory answers have been given.

The Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference published seven volumes dealing with the sanctuary and the interpretation of Daniel and Revelation. They contain a collection of biblical studies prepared by a large number of Adventist theologians who firmly believe that our teachings on the sanctuary are biblically based. The volumes carry the general description of "The Daniel and Revelation Committee Series" and can be obtained from our Adventist Book Centers.

The article makes reference to a small committee set up by the General Conference in the 1950's to study Daniel 8:14. Quoting Raymond Cottrell, it says that the committee was not able to support the Adventist interpretation. This is obviously the opinion of Raymond Cottrell, who was a member of the committee and opposed any interpretation other than the one he was promoting. The great majority of the members supported the Adventist position. Because of attempts by some to change the church's position, the work of the committee was left unfinished. It is saddening that some among us have raised themselves to undermine truth but for us this is a sign of the times.

In what follows we will provide some of the biblical materials and reasons why we believe that the argument of this article is an attack against biblical truth. It will become clear that contextually as well as linguistically the Adventist interpretation is on solid biblical ground. We encourage the reader to study this material carefully, with prayer and with an open Bible.

1. Relation Between Daniel 8 and Leviticus

Daniel 8:13-14 is part of a large vision (*hāzōn*) which began in 8:1. The prophet saw a ram with two horns, one higher than the other, charging to the west, north, and south. It was attacked and defeated by a he-goat coming from the west having one horn between the eyes. The he-goat was magnifying itself exceedingly when its horn broke into four which grew to the four winds of the heavens. Another horn appeared from one of the winds. It was a horn coming from small beginnings (“little horn”) which grew exceedingly great to the south, east, and to the glorious land and had control over the host of heaven, i.e. the people of God (vs. 10, 24; cf. Exod 7:4). This geographical, horizontal expansion (vs. 9-10), was followed by a vertical expansion or conquest (vs. 11-12). The horn magnified itself against the Prince of the hosts, took the continual away from him, overthrew the place of the sanctuary, and cast down the truth to the ground. It is in this setting that the prophet hears a holy one asking, “For how long is the vision. . . ?” and the answer was given, “For two thousand and three hundred evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state”[*nitsdaq*], (8:13-14).

It is very important for any exegete to observe that language used in the context of the Israelite sanctuary and its services is employed in Daniel 9-14 to describe the work of the little horn and the work of the Prince of hosts. Thus is established a linguistic and theological relationship between this passage and particularly the book of Leviticus.

It is interesting to notice that the symbols used to represent political powers are a ram and a he-goat (vs. 20-21), both of which are clean animals used as sacrificial victims. In chapter 7 the symbols are strange composite creatures. The term “horn” (*qeren*) reminds us of the horns on the four corners of the altar (cf. Lev 4:7), and “truth” could designate the instruction the priest handed over to the people (*'emet*, 8:12; cf. Mal 2:6). The term “transgression” (*peša*, 8:12) is used in Leviticus 16:16 to designate sins expiated during the Day of Atonement. Several terms for “sanctuary” are used which are obviously terms employed in the context of the Israelite worship: *mākōn* (place) is used to designate God’s earthly (Isa 4:5) and heavenly sanctuaries (1 Kgs 8:39); and the same applies to *miqdaš* (“sanctuary”; Lev 26:2; Ps 68:33-35), and to *qodeš* (“sanctuary”; Exod 30:13; Ps 68:5). This last term is used in Leviticus 16: 2 to designate the Most Holy Place of the Israelite sanctuary that was cleansed during the day of atonement. The term “hosts” is used in the context of the tabernacle to refer to the Levitical guard (Num 4:3, 23). The verb “take away,” used by Daniel (8:11) is also used in Leviticus to designate the act of removing from the sacrifices the parts which belonged to God (e.g. Lev 4:10). The heavenly beings mentioned in 8:13 are called “holy ones” (*qadōš*), a rather strange way of referring to angels but which is used here to establish a connection with sanctuary terminology. The term *ha-tāmīd* (the continual, the daily) is used in the Old Testament to designate the daily work of the priest in the holy place. It is never used in connection with his work in the Most Holy Place. The fact that the “Prince of hosts” is a heavenly

being (see Joshua 5:13-15) indicates that the sanctuary mentioned in 8:9-14 is the heavenly one, where he performed the *tāmīd*.

By using these terms Daniel is explicitly cementing a linguistic and ideological connection with the Israelite sanctuary. He presupposes that his readers are acquainted with the worship system, therefore he can use the vocabulary without explaining it. In order to interpret the vocabulary correctly one is forced to go to Leviticus to find out how that terminology is used there.

The use of language employed in the sanctuary services enables us to understand the work of the Prince of hosts, and the nature and work of the little horn. The political concerns of the horn are not ignored (v. 9-10), but the main concern is with its attitude toward the sanctuary and the Prince (vs. 11-12). The horn attacks the sanctuary guard, the host, defeats them (v. 10), and goes after the Prince and the sanctuary. This spiritual attack is described in terms of a military one. The *tāmīd* (the daily service) is taken away from the Prince, and the foundation/place of the sanctuary is cast down to the earth. Having done that the little horn sets up its own host in control of the *tāmīd* as an act of rebellion/transgression (v. 12). The “truth” associated with the sanctuary is disposed of by this anti-God power (cf. Dan 7:25). It is extremely important to notice that the language used by Daniel makes it clear that the little horn does not contaminate the sanctuary. Daniel does not use a single term that could suggest the idea of contamination. What we have here is an attack on the sanctuary which profanes it (*hālal*; cf. 11:31), but does not contaminate it. The sanctuary is treated by the horn-power as a common place.

This discussion makes clear that the little horn affects somehow the work of the Prince in the holy place, that is to say the *tāmīd* (his continual mediation). The immediate question is, would the horn be able to interfere in any way with the mediatorial work of the Prince in the Most Holy Place, i.e. the cleansing of the sanctuary? This is the question addressed in 8:13-14.

2. The Meaning of *Nitsdaq* in Daniel 8:14

The verb *nistdaq*, a verbal form of the root *tsadaq*, has been translated in different ways: “shall be cleansed,” “shall be restored to its rightful state,” “emerge victorious,” “be restored,” “be reconsecrated,” etc. Two particular reasons make it difficult to decide how to translate this verb here. First, the verbal form employed by Daniel is not used anywhere else in the Old Testament (simple passive [niphil] of *tsadaq*); and, second, the verbal root never takes as its object the sanctuary, except here. The basic verbal root (*tsadaq*) is usually translated “to be in the right, to have a just case, to be righteous.”

Interestingly, the root *tsadaq* is used in connection with the sanctuary, particularly in the book of Psalms. The individual who went to the temple and who had been loyal to the covenant was considered by the Lord to be righteous (24:3-6: cf. Deut 26:13-15). Those who participated in the sanctuary services were required to be blameless (*tāmīm*) and righteous (*tsedeq*), 15:1-2. To be blameless means here to be righteous. This righteousness was a gift from God (4:1; 17:1) and was impossible apart from atonement. The righteous one

(*tsaddîq*) was a person whose sins had been forgiven by the Lord (32:1, 5, 11). This righteousness was granted in the temple through a priestly declaration (24:5).

Also righteous is the person who, in the setting of the sanctuary, was judged by God and declared innocent; the individual was vindicated (7:8-9; cf. 35:24-25). Accused of a crime he or she did not commit, the person went to the sanctuary asking God to judge him/her, to vindicate him/her. This use of the root *tsadaq* indicates that it is basically a legal term.

In the Psalms access to the sanctuary required righteousness on the part of the worshiper; in Leviticus cleanliness was required (e.g. Lev 13:46; 14:1-20). To declare a person clean was tantamount to declaring him or her righteous. These two ideas, to be clean/to be righteous, are found together in Isaiah 53:11: "By his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous [*yatsdîq* "he declares (them) righteous"]; and he shall bear their iniquities." The many are declared righteous because the Servant removed their sins from them (cf. v. 12), that is to say, he cleansed them. To be declared righteous is the same as to be cleansed.

There is a theological and linguistic connection between to be righteous and to be clean in the context of the sanctuary. In fact the verb *tsādāq* is used in the Old Testament in synonymous parallelism with the verb *tāhēr* (be clean, pure), used in Leviticus 16 to designate the cleansing of the sanctuary (Job 4:17; 17:9); and also with the verb *zākāh* ("be pure, clean"; Ps 51:4; Job 15:14; 25:4). The noun *tsedeq* (righteousness) is also used in parallelism with *bōr* ("purity"; Ps 18:20). This indicates that the meaning of the root *tsadaq* includes the idea of cleansing and that this dimension of meaning is expressed particularly in the setting of the sanctuary services.

The root *tsadaq* played a significant role in the Israelite sanctuary services. Those services seem to have revolved around the concept of *tsadaq*: the worshiper entered the temple through "the gates of righteousness" (Ps 118:19); brought a "sacrifice of righteousness" (Ps 4:5; 51:19); and the priest, "clothed with righteousness" (132:9), interceded on behalf of the offerer before the Lord of righteousness (11:7). Consequently, the person received in the temple "righteousness from . . . God" (24:5).

Since the root *tsadaq* is used in the context of the sanctuary services, it should not surprise anyone to find it in Daniel 8:14, accompanied by a significant number of terms used in that same context. This suggests that *nitsdaq* should be interpreted in terms of its extended meaning in the sanctuary setting, which would be "to declare righteous" or "be vindicated," "to be cleansed." But how can this be said of the sanctuary? This would make sense only within the sanctuary services. The sanctuary cannot be separated from the fact that it is God's dwelling and that He meets there with His people to celebrate redemption and grant them atonement and forgiveness. The *nitsdaq* of the sanctuary would then have an impact on the sanctuary itself—by cleansing it—and on God and His people, who would then be vindicated. Only such a rich root as *tsadaq* could express the ideas of cleansing and vindication, combining legal and redemptive concerns in a sanctuary setting bringing the resolution of the sin problem to its

consummation. The verb *tāhēr* (to cleanse, purify), with its emphasis on cleansing in the context of the Israelite sanctuary, was too narrow to be used in the cosmic setting of this apocalyptic vision which deals with the final cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary and with the ultimate cosmic vindication of God and His people.

The article suggests that the *nitsdaq* of the sanctuary redresses the damage done to the sanctuary by the little horn. What is overlooked here is that the verbal root *tsadaq* does not mean “to reconsecrate,” and neither is it used to designate the restoration of a building or of its use. It is rather used with respect to people who are vindicated, whose right is restored to them. What the text is saying is that the little horn’s control over the *tāmīd* (the daily) would come to an end at a particular moment of time, that is to say, when the cleansing/vindication of the sanctuary will be taking place.

The logical question is, why would the heavenly sanctuary need to be cleansed? The answer is found in what took place during the day of atonement in the Israelite sanctuary (Lev 16). Notice that Daniel 8 mentions the *tāmīd* (the daily) but we are not told what it is or why it is important. We found the meaning and significance of the term by studying its usage in the Israelite sanctuary. This is what needs to be done with the purification/vindication of the sanctuary mentioned in 8:14. But before we do that let us deal with the time period.

The 2300 Evenings and Mornings: The answer to the question, “Until when . . . ?” is given as, “Until 2300 Evenings and Mornings, then the sanctuary would be cleansed/vindicated.” The phrase “evenings and mornings” is used only in one other place in the Bible, namely, Genesis 1, to designate each day during Creation week (e.g. vs. 5, 8). The 2300 evenings and mornings are a period of 2300 prophetic days which represents 2300 years.

The beginning of this prophetic period is suggested by the question itself: “Until when the vision, the daily/continuance, and the transgression causing horror, to make both the sanctuary and the host a trampling?” (v. 13). This literal translation differs from others in that it separates the noun “vision” (*hāzōn*) from “daily.” Most versions consider these two nouns to be in a very close relationship and translate them, “the vision of the daily,” limiting the question to the period during which the little horn was active. But the Hebrew text does not allow for this. (The first noun is in the absolute state; it has an article and long vowels.) It rather suggests that a comma be placed after *tāmīd*, “daily.” The term *hāzōn* (vision) is used in verses 1-2 to refer to the vision of the different animals. The question, then, is interested not only in the period during which the horn is active but also in the period of time that will take the whole vision to be fulfilled (vs. 1-12). This implies that the 2300 days/years should begin to be counted from the time during which the ram was active, that is, from the time of the Medo-Persian empire (v. 20). The vision will run from that time until the moment when the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary begins.

In looking for a more specific date for the beginning of the 2300 years the connection between Daniel 8 and 9 is very important. There are clear connections in terms between both chapters. In Daniel 9:23 Gabriel tells the prophet, “Understand the vision” (*mar’eh*). The term *mar’eh* (vision, appearance),

is the same one used in 8:26-27 to refer to “the *vision* of the evenings and mornings” the part of the *hāzōn*, vision of chapter 8 which had to do with the time period. Gabriel interpreted the vision to Daniel except the audition concerning the 2300 years. At the end of chapter 8 Daniel stated that he did not understand the *mar’eh*. In chapter 9 Gabriel came to assist Daniel in understanding the *mar’eh* (vision) of the time period. Notice that in both chapters the verb “understand” is used (8:23-27; 9:1, 22-23) and that there is a common concern for the sanctuary. In 9:24 the sanctuary is dedicated and its services began and in 8:14 the sanctuary is being cleansed. The time prophecy of the 70 weeks forms part of the 2300 years. The verb “decree” in 9:24 also means “to cut off.” That is one of the meanings of the verb *hatak* (at least in Mishnaic Hebrew and in texts found in the Canaanite city of Ugarit [1300 BC]). The implication is that the 490 years were “cut off” from the 2300 years period. The 490 years began with the decree of Artaxerxes in 457 BC to rebuild Jerusalem. That is also the starting point for the 2300 years. The end point of that period would fall in A. D. 1844. It is then that the sanctuary will be cleansed/vindicated. It is at this particular time within salvation history that Christ begins the second aspect of his mediatorial work in the heavenly sanctuary mentioned in Hebrews 9:23 (see the last section of this paper).

3. Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14, 26-27: Judgment Scene

Daniel 7 contains an important judgment scene which, as we will show, parallels the sanctuary audition in 8:13-14. The judgment scene describes the initiation of the judgment (vs. 9-10), its conclusion (v. 13-14), and a short interpretation (vs. 26-27).

The prophet saw thrones set in place for the members of the court to sit on. The wheeled throne of God was there, too. He appeared under the symbol of an Ancient of Days and sat on His throne. The books were opened before the court, one like a Son of Man came to the Ancient of Days, decisions were made, and the Son of man and the saints of the Most High received the kingdom.

(1) Time of the judgment scene. In order to understand the function and purpose of this judgment it is important to establish clearly its place within the sequence of events in the vision. Daniel saw four beasts: one like a lion (v. 4), one like a bear (v. 5), another like a leopard (v. 6), and the fourth one was indescribable and had ten horns (v. 7). Daniel saw another horn coming out and uprooting three of the others. This little horn spoke against God, persecuted the saints for 3 1/2 times ($360 \times 3 + 180 = 1260$ days/years), and changed or attempted to change the law and the times (v. 25).

The judgment scene is introduced when the little horn was actively speaking great words against God (v. 11, 25). It had been persecuting the saints already for 3 1/2 times. The judgment takes place toward the end of the reign of terror of the little horn. In fact, as a result of the judgment the little horn lost its dominion and was destroyed. It is also after the judgment that the Son of man and the saints received God’s eternal kingdom (v. 27). The vision moves from persecution of the saints to judgment to the kingdom of God. The judgment

described in Daniel 7 takes place before the little horn is destroyed and the kingdom of God is established for ever.

(2) Investigative Judgment. Several elements in the vision indicate that this is an investigative judgment, not an executive one, and that it takes place in heaven. In fact, the judgment scene is a heavenly one. God is there together with His council. In addition, thousands of His messengers are present to serve Him and to witness the judgment. The cosmic nature of this judgment is thus emphasized. The universe is interested in these proceedings.

The investigative nature of this judgment is clearly expressed by the reference to books (v. 10). These contain the records of the lives of those who would be judged. They are not there in person but the records of their lives are there and they are being scrutinized. There are several references to celestial books in the Old Testament, all of them associated with God's people. The righteous ones are listed there (Ps 69:28). Record is kept of their prenatal lives and of the length of their lives (139:16), their personal conflicts and struggles (56:8), their words and thoughts (Mal 3:16), their good deeds (cf. Neh 13:14), and their sins also are recorded there (109:14; cf. Isa 65:6). Those sins can be blotted out of those records (109:4) although in some cases the name of the impenitent sinner is blotted out (Exod 32:32-33; Ps 69:28); in both instances the records would have been cleansed. Isaiah describes the remnant left in Jerusalem to enjoy the messianic era as those who were recorded for life (4:3). This took place after God cleansed them. In the New Testament the book of life is mentioned a number of times. It contains the names of those who committed themselves to the Lord (Phil 4:3; Rev 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15) and is called the Lamb's book of life (Rev 21:27). Records also are kept of the wicked ones to be used to judge and condemn them after the millennium (Rev 20:12).

The records discussed in the judgment scene in Daniel 7 are the records of God's servants. They were being judged and the court decided in their favor (7:22). They were vindicated before the universe and they could now possess the kingdom. This is confirmed by comparing this judgment scene with Daniel 12:1-2. Michael stands up to receive the kingdom of glory. This was preceded by the defeat and destruction of the enemy from the north (11:45). Then the saints are delivered and a resurrection takes place. Those resurrected to eternal life have their names written in *the* book (12:1). This suggests that the investigative judgment examines also the records of those who died trusting the Lord. Their names were investigated and retained in the books because their sins were blotted out from the records forever. They, together with those who were delivered from the persecuting powers, can inherit eternal life.

The judgment discussed in Daniel 7 is a vindictive judgment which declares the righteous ones worthy of inheriting the kingdom of God. This is done before the council of God, before the Son of man, before the universe. The deliberations of this court are opened to God's intelligent creatures; God's judicial decisions are being observed by those who are not necessarily members of the court. This serves to vindicate God's government, the way life has dealt with sin and salvation, His actions before His vast universe. In this judgment God is also vindicated (cf. Ps 51:4).

The little horn is not judged in the sense in which the saints are judged, but it is condemned. Here we must be reminded of the biblical understanding of legal proceedings particularly in the context of innocent persons being falsely accused of a crime. They went to the temple court asking the Lord to judge them (Ps 7:8; 26:1), to examine their cases in order to be vindicated (7:9; 26:2). The wicked one functioned as the accuser in the court (cf. Zech 3:1-4; Ps 35:1). The vindication of the righteous ones confirmed the evilness of the wicked and in order to restore them the one causing the disruption was neutralized, condemned, and his or her power removed. This is what we seem to have in Daniel 7.

4. Meaning of the Cleansing/Vindication of the Sanctuary in Daniel

There is a clear connection between the judgment scene in Daniel 7 and the audience concerning the heavenly sanctuary in 8:13-14. The two chapters describe in parallel form the history of the world from the prophet's time to the time of the end. Each chapter adds new elements throwing light on the nature of the great controversy and on specific events within salvation history. The parallels are as follows:

Dan 7	Dan 8	Meaning
Lion		Babylon
Bear	Ram	Medo-Persia
Leopard	Goat	Greece
Beast	Horn: Horizontal Expansion	Pagan Rome
Little Horn	Horn: Vertical Expansion	Papal Rome
Judgment Scene	Sanctuary Scene	Christ's Last Work

The investigative judgment and the cleansing of the sanctuary complement each other, enriching our understanding of Christ's mediatorial work in the heavenly sanctuary shortly before the Second Coming.

The book of Daniel looks forward to the time when the salvation of God's people will be final. They are already the saints of the Most High. They received the cleansing benefits of the sacrificial death of the Messiah (9:24, 27) and He can, therefore, represent them in the heavenly court (7:13-14, 18). Yet, their cleansing and salvation is heading toward its final consummation. The vindication/purification of the sanctuary mentioned in Daniel 8:14 is what makes the vindication/purification of God's people final before the universe. Their sins will be blotted out from God's dwelling and they will inherit the eternal kingdom of God.

During the day of atonement God judged His people. The vindication/purification of the sanctuary in Daniel includes also a work of judgment. As we indicated, the verb used by Daniel to refer to the cleansing of the sanctuary (*tsadaq*) is primarily a legal term. In its legal and cultic aspects are brought together, making it possible to interpret the priestly work of the Prince in

juridical-redemptive terms. This judgment seeks primarily to vindicate God's people. This is developed in Daniel 7. There the saints were judged and acquitted. They remained in an attitude of complete dependence on God under the most distressing circumstances. The record of their lives was examined and their sins blotted out. Those whose names were preserved in the books, including the dead saints, inherited the kingdom (7:22; 12:1-2). Thus the sanctuary is cleansed.

The priestly ministry of the Prince, mentioned in 8:11, was performed on behalf of God's people. It was an intercessory ministry which granted forgiveness of sin. The purification of the sanctuary, referred to in 8:14, will make it clear that the involvement of the sanctuary in the sin problem was an effective way of disposing of the sin problem and that the transfer of sin to the sanctuary in no way affected God's character. The cosmic judgment in Daniel 7 points precisely to this dimension of God's concern for His own reputation and for the holiness of His dwelling place. The final resolution of the sin problem takes place before God's creatures and they are allowed to open the books and examine them. As a result of this process the instrument of salvation, the Son of man, is recognized as universal king (v. 14). God's contact with sin then comes to an end; the sanctuary was cleansed/vindicated.

5. Day of Atonement in Hebrews

In Hebrews there are clear references to the Israelite Day of Atonement. This is particularly the case in 9:25-26; 10:1-10. In these two passages the sacrifice of Christ and those offered during that day are contrasted. Christ's sacrifice is described as unrepeatable and His blood as superior to the blood/sacrifice offered by the high priest in the earthly sanctuary during the Day of Atonement. Hebrews 9:25 states that He does not have to offer Himself again and again and 10:11 adds that He did that "once and for all." The comparison is not between the ministry of the high priest in the Most Holy Place and Christ's work in the heavenly sanctuary but between the effectiveness of Christ's blood/sacrifice and the limited function of animal blood in the old system. The purpose of the references to the Day of Atonement in Hebrews is, then, to contrast Christ's sacrifice with those of the Old Testament (7:27; 10:11), including the ones offered during the day of atonement, in order to show the superiority of the sacrifice of our Lord.

Hebrews 9:23 is a very significant passage in a discussion of the typological meaning of the Day of Atonement in the earthly sanctuary. Scholars have been surprised by the statement made by the apostle that the heavenly things need to be purified. However, it is not difficult to interpret this passage once it is recognized that the reference is to the Day of Atonement. There is here a clear indication to the effect that Christ is to perform in the heavenly sanctuary a work of cleansing that is the typological equivalent of the work of the high priest in the earthly sanctuary during the Day of Atonement. The passage does not state that this cleansing takes place immediately after Christ's ascension. It simply states

the important fact that the heavenly sanctuary also is in need of cleansing. It was in need of cleansing when the epistle was being written. This symbolism is not developed, neither is the time element discussed. Nevertheless, the connection is significant because it recognizes the fact that Christ's mediatorial work encompasses the theological content of the annual services in the Israelite sanctuary. In addition, the context suggests that the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary is connected with Christ's death on the cross as sin bearer (vs. 26, 28) and with His work before the Father on behalf of His people (v. 25). At the cross He offered Himself for us and His blood is powerful enough to bring the sin problem to an end. He ministers for us in the heavenly sanctuary, applying the benefits of His sacrificial blood to those who believe and consummating our salvation through His work of judgment.

The work of Christ on the cross and in the heavenly sanctuary should be our constant object of study. Every church member should explore the wondrous love of God revealed to us in Christ and in what He has done, is doing, and will do for us.