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**Southern Asia Division
needs your prayers
and your offerings
this 13th Sabbath
to help with vital building projects.**



**Gifford Memorial Hospital
In-patient Care Facility - Andhra Pradesh**

**Tamil Nadu Clinic
Thiruvayaru**

**New Church Buildings
Throughout Division**

THE YEAR OF THE ADVENTIST WOMAN

One hundred and fifty years ago, devoted Seventh-day Adventist women were at the center of the birthing process of this movement; evangelizing, nurturing, prophesying, publishing, and playing a significant role in developing the organizational structure of the church. The most prominent of these women was Ellen Gould White, who wrote, **"When a great and decisive work is to be done, God chooses men and women to do this work, and it will feel the loss if the talents of both are not combined."**—*Evangelism*, p. 469.

In 1995, our world church is focusing on the challenges and opportunities of today's Adventist women. Unlike the goals of secular feminism, the goals of Women's Ministries encourage healing, spiritual wholeness, vision, and expanded involvement.

Women's Ministries programs range anywhere from small groups in local churches to Global Mission projects where whole congregations are raised up. They include scholarships and mentoring of young women, instructing new members, spiritual retreats that fortify members and bring the discouraged to a new commitment, and prayer counseling. ("When a woman is in trouble, let her take her trouble to a woman."—*Evangelism*, p. 460.) Other programs include parenting seminars, retreats that facilitate healing from abusive relationships, programs for single women and those who are "single again," and support for persons whose stress-filled lives make balancing family, job, and church responsibilities a meritorious achievement. In short, Women's Ministries provides a network among four million women, making them aware of new opportunities in which to participate, and occasions to nurture and be nurtured.

Just as in Jesus' day when mothers trained future leaders at their knee, and godly women clothed the less fortunate and served as church leaders, judges, and shopkeepers, contemporary Adventist women are eager to use their talents to the glory of God.

Speaking to her own gender, Ellen White wrote, **"We may do a noble work for God if we will. Woman does not know her power.... There is a higher purpose for woman, a grander destiny. She should develop and cultivate her powers, for God can employ them in the great work of saving souls from eternal ruin."**—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 642.

The year 1995 is a salute to women's contributions to the growth and development of the church, as well as a summons to fortify themselves spiritually and commit their talents to a finished work.

—Rose Otis

Meet the Principal Contributor to This Quarter's Lessons



Twice retired, twice rehired, Elder D. A. Delafield continues to serve the church. Presently he and his wife, Evelyn, are chaplains at the General Conference complex in Silver Spring, Maryland. They were first employed as missionaries to Hawaii in 1936 and are still active after more than 50 years of service. Elder Delafield was broadcasting on radio station KGU Hawaii Sunday morning, December 7, 1941, when enemy planes attacked Pearl Harbor.

Elder Delafield has pastored eight churches, including Honolulu Central and Phoenix Central. His service record reads: "Three years Associate Speaker, Voice of Prophecy; 9 years Associate Editor, *Review and Herald*; 25 years Associate Secretary, Ellen G. White Estate; 12 years Coordinator, Retired Workers Affairs in North America."

The author of fifteen books and four adult Sabbath School quarterlies, Elder Delafield has written hundreds of articles for S.D.A. church papers. His partner for 61 years, Mrs. Delafield served for many years as chaplain at the Washington Adventist Hospital. They have two children and five grandchildren.

Check with your local Adventist Book Center for the companion book to the Sabbath School lessons.

Introduction to Great Chapters of the Bible

Some years ago G. Campbell Morgan, teacher extraordinary, authored the book *Great Chapters of the Bible*. He examined 50 outstanding segments of Scripture. The volume became popular immediately. He explained in the foreword that he did not wish to compare these 50 chapters with others in the Bible. "No such comparison is intended," he stated. "Every chapter or section of the Sacred Writings has its own greatness. Nevertheless there are Chapters or Sections which stand out in the appeal they make to the human heart."—(London: Marshall, Morgan, & Scott Publishers, 1946), foreword.

We have elected to study 12 Bible chapters that have satisfied the human needs of Christians everywhere. This quarterly will be a blessing to people of all religions, even though it will have special significance to Seventh-day Adventists who recognize their responsibility of announcing to the world the three angels' messages of Revelation 14.

The 12 chapters examined follow a gospel pattern throughout. The message of the first angel of Revelation 14, the everlasting gospel, is paramount. The very first lesson is titled "The Great Love Lyric" (1 Corinthians 13). The second lesson presents "The Suffering Son of God" (Isaiah 53). This "good news" pattern flows throughout the series.

In the quality of content, these 12 golden chapters are eternal and inexhaustible. They bear study and restudy. This quarterly presents new approaches and new ideas to supplement the glorious array of commentary already available on the subject. Ellen White wrote, "It takes all of eternity to unfold the glories and bring out all the precious treasures of the Word of God."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 919.

The great Teacher, Jesus Christ, brings His students over and over the same ground until at last they understand the subject sufficiently to reflect the wisdom and love of God obtained from Bible study. Things new and old must be extracted from the gold mine of Scripture. There may be nuggets in this quarterly that you may not have discovered previously. You can reexamine with great profit those truths that you have understood.

The psalmist wrote, "The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times" (Ps. 12:6). That word *tried* means "refined." Silver refined in a furnace is purer. The more we read the Word, the more luminous its message appears to us, for it is, in the truest sense, "the purest truth."

The Great Love Lyric



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 1 Cor. 12:4-11, 27-31; 13:1-13; 14:1.

MEMORY TEXT: "And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:13, NKJV).

KEY THOUGHT: In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul accents the exquisitely beautiful element in Christian life—love, the precious and indispensable love of God pervading human lives and portrayed in behavior.

LOVE IS OUR INDIVIDUAL AND CORPORATE NEED. As we read 1 Corinthians 13, we see to what heights an author may climb when borne aloft by the Holy Spirit of God. Without love, the Christian, who may receive many other gifts of God, is a pauper. Someone has said, "Without love he [humanity] is a moral cipher, a zero in the arithmetic of the ages." The energy and power in all of God's rich endowments is love.

"The Lord desires me to call the attention of His people to the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians. Read this chapter every day, and from it obtain comfort and strength. Learn from it the value that God places on sanctified, heaven-born love, and let the lesson that it teaches come home to your hearts. Learn that Christlike love is of heavenly birth, and that without it all other qualifications are worthless."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1091.

Sunday

January 1

LOVE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT (1 Cor. 12:4-11, 27-31; 13:1; 14:1).

How would you explain the relationship between Paul's discussion of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 and his discussion of love in 1 Corinthians 13?

In 1 Corinthians 12 Paul describes the many spiritual gifts with which the Spirit had endowed the Corinthians. All the gifts of the Holy Spirit were meant to enrich the believers "for the common good" (1 Cor. 12:7, RSV). Paul did not want the Corinthians to lack any gift (1 Cor. 1:7). But in the Corinthian church some were exercising gifts that the Holy Spirit had not bestowed. "Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit" (1 Cor. 2:14, RSV). Paul added, "I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but rather as people of the flesh" (1 Cor. 3:1, RSV).

Unless the Spirit of God bestows and activates our gifts, we cannot regard them as "spiritual" gifts, but as counterfeits. The gifts that Paul lists in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 and verses 27-31 are always bestowed and imparted by the Holy Spirit. Any attempt to use these gifts apart from the Holy Spirit's action in our lives is an unloving deed. "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love [imparted by the Spirit], I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal" (1 Cor. 13:1, RSV).

What relationship do you detect between the love message of 1 Corinthians 13 and the warning about the incorrect use of tongues in 1 Corinthians 14?

In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul highlights the preeminent and most effective gift of all—the love of God in the converted heart. All the other gifts (more than 20 are mentioned in the New Testament) are swallowed up in this heavenly love of God. But some of the Corinthians were not allowing Spirit-directed love to control their speaking in tongues. Thus their tongues speaking was not edifying to the church; it was not Spirit directed.

For the Spirit-inspired use of tongues see Acts 2:4-12. What change in the Corinthians' worship service did the Holy Spirit wish to bring about? Was the exercise of the Spirit-directed gift of tongues controllable by the speaker? 1 Cor. 14:6-12, 26-33. (See the note in Further Study.)

PAUPERS WITHOUT LOVE (1 Cor. 13:1-3).

Name the five spiritual gifts mentioned by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3. What becomes of them in the absence of love?

The word *charity* is used eight times in the King James Version of 1 Corinthians 13—a word that today suggests pity, sympathy, and relief for the underprivileged and poor. The Greek word means “love.” The Greek language has four verbs translated “to love” in English. All four words appear in classical Greek, but the New Testament uses only *phileo* and *agapao*. The New Testament uses the noun *love* (*agape*) for the love God has for fallen man. Taking a word that was little used in reference to human love, the New Testament writers infused it with new meaning; namely, God’s love for His earthly children.

How could you detect that a “Christian” speaker is not directed by love? 1 Cor. 13:1. What should be the basis of the evaluation?

A missionary put the first three verses of 1 Corinthians 13 into an easy-to-understand paraphrase: “If I have the language perfectly and speak like a native, and have not His love for them, I am nothing. If I have diplomas and degrees and know all the up-to-date methods, and have not His touch of understanding love, I am nothing. . . . If I have all faith and great ideals and magnificent plans, and not His love that sweats and bleeds and weeps and prays and pleads, I am nothing. If I give my clothes and money to them, and have not His love for them, I am nothing.

“If I surrender all prospects, leave home and friends, make the sacrifices of a missionary career, and turn sour and selfish amid the daily annoyances and slights of a missionary life, and have not the love that yields its rights, its leisures, its pet plans, I am nothing. Virtue has ceased to go out of me. If I can heal all manner of sickness and disease, but wound hearts and hurt feelings for want of His love that is kind, I am nothing. If I can write articles or publish books that win applause, but fail to transcribe the Word of the Cross into the language of His love, I am nothing.”—Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations* (Rockville, Md.: Assurance Publishers, 1985), pp. 758, 759.

Tuesday

January 3

LOVELESS, FAITHLESS PROPHECY (1 Cor. 13:2).

Bible prophets from Moses to John exhibited true, persistent faith and abiding love. They bore the signature required to qualify as God's true messengers. "Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21, NKJV), and the love of God was shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit bestowed on them. True, sin may have marred their record, but their sins were forgiven, and the habitual tendency of their lives was commendable in God's sight.

How did Jesus indicate that we can identify false prophets and teachers who are not controlled by love (1 Cor. 13:2)? Matt. 7:15, 20.

Love and faith in God are the acid tests of a prophet—the credentials above all their other God-given gifts. Concerning Ellen G. White, God's messenger to the remnant, A. G. Daniells wrote: "She was uniformly pleasant, cheerful, and courageous. She was never careless, flippant, or in any way cheap in conversation or manner of life. She was the personification of serious earnestness regarding the things of the kingdom. I never once heard her boast of the gracious gift God had bestowed upon her, or of the marvelous results of her endeavors."—*The Abiding Gift of Prophecy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1936), p. 368.

These warm elements of Christian character were a distinctive trademark, without which Ellen White's prophetic ministry would have amounted to little or nothing. All the Bible prophets measured up to this standard.

Despite its great appeal, what must accompany love for it to be functional? Gal. 5:6; 1 Thess. 1:3.

Preacher or prophet, social worker, dedicated lay person, or martyr for Christ! Is not Paul telling us that all spiritual gifts must be immersed in faith and love in order to achieve God's purposes? If we lack these gifts the luster is gone! In the end, nothing will prove eternally efficient for good without them.

How does the life of Dorcas illustrate how Christ would have us demonstrate love? Acts 9:36, 39. In what practical ways can men, as well as women, follow Dorcas' example?

LOVE'S SIXTEEN PARTS (1 Cor. 13:4-8, 13).

How does Paul describe love's behavior as visible in the Christian's life? 1 Cor. 13:4-8.

"In the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians the apostle Paul defines true Christlike love. . . . This chapter is an expression of the obedience of all who love God and keep His commandments. It is brought into action in the life of every true believer."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1091.

Try to visualize a person who is always patient, kind, generous, humble, courteous, good natured, forgiving, loyal to God, and willing to accept His will. That Person is Christ! And He wishes to make us like Himself (Gal. 2:20).

Count them; you will find colorful parts in the spectrum of love, more than twice as many as the colors that emerge when white light passes through a triangular prism.

What sign of God's love and care for His people did He appoint in the heavens? Gen. 9:13-17; Isa. 54:9, 10.

"The bow represents Christ's love which encircles the earth, and reaches unto the highest heavens, connecting men with God, and linking earth with heaven.

"As we gaze upon the beautiful sight, we may be joyful in God, assured that He Himself is looking upon this token of His covenant, and that as He looks upon it He remembers the children of earth, to whom it was given. Their afflictions, perils, and trials are not hidden from Him. We may rejoice in hope, for the bow of God's covenant is over us."—Ellen White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1091.

What word does John use to portray God? 1 John 4:8. Is Jesus Christ also God? Heb. 1:8; John 1:1-3, 14. In whom is love perfectly personified? John 14:6-9; Rom. 5:6-8.

Instead of the word *charity* (used eight times in 1 Corinthians 13, KJV) substitute the name of Jesus. Then substitute your own name. How well do you do? Ask the following questions: Am I patient with my family, with friends, with co-workers? Am I kind and considerate with everyone? Am I ever rude or rash? Do I believe the best about my acquaintances?

LOVE, HOPE, AND FAITH SURVIVE (1 Cor. 13:8-11).

God will finally terminate some of His gifts (1 Cor. 13:8-10). Prophecy, knowledge, and tongues vanish away.

"Prophecies are done away in the sense that they are worked out to fulfillment. Tongues as signs and methods of praise cease when the necessity for such ends. Knowledge as enquiry is done away as it merges into the knowledge of fuller revelation. All the things referred to are great things, and things that tend to edification, but which cease when the edifice is completed."—G. Campbell Morgan, *Great Chapters of the Bible*, p. 254.

**What did Paul do when he became a man? 1 Cor. 13:11, 12.
What promise of a better vision is given to God's people?**

If you compare the knowledge of a little child with the knowledge of a loving and wise parent, it will be easier to grasp the difference between what is and what shall be when the Lord sets up His kingdom.

"Ancient mirrors were made of polished metal and not of glass. It was never possible to get distinct images. The word 'obscurely' would be a better translation than 'darkly.' In this world there is only an inadequate, imperfect, and partial view of things. Vision will be much better on the other shore."—Kyle M. Yates, *Preaching From Great Bible Chapters* (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1957), p. 50.

Since we cannot take our imperfect gifts to heaven, what can we take? Above all else, what gift will survive? 1 Cor. 13:13.

When he was young, Louis IX of France married Princess Margaret of Provence. On his wedding ring was engraved: "God, France, Margaret," and he used to say, "I have no love outside that ring." This was the secret of his being known to history as Saint Louis. Faith, hope, and love define the eternal bond that exists between God and His people.

Imagine how perfect spiritual vision and perfect knowledge and understanding will change our perspective and appreciation of other people. What instances can you recall in which your respect for another person increased when you came to understand that person better?

FURTHER STUDY: Check the word *love* in your concordance. Locate texts that demonstrate how love affects human relationships. For example, "Hatred stirreth up strifes; but love covereth all sins" (Prov. 10:12; see also 1 John 2:7-11 and Matt. 5:46). Study the word *love* as listed in the *Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White*, which carries 22 full pages of references for that word.

Note: First Corinthians 14:14 may be translated: "If I pray in a tongue, my spirit [mind] prays, but my thought [meaning] is fruitless." The word *spirit* (Greek: *pneuma*) as used in the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint; LXX) and in the Greek New Testament often means "mind," or includes the mind. (See Ex. 28:3; Deut. 34:9; 1 Chron. 28:12; Job 20:3; Matt. 26:41; Rom. 1:9; 8:16; 1 Cor. 2:11.) The word *mind* (Greek *nous*) often means "thought" or "meaning." (See Isa. 40:13, LXX; Joshua 14:7, LXX; Rom. 11:34; 1 Cor. 1:10; 2:16.) The genuinely Spirit-filled Corinthians who spoke in tongues understood what they were saying; their minds were operative. But their thought or meaning was profitless, because no one else understood—unless they or some other person interpreted the language. The Spirit-filled speaker was not experiencing an uncontrollable ecstatic state.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Is it easier to see ourselves or others as loving and lovable people? If you can't love a person whom you can see, how can you love God, whom you cannot see? Do you first tolerate people or do you accept them completely as fellow humans irrespective of race or religion? Why?
2. How have you chosen to apply 1 Corinthians 13 to your own life? If we all applied Paul's meaningful admonition in 1 Corinthians 14:1, first part, how would our lives change? How would the church change?

SUMMARY: They who pursue money, and money alone, are chasing fantasy—a mirage. They whose quest is for fame and fortune sooner or later will find that it bursts like a bubble. They whose aims are no higher than the body and its sensations will close their lives on a bed of shame and pierce themselves through with heavy sorrows. But they who seek to love in the highest sense will find it and glory in it and grow into it increasingly.

Trophies in Mongolia

Robert S. Folkenberg

One of the lands that make up the "uttermost parts of the earth" has moved a little closer to the rest of the Adventist world recently, when the first believers in Outer Mongolia were baptized.

Brad and Cathie Jolly and four student missionaries working with them (Suzy Baldwin, Tamara Caldeira, Joanne Park, and Julien Tristan), make up the Adventist work force in Outer Mongolia. These dedicated young people minister in Mongolia under the auspices of Adventist Frontier Missions, quietly planting the gospel in this previously unentered and politically closed country.

Recently I joined the Jollys in Mongolia to celebrate the first baptism of new believers in this corner of the world.

Friday evening about 45 Mongolian young people gathered to celebrate the Lord's Supper. Davaakhuu (Dah-VAH-hu), one of the two young women to be baptized the next day, spoke about the meaning of Communion. Her joy in the Lord bubbled out as she testified to her new-found assurance of salvation.

On Sabbath morning we met at an indoor swimming pool for one of the most moving baptismal services I have ever attended. We lifted the new members before God, pleading for the presence and power of the Spirit in their lives. Then I had the joy of baptizing Davaakhuu and Inkhbayar (INK-by-ar) the first fruits of the gospel in Mongolia. During the same ceremony we accepted a young man, Inkhtaiyan (INK-ti-van), into fellowship by profession of faith, bringing the number of Mongolian members to three. It was just after noon, but the regular Sabbath activities were just beginning! We began the three-hour Sabbath School and a one-and-a-half-hour church service. Most of the presentations were led by the three new members and several others who are studying with the Jollys. The light of God's love now warms Mongolia with love and hope.



Newly baptized Davaakhuu (left) and Inkhbayar rejoice in their faith.

Robert S. Folkenberg is
General Conference president.

The Suffering Son of God



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Isa. 52:13-15; 53:1-12.

MEMORY TEXT: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6).

KEY THOUGHT: The sacrificial death of the Servant-Messiah has atoned for the sins of all human beings, rendering it possible for God to make them right with Him.

THE MESSAGE OF THE CROSS HAS MAGNETIC POWER. Isaiah 53 has been described as "The Mount Everest of all Old Testament prophecy concerning Jesus." If Isaiah had stood beneath the cross of Christ, he could not have more effectively portrayed the enormity of the sacrifice and the blessedness of its results.

Adam Clarke summarizes Isaiah 53: "In this chapter the *incarnation, preaching, humiliation, rejection, sufferings, death, atonement, resurrection, and mediation* of Jesus Christ are all predicted, together with the prevalence of his Gospel, and the *extension* of his kingdom through all ages."—*Commentary on Isaiah 53:12*, p. 209.

"This chapter should be studied. It presents Christ as the Lamb of God. Those who are lifted up with pride, whose souls are filled with vanity, should look upon this picture of their Redeemer, and humble themselves in the dust. The entire chapter should be committed to memory. Its influence will subdue and humble the soul defiled by sin and uplifted by self-exaltation."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1147.

MESSIAH: GOD'S PRUDENT SERVANT (Isa. 52:13-15).

According to Isaiah 52:13, 14, what role was to characterize the Messiah? What prophecy is made concerning His destiny?

In the book of Isaiah, the "servant" is sometimes the Messiah (Isa. 42:1-9; 49:1-7; 52:13-53:12), sometimes Israel (Isa. 41:8, 9; 43:1-44:23), and sometimes Cyrus, the Persian monarch (Isa. 44:24-46:13). Throughout Scripture, God's servants are those commissioned to fulfill His special purposes in the earth. (See Rom. 1:1.) The servant may be an individual or a nation. The passage we are studying (Isa. 52:13-53:12) predicts that the Servant-Messiah will fulfill God's transcendent purpose in the earth. By suffering for all human sin, the Messiah would provide salvation for every human being. Isaiah introduces his discussion of the Messiah's suffering by speaking of His subsequent exaltation. Isaiah 52:13 reminds us that Jesus has been "exalted at the right hand of God" (Acts 2:33, RSV; compare Phil. 2:9).

In Isaiah 52:14 the Messiah appears as the suffering servant. Nowhere in Scripture is there a more vivid presentation of the terrible physical effects of His bearing "our sins in his body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24, RSV). "This does not mean that he appears to be more disfigured than other men, but that . . . he no longer resembled a man. This is an extremely strong way of saying how great his sufferings were."—Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1972), pp. 337, 338.

What does the Messiah do for the nations? What is their reaction? Isa. 52:15.

"So will he sprinkle many nations" (Isa. 52:15, NIV). In the ancient sanctuary services, the priests sprinkled the blood of the sacrifices representing the Messiah; "how much more shall the blood of Christ . . . purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (Heb. 9:14, RSV). The power of the blood of Christ cleanses believing people of all nations from their sin. The Holy Spirit reveals the mysteries of the gospel to their hearts (1 Cor. 2:9, 10). Those who do not believe will ultimately understand when they are confronted by the returning King (Matt. 24:30).

RECEPTION OF THE SUFFERING MESSIAH (Isa. 53:1-3).

What answer would you give to the questions Isaiah asks? Isa. 53:1 (compare Luke 18:8).

There is an element of passionate yearning in these questions. Jesus Himself dramatically expressed it: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matt. 23:37).

Despite all the miracles He had performed, many people did not believe Jesus was the Messiah. This is exactly what Isaiah the prophet had predicted. John quoted Isaiah 53:1 (John 12:38). The people to whom Jesus ministered could not grasp truth, because, as Isaiah had predicted, "He has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts" (John 12:40, NIV, quoting Isa. 6:10). Understanding comes with faith. Because many of Jesus' contemporaries refused to believe, they could not see or accept the truth He shared.

What did the prophet mean when he described the human Christ? Was Jesus' person not attractive? Was He unattractive—a physical weakling? Lacking in personality and charisma? Isa. 53:1-3.

"These words do not mean that Christ was unattractive in person. In the eyes of the Jews, Christ had no beauty that they should desire Him. They looked for a Messiah who would come with outward display and worldly glory, one who would do great things for the Jewish nation, exalting it above every other nation on the earth. But Christ came with His divinity hidden by the garb of humanity, unobtrusive, humble, poor. They compared this man with the proud boasts they had made, and they could see no beauty in Him. They did not discern the holiness and purity of His character. The grace and virtue revealed in His life did not appeal to them."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1147.

How do we discern the holiness and purity of Christ's character? How does the grace and virtue revealed in His life impress us? How does His unobtrusive style affect us?

Tuesday

January 10

WHAT THE MESSIAH HAS DONE FOR US (Isa. 53:4-10).

In what sense did Jesus bear our “griefs” (Isa. 53:4, KJV), or “infirmities” (NIV)? Matt. 8:17.

Jesus bore our sicknesses or infirmities in the sense that He healed the physically sick. Moreover, he took upon Himself our guilt and its consequences (1 Peter 2:24)—separation from the Father, ultimate spiritual and mental anguish, and the resulting physical suffering and death on the cross.

Consider prayerfully what Christ has done for us: (1) borne our griefs (Isa. 53:4); (2) carried our sorrows (verse 4); (3) stricken, smitten of God and afflicted (verse 4); (4) wounded for our transgressions (verse 5); (5) bruised for our iniquities (verse 5); (6) chastised for our peace (verse 5); (7) suffered stripes (verse 5); (8) bore the world’s iniquity (verses 6, 8); (9) was oppressed and afflicted (verse 7); (10) brought to slaughter as a lamb (verse 7); (11) dumb before His persecutors (verse 7); (12) taken from prison and judgment (verse 8); (13) life taken (verse 8); (14) buried with the wicked and the rich (verse 9).

Compare the Gospel account of Jesus’ trial, suffering, and death with Isaiah’s predictions. Matt. 26:47-67; 27:1, 11-50, 57-66.

The Saviour suffered alone. None of His followers defended or championed His Messiahship. Consider, His griefs were not His own. The infinite intensity of His suffering resulted from an act of the Father, who suffered with the Son (2 Cor. 5:19): “The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:6, NIV). “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us” (2 Cor. 5:21, NIV; compare Isa. 53:10). Willingly the Son accepted the results of all human sin; willingly, but with a breaking heart, the Father caused the Son to endure those results.

“It is for thee that the Son of God consents to bear this burden of guilt; for thee He spoils the domain of death, and opens the gates of Paradise. . . . He, the Sin Bearer, endures the wrath of divine justice, and for thy sake becomes sin itself.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 755, 756.

How would you describe your feelings at this sight of the Deity suffering for your sin?

Wednesday

January 11

SATISFACTION AND VICTORY GUARANTEED (Isa. 53:11).

What brings satisfaction to God's suffering Son? Isa. 53:10, 11 (compare 1 Thess. 2:19).

"Ever before Him, Christ saw the result of His mission. . . . By giving His life for the life of men, He would restore in humanity the image of God. He would lift us up from the dust, reshape the character after the pattern of His own character, and make it beautiful with His own glory."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 504.

What does the death of the Servant-Messiah make possible for believers? Isa. 53:11 (compare Rom. 5:17).

The New Jewish Publication Society translation of Isaiah 53:11 (second part) reads: "My righteous servant makes the many righteous, it is their punishment that he bears." The Hebrew verb *to justify* is translated "makes righteous." (Compare also the NRSV and the Amplified Bible. The Hebrew verb is causitive.) J. A. Ziesler comments: "It is also possible that because of the vicarious action of the Servant . . . they *are* righteous. . . . The Servant may be the cause not of the accounting righteous, but of the actual being righteous, of many."—*The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul* (Cambridge: University Press, 1972), p. 18.

Of the 41 instances of the verb *to justify* (*tsadaq*) in the Hebrew Old Testament, there is none in which God declares righteous a person who is not so. Quite the contrary, God says that He will not justify the wicked, and He commands human judges to follow His example. (See Ex. 23:7; Deut. 25:1; 1 Kings 8:32; Prov. 17:15; Isa. 5:22, 23.) But note that God does not justify the righteous person as a meritorious reward for good ethical conduct. *He justifies a person because of his or her covenant relationship with Himself that will be expressed in good ethical conduct.* Justification is a legal declaration of the transformation of heart brought about by covenant fellowship with God.

In Isaiah 53:11 the Lord (the Messiah) justifies in the sense of acquitting or declaring righteous those who have accepted His vicarious sacrifice and have entered into personal fellowship with Him. They are accounted righteous because the righteous Servant has made them so. Not only did He bear their iniquity, but He made them whole by healing them of their spiritual and ethical disease.

REWARD OF HIS SACRIFICE AND INTERVENTION (Isa. 53:12).

How will Jesus share His reward with His people? How will He divide "the spoil" with us? What makes all of this bestowal of gifts possible? Isa. 53:12 (compare Rev. 7:9-17).

The Messiah could never receive "a portion among the great," nor could He "divide the spoils with the strong" (Isa. 53:12, NIV) unless He rose from the dead. The text implies the resurrection of Christ. "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. . . . But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead" (1 Cor. 15:17, 20, NIV).

The magnificent truth is that Christ shares His victory with His believing people. "Assuredly, I will give him the many as his portion, He shall receive the multitude as his spoil" (Isa. 53:12, JPS). For us to be Christ's for eternity will be the greatest reward both for Him and for us. (See Mark 10:28-31.)

Isaiah reiterated the basis of our salvation: "He poured out His soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many" (Isa. 53:12, NIV; compare 1 Peter 3:18; Heb. 9:28; 1 John 2:2; 4:10). "Justice demands that sin be not merely pardoned, but the death penalty must be executed. God, in the gift of His only-begotten Son, met both these requirements. By dying in man's stead, Christ exhausted the penalty and provided a pardon." —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 340.

How does the Messiah make the benefits of His sacrifice immediately available to believers? Isa. 53:12 (last part).

Christ is our Mediator and High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary. (See 1 Tim. 2:5, 6; Heb. 7:23-27.) When at His ascension He began His heavenly ministry of intercession for sinners, He poured out His Spirit upon His people so that His indwelling presence would provide the enabling power for their victory over sin. (See Acts 2:37-39; Rom. 8:1-4.)

Thus Isaiah 53 speaks of the death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and heavenly intercessory ministry of Jesus Christ. Because of His wonderful gift, all that sin has lost, Christ will restore.

How could you briefly explain to your neighbor the significance of Christ's death? Perhaps you could rehearse your explanation in Sabbath School class.

FURTHER STUDY: In Scripture Christ the Saviour is represented as wonderful (Isa. 9:6); an unspeakable gift (2 Cor. 9:15); the captain of salvation (Heb. 2:10); the power of God (1 Cor. 1:24); Emmanuel (Matt. 1:23); the friend of publicans and sinners (Luke 7:34); the great High Priest (Heb. 4:14); the Lamb of God (John 1:36); the Lord our righteousness (Jer. 23:6); the Lord your redeemer (Isa. 43:14); the Messiah (John 4:25, 26).

Read the following statements that speak of the gift of Christ's righteousness to us:

"Abundant grace has been provided that the believing soul may be kept free from sin; for all heaven, with its limitless resources, has been placed at our command. We are to draw from the well of salvation. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believeth. In ourselves we are sinners; but in Christ we are righteous. Having made us righteous through the imputed righteousness of Christ, God pronounces us just, and treats us as just." —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 394.

"Christ has become our sacrifice and surety. He has become sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. *Through faith in His name He imputes unto us His righteousness, and it becomes a living principle in our life.* . . . Christ imputes to us His sinless character and presents us to the Father in His own purity." —*That I May Know Him*, p. 302. (Italics supplied.)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Could Christ have saved us without the sacrifice He made? Would it have been sufficient for Him merely to show how to live and how to die? Why is the legal aspect of the atonement vital to our salvation?
2. What is the main barrier to our being drawn to the Saviour? Is it our own bad habits and character weaknesses? Is it the cross that Jesus offers us to bear? What keeps people from coming to Christ?

SUMMARY: Isaiah's prophecy in chapter 53 is the explosive reality of God's truth about the mission of the coming Messiah. It blows to fragments the Israelite conception of a war-hero Saviour who would emancipate the captive Jews and destroy the power of Rome. And it explodes the idea that humanity can be given salvation without a substitutionary sacrifice. It presents instead the suffering Saviour dedicated to bearing the sins of the whole world and thrilled to bestow eternal life on those who accept Him.



One Pastor, 1,030 Baptisms

Alejandro Bullón

Carlos Franca, a young pastor in the North Brazilian Union, has not yet been ordained. However, during one year he led 1,030 persons to the Lord in the South American Division.

This young man has a special talent to organize and plan. He has placed his life in God's hands, and through Him, Pastor Franca has accomplished much in the three years since he began working.

To reach people for Christ, Pastor Franca uses family-based Bible study groups and baptismal classes. Some 300 informal family groups study a series of Bible lessons called *La Verdad*, or "The Truth." Members work together to interest their neighbors, family, and friends. In these informal groups, interested persons have their first major contact with our message through the Bible lessons.

After they finish the Bible lessons they are invited to attend baptismal classes. In his district of 10 churches, Pastor Franca conducted 30 baptismal classes for young people, adults, and juniors in one year.

Pastor Franca held leadership training seminars for family and baptismal study group leaders. He challenged and inspired them, and then he placed the Bible lessons in their hands.

During the year he keeps busy visiting and encouraging the groups. With special authorization of the church, he has baptized his candidates. Early in the year he performed baptisms weekly, but near the end of the year, he had to schedule baptisms daily.

Today his district has grown from 10 to 29 churches, each church adopting the family group and baptismal class method as a permanent outreach feature.

Pastor Franca uses no complicated plans, no new or costly methods. His method is simple and direct, but the results are thrilling.



Alejandro Bullón is the Global Mission coordinator for the South American Division.

God's Honor Roll



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Heb. 10:35-37; 11:1-40; 12:1, 2.

MEMORY TEXT: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Hebrews 11:13).

KEY THOUGHT: Faith in God, resulting in works acceptable to Him, is an essential response for those preparing to be citizens of the city Christ is preparing.

THE CONTEXT OF HEBREWS 11 enhances the enormous significance of the chapter. Previous chapters emphasize that Christ's death, resurrection, and heavenly ministry have replaced the Old Testament sanctuary services. Through the blood of Christ we have immediate access to the presence of God. Our past sins can be forgiven. Christ gives us His perfection while we continue to grow in holiness (Heb. 10:14). Amid the struggles of life our confidence in Christ must remain unshaken (Heb. 10:35-39).

As an encouragement for us to persevere (Heb. 12:1, 2), the Epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 11, presents in 40 verses the stunning exploits of faith in the lives of twelve Bible heroes and heroines including Sara, the wife of Abraham, and Rahab, of Jericho. Five stalwart warriors, as well as Samuel and the prophets, are given honorable mention. Thousands of Christians have passed through the pain of persecution. By faith they conquered, knowing that in later generations men and women of faith also would be victorious.

HOW TO OBTAIN A GOOD REPORT (Heb. 11:1-7, 39, 40).

The elders in Zion obtained a good report ("testimony," NKJV). How did this come about? Through faith. The truly great men and women of Bible times, and all time, have been champions of faith in God and His Word. (See 1 John 5:4.)

What is faith said to be? Heb. 11:1. How does verse 3 illustrate faith at work?

Hebrews 11:1 reads in the Amplified Bible: "Now faith is the assurance (the confirmation, the title-deed) of the things [we] hope for, being the proof of things [we] do not see and the conviction of their reality—faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses."

"Faith is trusting in God—believing that He loves us, and knows what is for our best good. Thus, instead of our own way, it leads us to choose His way. In place of our ignorance, it accepts His wisdom; in place of our weakness, His strength; in place of our sinfulness, His righteousness. Our lives, ourselves, are already His; faith acknowledges His ownership, and accepts its blessing. Truth, uprightness, purity, are pointed out as secrets of life's success. It is faith that puts us in possession of these."—*The Faith I live By*, p. 90.

As you read Hebrews 11:1-34, think of at least one act of each of the saints that required heroic faith. Then identify some New Testament believers (women and men) who could also qualify for God's honor roll.

What did the works of Abel, Enoch, and Noah demonstrate? Heb. 11:4, 5, 7. What kind of faith pleases God? Why? Heb. 11:6 (compare Gal. 5:6).

The great faith of men and women of the past manifested itself in great deeds. Hebrews 11 illustrates James's point that living faith always results in good works (James 2:14-26). The patriarchs were accounted righteous, not because their works earned righteousness, but because, having believed, they received the gift of God's righteousness as the inner power to serve Him.

If you don't have the kind of faith described in Hebrews 11, how should you go about getting it? (See John 20:31.)

Monday

January 16

THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM AND SARAH (Heb. 11:8-19).

On Abraham's journey to Canaan, what prospect thrilled his soul? Heb. 11:8, 9, 13-16.

How encouraging that Abraham's motivation in moving to Canaan was not worldly wealth and control of real estate! His concern was to show his complete trust in God, who was preparing for him a city (verse 10), the "better country" (verse 16).

How did Abraham's faith in God's promises affect both his standing with God and his spiritual state? Rom. 4:1-5; Gal. 3:6-9, 14. By what painful act did God ask Abraham to demonstrate his standing and state? Heb. 11:17-19.

There can be no justification without faith. Abel trusted in the blood of Christ and was accounted and made righteous. Enoch pleased God by his faith attachment to Christ, and he walked with the Invisible. In the eyes of a righteous God, Noah became heir of the righteousness that is by faith. Abraham was righteous in God's sight because his faith worked, and he went out to the Promised Land not knowing whither he went. Later he obeyed the divine summons to offer his son as a sacrifice. His actions did not save his soul, but they demonstrated the faith of a man accepted by God. We are justified by faith alone, but we will be judged by our works, which represent God at work in and through us (2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:12; 22:12).

What test of faith came to Sarah? Heb. 11:11, 12.

The miraculous birth followed the ordinary processes of childbearing: conception, pregnancy, the birth of a son. It all happened through Sarah's response of faith to God's command and promise. Sarah first laughed at the idea of having a baby at the age of 90 (Gen. 18:9-15), but when conception occurred and she began to show signs of childbearing, her friends could exclaim, "Isn't it wonderful what God can do for an old woman who has faith in Him!"

How valid is our claim to faith when we refuse to give up something or someone God asks us to separate from?

Tuesday

January 17

FAITH EXPRESSED IN PROPHETIC UTTERANCES (Heb. 11:20-22).

By faith Isaac blessed his twin sons concerning things to come (Heb. 11:20). Esau's blessing is recorded in Genesis 27:38-40; Jacob's blessing is recorded in Genesis 27:26-29; 28:1-5.

Considering the outrageous and deceptive behavior of Jacob and the perverse nature of his brother, Esau, would you say that either deserved a blessing from the Lord? Why? See Genesis 27 and 28. If Jacob was no more worthy than Esau, why did the Lord favor him (Rom. 9:10-13)? Are we any more worthy of God's favors? If not, why does the Lord bless us?

God's grace is larger than human failures. The blessings of Isaac were really prophetic utterances of things to come. Isaac had faith that the word of the Lord he proclaimed would come to pass, and it did! Jacob's life changed for the better, while Esau remained adamant in his pattern of evildoing, as the Lord had predicted. And through Jacob, the seed of Isaac, came Jesus the promised Saviour. How wonderful the providences and foreknowledge of God! (See Rom. 11:33.) And how great the faith of Isaac!

Joseph asked his father, Jacob, to bless his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, and he did so under prophetic inspiration (Gen. 48:11-22). Jacob was 147 years old, a tottering elderly man, but his faith was unmoved. He uttered prophetic blessings without wavering. He knew that, in His own time, God would fulfill the predictions.

As Esau, the firstborn of Isaac, and Jacob exchanged places, in the providence of God, so did Manasseh, the firstborn, with his brother Ephraim. Esau and Manasseh would prove to be unworthy; Ephraim and Jacob proved to be worthy. God knows what He is doing. Do you ever question God's dealings in your life? Do you ever wonder how things will turn out, considering all the problems? Faith enables us to envision success while our humanity visualizes only failure.

Review other scriptures indicating that God uses godly people who have faith as He unfolds future events through them: Amos 3:7; 2 Peter 1:19-21; Luke 1:26-31, 39-45. The prophets who received revelations from God were men and women of faith.

Wednesday

January 18

MOSES, HIS PARENTS, AND RAHAB (Heb. 11:23-31).

**Discuss the exploits of faith recorded in Hebrews 11:23-31.
How did faith enter the picture in each instance?**

Moses' parents (verse 23) _____

Moses (verses 24-29) _____

Joshua (verse 30) _____

Rahab (verse 31) _____

Compare Moses' life of faith and self-renunciation with that of our Lord Jesus. Compare Heb. 11:24-29 with Phil. 2:4-11.

"Moses was a type of Christ. As Israel's intercessor veiled his countenance, because the people could not endure to look upon its glory, so Christ, the divine Mediator, veiled His divinity with humanity when He came to earth. Had He come clothed with the brightness of heaven, He could not have found access to men in their sinful state. They could not have endured the glory of His presence. Therefore He humbled Himself, and was made 'in the likeness of sinful flesh' (Romans 8:3), that He might reach the fallen race, and lift them up."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 330.

What act of faith distinguished Rahab, the harlot, and with what result? Heb. 11:30, 31; Joshua 2:1-18; 6:17-25.

What casual Hebrew observer would have detected the heart of faith beneath the disguise of a prostitute! We look on the outward appearance; God looks on the heart. Boaz, an ancestor of Christ, took Ruth the Moabitess to be his wife. Boaz was the son of Salmon, "by Rahab" (Matt. 1:5). Matthew states that Jesus descended directly from Rahab, a reformed harlot, and Ruth, a Moabitess. The important thing with God is the heart of faith. Glory is given to the Father and the Son when lives are transformed by grace. We can only stand in awe and wonder at what God can do when people believe and obey Him!

What would it mean for you to bear your cross in life as faithfully as Moses bore his?

SIX HEROES OF FAITH (Heb. 11:32-40).

What common occupation distinguished the six heroes mentioned in Hebrews 11:32? Name two common traits of character. What will these characteristics do for God's people today?

Are the experiences described in Hebrews 11:33-38 intended to be purely historical? What application do these verses have for God's last-day people?

In this chapter, faith shines like a jewel with many polished facets. Twenty-two episodes gleam with the power and beauty of faith. Faith is portrayed as an experience. Hebrews 11 reveals the principle that God's Word was cherished more dearly than anything life could bring to His faithful servants. Each situation, if studied in context, demonstrates a test between God's will and someone else's will. This honor roll shows that God does not forget His loyal subjects. Their reward still awaits them and all others who place implicit trust in their Creator and Redeemer.

What glorious cloud encompasses God's children? What three things should we do? Heb. 12:1, 2. What is the secret of success? Verses 2-4 (see also Heb. 11:39, 40).

"We are homeward bound. A little longer and the strife will be over. May we who stand in the heat of the conflict, ever keep before us a vision of things unseen—of that time when the world will be bathed in the light of heaven, when the years will move on in gladness, when over the scene the morning stars will sing together and the sons of God will shout for joy, while God and Christ will unite in proclaiming, 'There shall be no more sin, neither shall there be any more death.' 'Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,' let us 'press toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.' "—Ellen G. White (a message Ellen G. White placed in gift copies of her books).

If a murderer and adulterer (David), a deceiver and liar (Jacob), and a prostitute (Rahab) conquered their evil desires by faith in God, is there hope for us? Why? Wherein lies the victory? (See 1 John 5:2-5.)

FURTHER STUDY: How would you explain Matthew 17:20 and Mark 9:23? Under what circumstances are these promises fulfilled to us? Read: "An Impressive Dream" in *Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 594-597; "Faith and Acceptance" in *Steps to Christ*, pp. 49-55.

Hebrews 10:35-37 has special meaning for Seventh-day Adventists. As we face the future, increasingly aware of Bible prophecy being fulfilled by events in the world and in the church, what could be more reassuring? "Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that you may do the will of God and receive what is promised. 'For yet a little while, and the coming one shall come and shall not tarry; but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.' But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and keep their souls" (Heb. 10:35-39, RSV). Because Christ is coming very soon, our faith in His appearing must grow stronger every day.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Illustrate how you would distinguish between faith and presumption.
2. Is faith natural to our human nature like memory or judgment, or is it a gift of God? (See Eph. 2:8.)
3. How can you tell how much faith you actually have?
4. If God's Word bids you live in a certain way and you offer excuses or refuse, what is the real reason for your attitude?
5. The characters of Hebrews 11 overcame by faith. What would hinder us from having our names registered in God's great honor roll?

SUMMARY: Faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Hebrews 11 provides illustrations of how men and women of God in past ages held to the faith steadfastly, though tried by persecution. Much of the Old Testament delineates exploits of faith that provide excellent models for us in these last days of earth's history.



KaFuMa

James H. Zachary

Inside Story

Brother Henderson had learned his lessons well. After six weeks at the lay training school in Papua, New Guinea, he began holding Bible studies. Each week this energetic layman hiked eight kilometers (five miles) to lead a Bible study at KaFuMa. This was the third new church that he had planted since he completed his training.

Brother Henderson stood in front of a partly-completed jungle-style church. More than 200 people sat on the ground, listening to Henderson's lively presentation. The candidates for baptism had built this sanctuary for the new congregation that would be organized following their baptism. Candidates were Sabbath School members for at least one year before they could be baptized. This year would be spent establishing them in a new life in Jesus.

The construction had been hard work. They cut poles from the forest and gathered jungle vines to tie poles together. Next they would construct the benches from similar poles, then gather grass and dry it for the roof.

As the Bible study closed, we gathered around a table laden with tropical fruits. As we ate, one of the tribesmen told me the story of the new church.

"We are three clans living in this valley. Since the days of our forefathers we fought and killed one another."

Another man joined in the conversation. Pointing to their teacher, he said, "Then Henderson came. He invited us to study the messages from the God in the sky. We have learned many things from the holy book. We have accepted Jesus and his new way of life."

The first tribesman continued, "Our three clans are friends now. We are now one in Jesus," he said with a smile. "There will be peace in this valley now. We will not fight anymore."

The tribes have named their new church KaFuMa, taken from the first syllable of each clan's name. Jesus transforms men and women. An old way of life comes to an end. KaFuMa testifies to that.



James H. Zachary is associate secretary of the Ministerial Association at the General Conference.

In the Beginning



Sabbath Afternoon:

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Gen. 1:1-31; 2:1-4; Ps. 33:6-9.

MEMORY TEXT: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1).

KEY THOUGHT: God is the Creator and the Re-Creator. Just as He created the world out of nothing, so He creates spiritual life for human beings from a spiritual void.

GOD CREATED THE UNIVERSE AND ITS INHABITANTS. Genesis chapter 1 records that our world, with its plant life, animal life, and human life, was created in six days. Some of the Bible passages that refer to God's creative work are as follows:

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters" (Gen. 1:1, 2, NASB).

"For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and made it holy" (Ex. 20:11, NASB).

"You alone are the Lord. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them" (Neh. 9:6, NIV).

"In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands" (Ps. 102:25, NIV).

"By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible" (Heb. 11:3, NRSV).

PLANET EARTH—GOD'S CREATION (Gen. 1:1, 2).

In what classic-but-simple language does the author of Genesis describe the origin of our world and the heavens? Gen. 1:1.

"The work of creation can never be explained by science. What science can explain the mystery of life?

"The theory that God did not create matter when He brought the world into existence is without foundation. In the formation of our world, God was not indebted to pre-existing matter. On the contrary, all things, material or spiritual, stood up before the Lord Jehovah at His voice and were created for His own purpose. The heavens and all the host of them, the earth and all things therein, are not only the work of His hand; they came into existence by the breath of His mouth."—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 258, 259.

God first invented or planned the universe. Then, by His miraculous power, He put His plan into action.

How does "God the Lord" identify Himself? Isa. 42:5; 40:28 (compare Isa. 40:12-22, 25, 26).

God's work was to make tangible objects out of nothing, things out of no thing. God changed the nature of physical elements when He breathed life into Adam (Gen. 2:7). This requires the same divine energy as to create the universe out of nothing. God also creates new hearts in human beings; He re-creates. David prayed, "Create in me a pure heart, O God" (Ps. 51:10, NIV). All of these creative acts are miracles of which the divine Creator alone is capable.

Who was active in the creation of our world? Gen. 1:2; Ps. 104:30; John 1:1-4; Heb. 1:1, 2; Col. 1:15-17.

Just as all three Persons of the Godhead shared in the work of Creation, all three are involved in re-creation. All three Persons of the Godhead are interested in the redemption of lost man, his restoration to the divine image. In this sense creation is still going on. The creative energy and power of God is needed in every life every day.

Under what circumstances will God answer us when we pray David's prayer recorded in Psalm 51:10? What is the role of faith as we consider the Creation account and as we approach God for re-creation? (See Heb. 11:1-6.)

ORIGIN OF DAY AND NIGHT (Gen. 1:3-5).

What was the source of the light that illuminated the earth during the first three days of Creation? Gen. 1:3-5 (compare Ps. 104:1-5). How does spiritual light come to sinful human beings? John 1:9-13.

The Lord is the source of both natural and spiritual light. "For God, who said, 'let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6, NIV). "God is light; in him there is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5, NIV).

Since we cannot explain Creation or any of God's miraculous works (Rom. 11:33), why should we trust Him as the source of truth and spiritual light? Isa. 50:7-10; Ps. 32:10.

How can we demonstrate from Genesis 1 and 2 that life as we know it was not created over millions (or even billions) of years, and that it did not evolve? Gen. 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31; 2:1-3 (compare Ex. 20:8-11).

"The days of the Bible's Creation account signify literal 24-hour periods. Typical of how the Old Testament people of God measured time, the expression 'the evening and the morning' (Gen. 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31) specifies individual days with the day beginning at evening, or sunset (see Lev. 23:32; Deut. 16:6). There is no justification for saying that this expression meant one literal day in Leviticus and thousands or millions of years in Genesis."

"The Hebrew word translated day in Genesis 1 is *yom*. When *yom* is accompanied by a definite number, it always means a literal, 24-hour day (e.g. Gen. 7:11; Ex. 16:1)—another indication that the Creation account speaks of literal, twenty-four-hour days."—*Seventh-day Adventists Believe* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 1988), p. 71.

If each day preceding the Sabbath was a long period of time, the Sabbath must have been also. But the Sabbath commandment instructs that the seventh-day Sabbath be observed, "for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth" (Ex. 20:11; compare 31:17). Because the Sabbath is a 24-hour period, so are the days of Creation week that the Sabbath memorializes. (See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 112.)

Tuesday

January 24

THE FIRMAMENT, THE SEA, AND THE DRY LAND (Gen. 1:6-13).

What is the firmament? Gen 1:7, 8 (compare the use of the word in verses 14, 15, 17, 20; Ps. 19:1).

How did the Lord work in arranging the surface of the earth? Gen. 1:9, 10.

In Genesis 1:6-10 we see the bountiful Divider at work. First He divides night from day; then He divides the waters on the earth from the clouds and vapors above the earth. Thus there is created the vast expanse of the sky, or the firmament. Here God anticipates a magnificent habitat for the fowls of the air. Our atmosphere comes into being, which the astronauts tell us wraps our earth in a cocoon of blue. The firmament consists of air. Sufficient space exists for birds to fly and, in our time, for jet planes to streak across the skies. Then comes the gathering together of waters, creating seas. Then dry land appears.

What occurs next in the unfolding drama of Creation? Gen. 1:11, 12.

God gave names to the elements of His creation on days one to three: Light equals day; darkness equals night; firmament equals heaven; water equals sea; land equals earth. On the sixth day Adam gave names to the living creatures upon the earth.

From what source did Adam draw to frame appropriate names for both fauna and flora? How could this be when Adam had little time to study or premeditate? And what about noxious plants?

"Not one noxious plant was placed in the Lord's great garden, but after Adam and Eve sinned, poisonous herbs sprang up. In the parable of the sower the question was asked the master, 'Didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?' The master answered, 'An enemy hath done this' (Matt. 13:27, 28). All tares are sown by the evil one. Every noxious herb is of his sowing, and by his ingenious methods of amalgamation he has corrupted the earth with tares."—*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 288. (See *Temperance*, p. 75.)

What is the difference between the way we treat noxious plants in our gardens and the manner in which we treat "tares" in the church? (See Matt. 13:30.)

Wednesday

January 25

THE FOURTH DAY (Gen. 1:14-19).

Since the firmament refers to the atmospheric heavens, how can we explain Genesis 1:14, 17?

"The expression that they [sun, moon, and stars] are set in the firmament, or expanse of heaven, is chosen because it is there that the earthly inhabitant sees them."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 212.

When were the stars created? Gen. 1:16 (last part).

"He made the stars also. The words, 'he made,' have been supplied. As to the origin of the stars two principal views have been set forth: (1) The stars were brought into existence during creation week, along with the sun and moon. (2) The 'stars,' though created earlier, are here mentioned, in passing, by Moses, inasmuch as he is discussing the luminaries of the heavens. The first view necessitates the conclusion that prior to creation week the vast universe was an empty void. This conclusion seems unwarranted.

"However, on this as on many other cryptic declarations of Scripture regarding God's mysterious acts, we should be slow to dogmatize. We should not forget that the primary truth Moses sought to present in regard to the origin of the sun, moon, and stars is that all are the result of God's creative power. Here is a further refutation of the ancient but ever-recurring heresy of the eternity of matter."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 213.

Why did people begin to worship the heavenly bodies? What were the results of sun worship in Israel? 2 Kings 21:3, 5; Jer. 8:1, 2.

The idolatry of worshiping the heavenly bodies denied the Lord's claims and requirements. The Lord warned His people of the dire results of worshiping the sun, moon, and stars (Deut. 4:19, 24).

Scripture sometimes presents the sun and light as symbols of Christ. (See Mal. 4:2; John 8:12; Rev. 21:23.) Excluding Him from our lives by substituting things or persons as objects of our adoration is idolatry as objectionable to God as was that of our ancestors.

What other objects of God's creation has Satan transformed into objects of worship?

Thursday

January 26

CREATOR VERSUS CREATURE WORSHIP (Gen. 1:20-25).

How did God arrange for birds, fish, and animals to reproduce only within their basic types? Gen. 1:20-22, 24-25.

The laws of genetics were implanted into each living creature by God Himself. The obvious divine intention was that each broad kind of animal should reproduce others of the same kind with only minor variations within the basic type. Birds and animals do not evolve into other kinds of life. Cats do not become dogs; fish do not become land animals. Moreover, there is no evolution from lower to higher forms of life.

How would you describe the human beings who came forth from the hand of the Creator? Gen. 1:26-28; 2:7, 18, 21-25.

"God created man in His own image. Here is no mystery. There is no ground for the supposition that man was evolved by slow degrees of development from the lower forms of animal or vegetable life. Such teaching lowers the great work of the Creator to the level of man's narrow, earthly conceptions. Men are so intent upon excluding God from the sovereignty of the universe that they degrade man and defraud him of the dignity of his origin. . . . Man was to bear God's image, both in outward resemblance and in character."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 45.

What has happened to the noble being God created? Eccles. 7:29; Rom. 5:12-21; 7:14, 15, 18, 19. The tendency throughout history has been for humans to substitute creature-worship for Creator-worship. What have been the dire results? Rom. 1:21-32.

What perpetual memorial of Creation did God give as a barrier against false modes of worship? Gen. 2:1-3.

If humans had faithfully observed the Sabbath, there would have been no idolatry. False systems of worship would never have arisen, and substitutes for the Sabbath would have been rejected. The seventh-day Sabbath that God instituted at Creation and that Christ observed while on earth (Luke 4:16; Matt. 24:20) was designed to keep human beings in close fellowship with their Creator.

FURTHER STUDY: Study John 1:1-3, 14; Rom. 1:20; Col. 1:12-17; Rev. 4:11; 14:6, 7; "The Creation" in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 44-51; "Science and the Bible" in *Education*, pp. 128-134.

"Seventh-day Adventists believe God is Creator of all things, and has revealed in Scripture the authentic account of His creative activity. In six days the Lord made 'the heaven and the earth' and all living things upon the earth, and rested on the seventh day of that first week. Thus He established the Sabbath as a perpetual memorial of His completed creative work. The first man and woman were made in the image of God as the crowning work of Creation, given dominion over the world, and charged with responsibility to care for it. When the world was finished it was 'very good,' declaring the glory of God."—*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 68.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How does a strict belief in a literal Creation affect one's belief in Christ and the power of His word?
2. If one believes the view that humanity's development sprang from lower forms, with God guiding the process, what is the effect upon one's understanding of Scripture? For example, how does the fall of humanity into sin relate to this view? What is the significance of the Sabbath, if this view is held?
3. If God, the Creator, is all-powerful, can He not create a world in a split-second of time? Why did He take six days and nights to create our world and its first inhabitants?
4. How would you explain to a nonbelieving friend that the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath contributes to faith in the Genesis 1 account of Creation?

SUMMARY: The creation of the world and all things in it was the work of the Creator-God, who made many things out of nothing. It was fiat-creation. "For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm" (Ps. 33:9, NIV). Not only mighty life-giving power, but His love and wisdom were on display before the universe. In a week's time the glorious earth appeared with the seventh-day Sabbath to memorialize it, and man and woman upon it to exercise, under God, sovereign rights over all the creation.



Sermon in the Flax Field

At a recent youth congress in Romania, a young man related this testimony:

One day when I was 8 years old I went with my father to his work as a builder. He was working near a fenced-in field of flax where women from a nearby prison were working.

Soon I became bored and wandered toward the fenced field. I began to pretend I was conducting a church service. I sang songs and preached a sermon to an imaginary audience.

Unknown to me, one of the women prisoners was watching me. When I saw her I became frightened. But she asked softly, "Are you a Christian?"

"Yes," I answered.

"Sing more," she said. I sang for her, then told her the story of the prodigal son and how Jesus died on the cross for us. She began to cry and told me her child had died and that she had been blamed for its murder. She asked me to wait while she brought a friend. When she returned with her friend she asked for more songs and stories. They listened eagerly, then asked me to return to the fence the next day. They also asked me to bring them a Bible.

The next day they were waiting at the fence when I arrived. They had brought other women and even a guard. I told them more stories about the love of Jesus. Then I quickly slipped the woman the New Testament that my father had given me.

I returned to the fence several more days, but the women's work was done, and they never returned.

Several years passed, and as a young man I was going from door to door inviting people to a Revelation Seminar. At one house the woman invited me in. She began to tell me about the first time she heard about the love of Jesus.

As I listened to her story, I realized this was the same woman who had heard my sermon in the flax field years earlier! When I told her that I was that boy, she excitedly ran from the room, returning with the now-worn New Testament I had given her! She told me of five other women who had been converted in that prison because of my witness.

This woman attended every meeting of the Revelation Seminar, and when it was over she declared, "'As for me and my house we will serve the Lord' (Joshua 24:5)."

Inside Story

God's Ten Eternal Principles



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Ex. 19:1-25; 20:1-26.

MEMORY TEXT: "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine" (Exodus 19:5).

KEY THOUGHT: God's eternal law of love (James 2:8-12) attracts us to the love and justice of the Lawgiver Himself.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS ARE A PERPETUAL REMINDER. Maxie D. Dunnam recounts that, during the days of the American gold rush, a young man's bride became ill and died before they could reach Fort Kearney in Nebraska. Heartbroken, the young man took her body to the highest hill and buried it, using the wagon bed to make a coffin. He drove down some wooden stakes to mark the grave, thinking that he would go on West and come back later. But he could not go on. He went back to St. Louis, Missouri, where he had a stonemason prepare a tombstone engraved with the name "Susan Hale." Not able to persuade anyone to haul it to Nebraska for him, he put the stone in a wheelbarrow, and pushed it all the way to Fort Kearney, where he set it up on her grave.

"Thus it is with Mount Sinai and the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments have been set up for us so that we will never forget the importance of some things. We keep coming back to them, for they speak to us of eternal truths and values."—Maxie D. Dunnam, *The Communicator's Commentary: Exodus* (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1987), pp. 249, 250.

**THE SETTING FOR THE PROCLAMATION OF GOD'S LAW
(Ex. 19:1-25).**

In the third month after the Exodus from Egypt the multitudes of Israel arrived at Mount Sinai and camped there (Ex. 19:1, 2). God called Moses up into the mount to receive instruction (verse 3).

What words of covenant relationship did the Lord give Moses for the elders and the people? Ex. 19:3-6. How did the people respond? Verses 7, 8. Do you think they meant what they said? Were they able to keep their covenant promise? Why? See Heb. 8:6-12; Rom. 8:3, 4.

The same covenant promises God offered Abraham, He offered to his descendants at Sinai. (See Gen 17:7, 9, 19; Gal. 3:15-17.) But the people's response was faulty; their hearts were not in their words. The Lord said to Moses, "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always" (Deut. 5:29; compare Heb. 8:8-10).

"The covenant that God made with His people at Sinai is to be our refuge and defense. . . . This covenant is of just as much force today as it was when the Lord made it with ancient Israel."—Ellen G. White, *The Southern Watchman*, March 1, 1904.

What terrifying experience followed? Ex. 19:16-25 (compare Heb. 12:18-21). Why did God give Israel this dramatic display of His power and majesty? Deut. 4:9-16.

"So terrible were the tokens of Jehovah's presence that the hosts of Israel shook with fear, and fell upon their faces before the Lord. Even Moses exclaimed, 'I exceedingly fear and quake.' "—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 304.

God's presence on the mount was glorious and spectacular. The people froze with fear at the sight. Boundaries had been set to keep man and beast at a safe distance from the sacred ground of Mount Sinai, made holy by God's presence. Now the Lord was ready to announce His holy law. First He gained their attention by the spectacular display of power. Then in a voice like thunder He proclaimed His Ten Immortal Words.

What is the significance for us of the words of reassurance with which the Lord began His proclamation (Ex. 20:2)? See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 305.

Monday

January 30

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT (Ex. 20:3).

Who is the great “I AM” of Exodus 20? Ex. 3:14; John 8:57, 58 (compare 1 Cor. 10:4; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 307).

In Exodus 20:1, 2, Yahweh, or Jehovah God, who is Christ Jesus of the New Testament, is saying in substance: “I delivered you from Egyptian bondage and so if you trust Me I will likewise deliver you from the bondage of sin, from the idolatry of violating the first table of My law and from the inhumanity involved in breaking the second table. All My biddings are enablings.” (See *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 333.)

What two divine principles summarize the first four commandments and the second six commandments? Matt. 22:34-40 (compare Deut. 6:4-6; Lev. 19:18).

What is taught by the very first commandment in God’s law? Ex. 20:3; 1 Cor. 8:4.

“Jehovah, the eternal, self-existent, uncreated One, Himself the Source and Sustainer of all, is alone entitled to supreme reverence and worship. Man is forbidden to give to any other object the first place in his affections or his service. Whatever we cherish that tends to lessen our love for God or to interfere with the service due Him, of that do we make a god.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 305.

The Bible teaches that there is only one true God—the Creator God. (See Isa. 45:18.) Satan weaned the affections of nearly the whole world away from the true God and set up his own deities. Scripture names at least 17 false gods, among whom were Baal-Peor (Moab, Num. 25:1-3), Dagon (Philistia, 1 Sam. 5:1-3), Ashtoreth and Milcom (Canaan, 1 Kings 11:5), and Bel (Babylon, Jer. 50:1-3).

Elijah’s contest with the prophets of Baal was a classic demonstration of God’s power and the impotence of the so-called deities set up by the evil one. (See 1 Kings 18:17-39.)

Name at least five objects or gods worshiped in modern society. From your own experience, how would you suggest to someone who asks the best means of resisting and overcoming these modern gods? What god(s) do you need to overcome?

Tuesday

January 31

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT (Ex. 20:4-6).

Note how the second commandment amplifies the first. Ex. 20:4. What reason does God give for obedience to the second commandment? Ex. 20:5, 6 (compare verses 22-26).

"The second commandment forbids the worship of the true God by images or similitudes. Many heathen nations claimed that their images were mere figures or symbols by which the Deity was worshiped, but God has declared such worship to be sin. The attempt to represent the Eternal One by material objects would lower man's conception of God. The mind, turned away from the infinite perfection of Jehovah, would be attracted to the creature rather than the Creator. And as his conceptions of God were lowered, so would man become degraded."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 306.

The one true God is able to act—to punish those who spurn His love and to bless those who cherish it. False gods have no such power.

Jealousy can be a bad character trait. Yet God is a jealous God. Explain. Ex. 34:12-15 (compare James 4:4).

Scripture often represents the relationship between God and His people as a marriage. An earthly bridegroom genuinely loves his bride and has no desire to share her intimate affections with anyone else. Just so God loves His people infinitely and is deeply hurt when they are untrue to Him. In this sense He is jealous of His people's affections. (See Jer. 6:2; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 306.)

Modern gods are not made of wood and stone, but of film, printers' ink and paper, metal and wire, buttons and fuses. They may also be actors and athletes, dictators, and night-club personalities. Jesus warned against the lust of these things. Things and people can become our gods: dress, automobiles, houses, lands, admired persons. Humanity is hailed as god. People live and move, talk and cry, dance and play, murder and rob, commit adultery and behave with gross indecency on stage and TV screen. And many viewers are slaves to these idols.

What deliverance from evil practices occurred at Ephesus?
Acts 19:18-20. Is idolatry going on in your life and home? How can the great I AM—Jesus—save us from these things? (See 1 John 5:18-21; 2:15-17; Heb. 7:25.)

Wednesday

February 1

REVERENCE AND WORSHIP OF GOD (Ex. 20:7-11).

What does the third commandment mean? What is involved in taking the Lord's name "in vain" (Ex. 20:7)? Lev. 19:12; Matt. 5:34-37 (compare Lev. 24:10-16; Isa. 29:23).

"This commandment not only prohibits false oaths and common swearing, but it forbids us to use the name of God in a light or careless manner, without regard to its awful significance."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 306.

"Holy and reverend is his name" (Ps 111:9). We should call upon the name of God when we pray, testify, or witness. When we pray we ask favors of God in Jesus' name. The seraphim, the highest of the angels, sing with reverent praise, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty" (Rev. 4:8) and they never tire of joyful praise.

What does the content of the Sabbath command reveal regarding its importance? Ex. 20:8-11. How should the Sabbath be observed? Isa. 58:12-14. What does our weekly Sabbath observance signify? Ex. 31:13, 16, 17.

"The Sabbath is not introduced as a new institution but as having been founded at creation. It is to be remembered and observed as the memorial of the Creator's work. Pointing to God as the Maker of the heavens and the earth, it distinguishes the true God from all false gods. All who keep the seventh day, signify by this act that they are worshipers of Jehovah. Thus the Sabbath is the sign of man's allegiance to God as long as there are any upon the earth to serve Him. The fourth commandment is the only one of all the ten in which are found both the name and the title of the Lawgiver. It is the only one that shows by whose authority the law is given. Thus it contains the seal of God, affixed to His law as evidence of its authenticity and binding force."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 307.

God has given us six days to work, asking that we refrain from work on the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a special day of communion with our Maker. Any interruption of that communion, allowing our minds to dwell on secular matters is desecration of the Sabbath. Jesus taught that caring for the sick and other acts of necessity on the Sabbath are acceptable. (See Mark 2:23–3:6.)

What blessings have you found in Sabbath observance? What has it done for your physical and spiritual life?

Thursday

February 2

SIX LAWS GOVERNING HUMAN RELATIONS (Ex. 20:12-17).

Each of the Ten Commandments implies a positive spiritual imperative. What is the deep spiritual meaning of the last six commandments (Ex. 20:12-17)? (See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 308, 309.)

Commandment 5: "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you" (Ex. 20:12, RSV). Compare Mark 7:8-13.

Commandment 6: "You shall not murder" (Ex. 20:13, NIV). Compare Matt. 5:21-26.

Commandment 7: "You shall not commit adultery" (Ex. 20:14, NIV). Compare Matt. 5:27-30; Rom. 1:24, 25; Eph. 5:3.

Commandment 8: "You shall not steal" (Ex. 20:15, NIV). Compare Mal. 3:8; Prov. 11:1; 16:8; 21:6; 22:16; Jer. 17:11.

Commandment 9: "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor" (Ex. 20:16, NIV). Compare Ex. 23:1; Prov. 19:9.

Commandment 10: "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor" (Ex. 20:17, NIV). Compare Luke 12:15; Col. 3:5.

How is it possible for a born-again believer to keep these moral precepts? Rom. 8:3, 4; John 15:7, 10.

"Though Christ is *said* to have *fulfilled the law* for us, yet it is nowhere intimated in the *Scripture* that he has so fulfilled these ten laws, as to exempt us from the necessity and *privilege* of being *no idolaters, swearers, Sabbath-breakers, disobedient and cruel children, murderer, adulterers, thieves, and corrupt witnesses.* . . . It is therefore readily granted that no man *unassisted and uninfluenced* by the *grace* of Christ can keep these commandments, either in the *letter* or in the *spirit*; but he who is truly converted to God, and has Christ dwelling in his heart by faith, can, in the *letter* and in the *spirit*, do all these things, because Christ strengthens *him*."—Adam Clarke, *A Commentary and Critical Notes* (New York: Lane and Sandford, 1843), vol. 1, p. 407. Italics in original. (See Eze. 36:24-27.)

FURTHER STUDY: Study Ex. 34:1, 2, 27-29; Matt. 5:17-20; Rom. 3:31; 7:7; 8:3, 4; James 2:10-12. Read "The Law Given to Israel" and "Satan's Enmity Against the Law" in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 303-314; 331-342.

God's character revealed in the Ten Commandments may be summarized in ten words that touch our own experience as Christians: (1) faith, (2) truth, (3) reverence, (4) obedience, (5) respect, (6) love, (7) purity, (8) honesty, (9) truthfulness, and (10) contentment.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What 10 words might represent Satan's evil substitute for the ten principles stated in the Ten Commandments?
2. Why did Jesus come to earth to fulfill the Law perfectly? Why does He expect us to emulate Him? (See Rev. 3:21; 1 John 3:4-9; 5:18.)
3. What means of grace provided in the gospel make loyalty and obedience to Christ a reality?
4. A friend asks how you can reconcile the negative commands of the Ten Commandments with the law of love given in the Sermon on the Mount. How would you answer?

SUMMARY: "The great principles of God's law are embodied in the Ten Commandments and exemplified in the life of Christ. They express God's love, will, and purposes concerning human conduct and relationships and are binding upon all people in every age. These precepts are the basis of God's covenant with His people and the standard in God's judgment. Through the agency of the Holy Spirit they point out sin and awaken a sense of need for a Saviour. Salvation is all of grace and not of works, but its fruitage is obedience to the Commandments. This obedience develops Christian character and results in a sense of well-being. It is an evidence of our love for the Lord and our concern for our fellow men. The obedience of faith demonstrates the power of Christ to transform lives, and therefore strengthens Christian witness."—*Fundamental Beliefs*, no. 18, in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 232.



Sudanese Youth Do "Impossible"

Berhane Woldemariam

Most of Sudan's 27 million inhabitants are Muslim. Until recently, the Adventist church barely had a toehold there. Work has been slow among the Sudanese, who are caught up in a war that has displaced one out of 15 countrymen.

During 1993, the Year of Youth Evangelism, leaders of the Sudan Field challenged the youth to see what they could do for God. "Nobody ever told them it would be difficult," Sudan Field president Berhane Woldemariam said. "They just went out and did it." And in this difficult field that has only two ordained ministers, the youth are showing the rest of us what can be done with youthful energy and imagination.

Young people went out into the streets of Khartoum and neighboring towns to hold Voice of Youth meetings. Through drama and sermon they attracted crowds of up to 300. They collected names of interests and followed up with studies. From these meetings young people of South Sudan baptized 95.

The youth were so encouraged they conducted a second program in another area, and another 40 were baptized. This is in one of the most difficult areas in the Middle East Union to win converts. Difficult? Impossible? Nobody told the young people.

Twelve teams of two are stationing themselves around Sudan to witness to people seeking for a better way. Each team is studying with 20 to 40 people and forming churches.

The fields of the Middle East Union had set a goal of 150 baptisms for the youth during the Year of Youth Evangelism. During the first half of 1993, the youth registered 287 baptisms. Throughout the Middle East, faithful members work quietly under adverse conditions to spread the gospel. During 1992, 20 people were baptized into fellowship in Iraq. We do not hear about them because of the sensitive nature of the work there, but

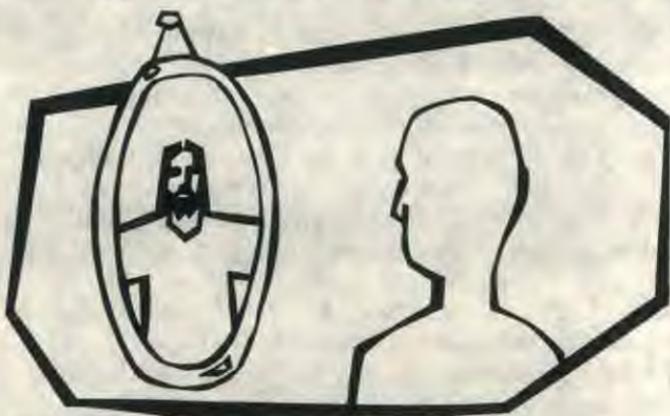
God hasn't forgotten, and believers around the world are praying for them.



**Sudanese young people
preach in the streets of
Khartoum.**

**Berhane Woldemariam is
president of the Sudan Field.**

The Qualities That Qualify



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Matthew 5.

MEMORY VERSE: "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48, RSV).

KEY THOUGHT: Jesus taught that the great qualification for entrance into the kingdom of heaven is righteousness (Matt. 5:20; 25:46)—righteousness which God gives freely to those who plead for it (Matt. 5:6). This gift empowers believers to fulfill the spirit of God's law as Jesus outlined it in the Sermon on the Mount.

CHRIST'S KINGDOM IS SPIRITUAL. Matthew 5, the first segment of Jesus' "inaugural address," the Sermon on the Mount, provides a clear and correct view of the spiritual nature of our Lord's kingdom. He called it "the kingdom of heaven." The nation Israel, chosen by Heaven to represent God and His laws to the world, was a theocracy. Though there was an earthly king, God was the absolute monarch. God expected the king, elders, and judges to administer His laws. But all the kings of Israel and most of the kings of Judah broke the covenant relationship with the Lord. Many severed their connection with Heaven by becoming idolaters. The monarchical theocracy came to an end with Zedekiah, the last king of Judah. But God had promised that the kingdom established by David would not cease. The Messiah would come and sit upon the throne of David, establishing a spiritual kingdom. Jesus Christ is to govern as King in the lives of all who accept His principles and choose to follow Him.

THE BLESSED PEOPLE IDENTIFIED (Matt. 5:1-12).

Describe the circumstances and venue for Jesus' famous discourse. Matt. 5:1, 2.

By the sea, seated on a mountainside, Jesus taught His disciples and the multitude the spiritual qualities possessed by the subjects of His kingdom. (See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 298.)

Jesus uttered nine blessings (Matt. 5:3-12). After reading the references given below, how would you describe the people whom Jesus regards as members of His spiritual kingdom? (See *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 6-35.)

The “poor in spirit” (Matt. 5:3): By contrast with those who think they are “rich, and increased with goods” (Rev. 3:17), they sense their total dependence upon Christ.

“They that mourn” (Matt. 5:4): God comforts those who mourn the loss of loved ones and those who mourn the sins that crucified the Son of God. (See Luke 18:13.)

“The meek” (Matt. 5:5): These are not weak, cowardly, fearful people, but are as Jesus was, patient, gentle, and humble in the face of unjust treatment. (See Phil. 2:5-7.)

“Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness” (Matt. 5:6, RSV): Recognizing their own unrighteousness, they plead that Christ’s righteousness will be counted for them and bestowed upon them. (See Rom. 4:5; 8:9, 10.)

“The merciful” (Matt. 5:7): They show compassion for others and willingness to forgive those who have wronged them. (See Job 29:12-16; Matt. 18:21, 22.)

“The pure in heart” (Matt. 5:8): “In one who is learning of Jesus, there will be manifest a growing distaste for careless manners, unseemly language, and coarse thought.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 24, 25.

“The peacemakers” (Matt. 5:9): The person at peace with God (Rom. 5:1) will diffuse a spirit of peace and harmony between humans and with Christ. (See Micah 5:7; James 3:17, 18.)

“The persecuted for righteousness’ sake” (Matt. 5:10): They share Christ’s sufferings (1 Peter 2:21) and depend solely upon His sustaining grace (2 Cor. 12:9).

“When men shall revile you” (Matt. 5:11): They are blessed because their characters remain steadfast when their reputations are slandered. (See James 5:10.)

THE SALT, THE LIGHT, AND THE LAW (Matt. 5:13-26).

With what two things from nature did the Lord illustrate the vitality of a Christian's witness? Matt. 5:13-16. How would you apply Jesus' words to yourself?

As salt gives savor, or taste, to the food it permeates, so Christians pervaded by the love of Christ disseminate love and hope to those around them. "Without a living faith in Christ as a personal Saviour it is impossible to make our influence felt in a skeptical world."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 37. As believers receive Christ, "the light of the world" (John 8:12), into their hearts, they impart this light to others.

Did the coming of Jesus to earth destroy the law or establish it? How did Jesus fulfill the law? Matt. 5:17-20.

"I have not come to do away with them [God's laws]" (Matt. 5:17, Twentieth Century New Testament) or "to annul them" (Weymouth).

Many New Testament passages emphasize that God's moral law of Ten Commandments is the standard of righteousness for the Christian believer. (See Rom. 3:31; 7:7, 12, 14; 8:3, 4; James 2:10-12.) Jesus' life is the ultimate standard of righteousness because He did as Isaiah had predicted: "He will magnify the law, and make it honourable" (Isa. 42:21).

Our righteousness can exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 5:20) only as we allow Christ, by the Holy Spirit, to write the principles of the law upon our hearts. (See Phil. 1:11; Rom. 10:5-10.)

How did Jesus magnify the law regarding murder? Matt. 5:21, 22; 1 John 3:11-18.

"One who becomes a party to the least injustice is breaking the law, and degrading his own moral nature. Murder first exists in the mind. He who gives hatred a place in his heart is setting his feet in the path of the murderer, and his offerings are abhorrent to God."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 310.

Rather than hating others, we should seek to become reconciled to them (Matt. 5:23-26).

ABOUT ADULTERY AND DIVORCE (Matt. 5:27-32).

Explain why Jesus categorized the lustful look as adultery (Matt. 5:28). Matt. 15:19. How do you understand the striking figures of speech Jesus used, recorded in Matthew 5:29, 30.

Sexual impurity is in the mind and the heart before it is put into action. (See Job 31:1.)

"Near the close of this earth's history Satan will work with all his powers in the same manner and with the same temptations wherewith he tempted ancient Israel just before their entering the land of promise. He will lay snares for those who claim to keep the commandments of God, and who are almost on the borders of the heavenly Canaan. He will use his powers to their utmost in order to entrap souls, and to take God's professed people upon their weakest points. Those who have not brought the lower passions into subjection to the higher powers of their being, those who have allowed their minds to flow in a channel of carnal indulgence of the baser passions, Satan is determined to destroy with his temptations—to pollute their souls with licentiousness."—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies on Sexual Behavior*, p. 84.

Explain Jesus' teaching about putting away one's wife. Matt. 5:32.

"Putting away" was common among the Jews; they could put away their wives for any reason whatsoever. But Jesus was concerned for women divorced by selfish husbands. He indicated that no man has a right to put away his wife unless she has been unfaithful to him. He then declared that the man who marries the divorced woman commits adultery. A woman who is put away for immorality and marries another commits adultery. On the other hand, if the husband or wife has maintained an adulterous relationship and puts away his or her innocent partner, the innocent one is free to marry again. Thank God that forgiveness, restoration, and renewal are available for adulterers.

Are the teachings of Jesus on divorce and remarriage still applicable today? If not, why not? In respect to the divorce of certain believers, how can we avoid criticism and a "holier than thou" attitude?

ABOUT OATH TAKING AND VIOLENCE (Matt. 5:33-42).

What kind of oath taking is unacceptable? Matt. 5:33-37.

An oath is unnecessary unless, of course, one is called before a court to give testimony. Then an oath to tell the truth is proper. Jesus Himself took an oath when He appeared before Caiaphas (Matt. 26:62-67).

When we were children, we might have reinforced a statement with some kind of oath. When older, we might say, "I'll swear it's true on a stack of Bibles." All of this is inappropriate and unnecessary. Truth is its own defense and does not need an oath for support.

Do you find yourself falling back on oath taking to support your word? If so why?

"We are all conscious of the value of simplicity in speech, even though we may not always practice it. When one says, in order to produce conviction in another, 'I will take my oath that it is so,' doubt is immediately created in the mind of the one to whom the thing is said. The taking of an oath always postulates the possibility of deceit."—G. Campbell Morgan, *Great Chapters of the Bible*, p. 123.

What is better than "an eye for an eye"? Matt. 5:38-42 (compare Deut. 32:35; Rom. 12:19).

Here actions are described that are better than revenge or retaliation. Some think that of all the teachings of Jesus this quintet of commands is the hardest to obey. Do you agree or disagree? Why?

"He who is imbued with the Spirit of Christ abides in Christ. The blow that is aimed at him falls upon the Saviour, who surrounds him with His presence. Whatever comes to him comes from Christ. He has no need to resist evil, for Christ is his defense. Nothing can touch him except by our Lord's permission, and 'all things' that are permitted 'work together for good to them that love God.' Romans 8:28."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 71.

Why does it seem so difficult to return good for evil? Are we happier returning good for evil, or evil for good? Which is more satisfying?

LOVE THY NEIGHBOR AS THYSELF (Matt. 5:43-48).

Why should we love our enemies? What are the advantages to us of loving them? Matt. 5:43-47.

There was no counsel in Moses' law to "hate" anyone, but in Deuteronomy 23:6 God forbade the children of Israel to ever seek the peace or prosperity of the Moabites. Why? Because they had sought Balaam's aid in cursing Israel. (Compare Lev. 19:17, 18.)

The enemies of the church sometimes have interpreted Christian love, longsuffering, and good will as weakness and cowardice. But what is Jesus' example?

1. *Love your enemies:* The scribes and Pharisees were committed by envy and clerical pride to murder Jesus, and they poisoned the minds of the populace against Him. But Jesus loved them still.

2. *Bless them that curse you:* Jesus' persecutors and executioners were the objects of His dying prayer, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

3. *Do good to them that hate you:* When the Jews again and again sought to entangle Jesus in His speech and to charge Him falsely with violating Roman or Jewish law, His penetrating replies, full of wisdom and love, exposed their hypocrisy and strikingly revealed His divinity. He would do them good in spite of their evil designs.

4. *Pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you:* Jesus spent entire nights in prayer for His disciples and for the leaders of Israel.

What is the ultimate goal set before us? Matt. 5:48.

Jesus' concept of perfection involved a relationship with God that manifests itself in the loving attitudes toward others of which He spoke in the Sermon on the Mount.

"The conditions of eternal life, under grace, are just what they were in Eden—perfect righteousness, harmony with God, perfect conformity to the principles of His law. The standard of character presented in the Old Testament is the same that is presented in the New Testament. This standard is not one to which we cannot attain. In every command or injunction that God gives there is a promise, the most positive, underlying the command. *God has made provision that we may become like unto Him, and He will accomplish this for all who do not interpose a perverse will and thus frustrate His grace.*"—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 76. (Italics supplied.)

FURTHER STUDY: Read Luke 6:19-49; 17:20, 21. Also read "The Sermon on the Mount," in *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 298-314. (See the comments in *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 6-78.)

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Analyze the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). Is it long or short by modern standards? Time your reading of it. For whom did Christ intend it? Do you think Christ could be heard clearly in an open-air arena? Matt. 5:1, 2. Did He teach or preach? Matt. 5:2; 7:29.
2. *Blessed* and *happy* are words equal in meaning. Explain how humility, mourning, and persecution can coexist with happiness.
3. Does Jesus' discourse magnifying the law of God make you feel uncomfortable? Matt. 5:17-44. In what ways? How may we relate to His inspired teaching? How is it possible to obey Him and enjoy being like Him?
4. Discuss the command "Be ye therefore perfect" (Matt. 5:48). The Greek word translated "perfect" in the KJV may be rendered "mature." Is sin ever an evidence of maturity? What are Jesus' expectations for us?

"As God is perfect in His sphere, so man may be perfect in his sphere."—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 64. "He is a perfect and holy example, given for us to imitate. We cannot equal the pattern, but we shall not be approved of God if we do not copy it and, according to the ability which God has given, resemble it."—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 549.

SUMMARY: The Master Teacher describes the character of the people who make up His spiritual kingdom. The contrast between Jesus' kingdom of grace and virtue and the kingdom expectation of His contemporaries is marked and painful. But the humble, faithful follower of Jesus is encouraged and challenged, while the devotee of ritual, form, and ceremony is alarmed and rebellious. Not the clashing of arms and emancipation by force, but the deliverance of the soul from the mastery of sin, is accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ. Even today the Sermon on the Mount creates division between two types of professed Christian, those who worship God in spirit and in truth and those "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (2 Tim. 3:5). In which group do you find yourself?



Champion Surrenders to Christ

Syd Kettner

My name is Eva Martinovska (Martin-OV-skah). I am 18 years old and live in the city of Most, in the Czech Republic. I am a champion runner. I hold the Czech record in the 800-meter race and have won that event many times in international competitions. I was preparing for the Olympics when God changed my life. If someone had told me a year ago that sports would not be first in my life, I would have laughed.

I am studying medicine at the university, so when I saw a notice about lectures on preventive medicine that were part of evangelistic meetings, I decided to attend. During the health lectures, the doctor discussed how our bodies function in such marvelous ways. I began to realize that life consists in more than sports. As he presented Christ as Creator and Healer, I felt a yearning to know more about Jesus. I began listening to the evangelist with interest. As my understanding of God and His claims on my life became clearer to me, I wrestled with conflicting desires—my love for sports and the call of Jesus in my heart.

After struggling for weeks, I took a stand for Christ and began studying for baptism. I realized then that if I followed Christ I would have to give up my competitive sports career, because most athletic competitions are on Sabbath. As the baptism drew near, the tension became unbearable. I asked God for courage to make the right decision. My coach did not understand my dilemma, and even my family seemed unable to help me. Finally, following a difficult spiritual struggle, I was baptized in March 1993.

God has given me wonderful peace. Without His help, and the understanding of my new Christian friends, I could not have made this difficult decision. I thank God for His guidance and for the wonderful people I have met since becoming an Adventist.

Dr. Syd Kettner, a physician living in Creston, British Columbia, Canada, conducted the health lectures that Eva Martinovska attended in Czechoslovakia.

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The Keynote of Victory



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 2 Peter 1:1-21.

MEMORY TEXT: "His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3).

KEY THOUGHT: Knowing Christ means receiving His divine power for deliverance from evil passions and for constant spiritual growth in preparation for His glorious second advent.

CHRIST IS OUR ROCK OF SUPPORT. A group of student singers were on board a ship that caught fire. One young man fixed a life-belt to his wife and another to himself, but in the scuffle to abandon ship someone took his wife's life-belt. After jumping overboard she found herself helpless in the water. She clung to her husband's shoulders as long as she could, but her strength began to wane. "I can't hold on any longer," she cried. "Try a little longer," was his entreaty. And then he added, "Let us sing 'Rock of Ages.' "

They both began to sing faintly, and others around them, struggling to stay afloat, joined in the song. Strength seemed to come with the song. They were able to hold out until a boat arrived and lifted them on board.

The message of 2 Peter 1 is this: Through the undergirding power of Christ, we resist the impact of the swirling confusion and impurity around us. By this means we can hold on till our Lord returns and transports us to eternal safety.

ABUNDANT GRACE FOR CHRISTIANS (2 Peter 1:1-4).

To whom does Peter direct his second Epistle? What do the writer and the believer have in common? 2 Peter 1:1.

"To those who have received a faith as precious as ours through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:1, NRSV). Christ imparts the faith that lays hold upon His righteousness. Then Christ Himself, our God and Saviour, becomes our ever-present righteousness. There is a commonality of experience in receiving Christ's gift of righteousness by faith. Peter enjoyed this gift, and so did the people to whom he wrote both his Epistles (2 Peter 3:1)—the believers of Asia Minor (1 Peter 1:1).

What special gifts did Christ impart to the believers as they came to know Him? What are the results when His promises are received and believed? 2 Peter 1:2-4.

"The word here used for 'knowledge' (*epignosis*) is more emphatic than the simple noun form (*gnosis*), and implies a fuller, more perfect knowledge that comes from contemplation of the object studied. Such knowledge cannot fail to influence the life of the one who gains it. When it centers on the Father and the Son it brings abundant grace and peace into the heart of its possessor. The apostle is very much aware of the efficacy of this *epignosis*, and refers to it four times in his epistle (here; vs. 3, 8; ch. 2:20)."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 596.

When God's grace is multiplied to us, it consists of the divine power that provides us "all things that pertain to life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3, RSV). Paul thanked God for the grace given to the Corinthians by which they were "enriched in every way—in all . . . speaking and in all . . . knowledge" (1 Cor. 1:5, NIV; compare 1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 8:9; 9:8; 12:9).

God's promises are acts of grace. By accepting these promises by faith we "escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4, RSV). The divine nature pervades our lives, and we have the power to resist corruption and overcome the temptation to evil.

Can you testify to the power of Christ in delivering you from the power of sin? How has your knowledge of, and faith in, the Word of God contributed to that victory?

Monday

February 13

GROWING IN GRACE (2 Peter 1:5-11).

What qualities does Peter urge us to make every effort to develop by faith in Christ? 2 Peter 1:5-7.

Peter is not suggesting that we develop these qualities in chronological sequence, working on a new virtue when we have sufficiently mastered the previous one. If we did that, love would come last.

"You are not to think that you must wait until you have perfected one grace before cultivating another. No; they are to grow up together, fed continually from the fountain of charity [love]; every day that you live, you can be perfecting the blessed attributes fully revealed in the character of Christ; and when you do this, you will bring light, love, peace, and joy into your homes."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 943.

When we receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, we receive all of Him, all of His virtues—not one at a time. The eight virtues mentioned by Peter are resident in Jesus. But these gemstones of character, which become ours when we receive Him as Lord and Saviour, are polished by experience and testing. Each day lived in relationship with Christ adds luster to these gemstones. Faith grows stronger, knowledge increases, patience develops, brotherly love and charity blossom to the full.

How is the person described who lacks these eight virtues? 2 Peter 1:8, 9. How can we make our "calling and election sure"? Verse 10, KJV. What precious promises are given us? Verses 10, 11.

We have the assurance of present salvation in Christ as, by faith, we experience fellowship with Him and allow His grace to foster the spiritual virtues that Peter has mentioned. If we neglect daily dedication to and communion with Christ, we will be spiritually "ineffective or unfruitful" (2 Peter 1:8, RSV), and will fall back into our old sins (verse 9). The vigilant Christian enjoys the gift of eternal life (1 John 5:11-13) and has the assurance of "an entrance into the eternal kingdom" (2 Peter 1:11, RSV).

Peter counsels us to "be the more zealous to confirm your call and election" (2 Peter 1:10, RSV). The statement implies personal effort. How can you reconcile this counsel with the truth that salvation is only by faith?

Tuesday

February 14

STIRRING UP THE MEMORY (2 Peter 1:12-15).

Why does Peter not hesitate to remind his readers of things they already know? 2 Peter 1:12, 13, 15 (compare Luke 22:32; John 21:15-17).

As a faithful shepherd of the flock, Peter knew that all believers need to be constantly reminded of the gospel truth they already know. C. S. Lewis wrote, "Christ did not come to preach any brand new morality. The Golden Rule of the New Testament (Do as you would be done by) is a summing up of what every one, at bottom, had always known to be right. . . . The real job of every moral teacher is to keep on bringing us back, time after time, to the old simple principles which we are all so anxious not to see."—*Mere Christianity* (London: Collins, 1958), p. 74.

What is the significance of the expression "the present truth" (2 Peter 1:12)?

"The truth that has already reached you" (NEB); "the truth that [you] now [hold]" (Amplified); "the truth that has come to you" (NRSV). Present truth for the early Christians included all Bible truth, most prominent of which was the passion of Christ, including the glorious doctrine of the resurrection. Christ announced it (John 2:19-22), and the apostles proclaimed it (Acts 2:23, 32).

Present truth today includes all of the above with emphasis on the Second Advent prophecies that were not unsealed until the "time of the end" (Dan. 12:9), and the messages of the pre-Advent judgment and the Sabbath that for centuries had not been clearly understood (Rev. 14:6-12).

What is the significance of the fact that Peter expected his life to end in the near future? 2 Peter 1:14; John 21:18-23.

Peter did not expect to live on until the second advent of Christ, and John did not rule out the possibility of his death before that event. In its context, 2 Peter 1:14 underlines Peter's great concern to remind the believers of the truths they had accepted. Because his death was imminent, he wanted to provide the church with written testimony that would speak until Jesus comes.

PETER RECALLS AN EYEWITNESS EXPERIENCE (2 Peter 1:16-18).

Why did Peter make reference to a particularly dramatic event in Jesus' life? 2 Peter 1:16-18; Matt. 17:1-8.

The word "For" introducing 2 Peter 1:16 links what follows with what has gone before. There are compelling reasons why the believers should be reminded of Christ's power to enable them to grow spiritually. One very good reason is that God demonstrated the deity of Christ to Peter, James, and John in the miraculous transfiguration experience. Peter resorts to the testimony of the senses—sight and hearing—as another strong argument in favor of Jesus' messiahship, His divinity. The great truth of Christ's resurrection power was no cunningly devised myth. Believers in every age can have confidence that what the apostles saw and heard is convincing evidence.

How do we know that the transfiguration of Christ was a pre-enactment of His glorification at the Second Coming? 2 Peter 1:16, 17 (compare Mark 9:1 with verses 2-8; compare Luke 9:27 with verses 28-36).

"Moses upon the mount of transfiguration was a witness to Christ's victory over sin and death. He represented those who shall come forth from the grave at the resurrection of the just. Elijah, who had been translated to heaven without seeing death, represented those who will be living upon the earth at Christ's second coming, and who will be 'changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump'; when 'this mortal must put on immortality,' and 'this corruptible must put on incorruption.' 1 Cor. 15:51-53. Jesus was clothed with the light of heaven, as He will appear when He shall come 'the second time without sin unto salvation.' For He will come 'in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.' Heb. 9:28; Mark 8:38. The Saviour's promise to the disciples was now fulfilled. Upon the mount the future kingdom of glory was represented in miniature—Christ the King, Moses a representative of the risen saints, and Elijah of the translated ones."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 421, 422.

Peter lived and worked with Christ and witnessed His transfiguration. We have not had those experiences. Why, then, should we accept Peter's experience as evidence of the deity of Christ and of His second coming?

Thursday

February 16

THE CERTAINTY OF THE PROPHETIC WORD (2 Peter 1:19-21).

What testimony of God could be more powerful than the transfiguration of Christ, which Peter witnessed? 2 Peter 1:18, 19.

"And we have the prophetic word made more sure" (2 Peter 1:19, RSV). "And we have the word of the prophets made more certain" (NIV). The apostles had the witness of their own senses; they knew Christ personally and received repeated evidence of His messiahship. But the manner in which His life, death, and resurrection fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies was equally convincing, and to Peter's readers even more convincing. In their witnessing for Christ, the apostles constantly applied Old Testament prophecies to Him. (See Acts 2:22-36; 3:18; 4:10, 11, 23-28.)

To us today, Bible prophecy is compelling evidence of the deity of Christ and of the great significance of His atoning sacrifice and resurrection from the dead. But fulfilled prophecy also increases our confidence in the forecasts of the future given by Jesus (Matthew 24), Daniel, John, and other prophets. The fact that Daniel accurately foretold the sweep of human history from his day to ours (Dan. 2:14-45) gives us confidence that his predictions of events future to our day will certainly be fulfilled.

In the interpretation of scriptural prophecy, what must we avoid? 2 Peter 1:20. How were the prophets guided in their spoken utterances? Verse 21. What is the implication for the manner in which we interpret the prophecies?

Jesus taught that the same Holy Spirit who inspired the prophecies in the first place is available to the humble, teachable student who prayerfully seeks an understanding of the Bible's prophetic messages. "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13, RSV). Because the Holy Spirit gave the prophetic messages (2 Tim. 3:16, 17), it stands to reason that no interpretation is valid but that which results from the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit.

How can you be sure that the Holy Spirit is guiding your mind as you study Bible prophecy? On what basis can you test someone else's interpretation?

FURTHER STUDY: On the subject of preparation to meet the Lord, study Romans 13:11-14; Titus 2:11-15; 3:3-8. Compare these passages with 2 Peter 1:3, 4, 10, 11. These scriptures urge the saints to escape the world's moral and spiritual corruption. Purity of heart and life is the hallmark of God's holy ones whom He will take off this planet to their heavenly abode. Read "Apostasy at the Jordan" in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 453-461.

Christian virtue versus false teaching: In 2 Peter the apostle is concerned about false teachings that can be met only by believers strong in Christian character. Hence in chapter 1 he urges Christian growth and grace as the best method of counteracting false teaching. John makes plain in 2 John 1-12 that to obey God and to abide in the doctrine of Christ is to escape the influence of false teachers. Abiding in Christ is the most effective preventive of heresy.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. A friend asks you how we can have the assurance of salvation. How would you use this week's lesson to help you answer the question?
2. You hear a professing Christian say, "Christ has done everything for me; there is nothing for me to do but accept His offer of salvation." In the light of 2 Peter 1:5-8, do you believe that statement? How would you explain to this person the role of the believer in the sanctification process, without contradicting Paul's teaching of salvation by faith? (See Gal. 2:16.)
3. If you could have been with Jesus during one event in His life, which event would that have been? Why?
4. If someone asked you to prove that the Scriptures are God's word, how would you answer? How does your answer relate to your Bible-study habits? Your witness?

SUMMARY: In chapter one Peter states the basic ideas, the ruling principles in the Christian life. He shows that an acquaintance with Jesus makes possible a life of godliness. Peter wishes to assure those who read his two letters that he had, indeed, been an eyewitness of the glory of Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. He affirms that the writings of the prophets are inspired and that they are more dependable than sight or sound.



Pentecost in China

Eugene Hsu

Just one year after 2,000 believers were baptized in a city in northeast China, another baptism was held. This time, more than 4,400 were baptized in a four-day baptismal marathon.

Following the 1992 baptism, government officials and police harassed the church and its members. Police were posted inside and outside the church to prevent further baptisms and Communion services. But this did not frighten the church members, who continued their worship services with their visitors present.

When the government received word of plans for a second baptism scheduled for August 1993, officials insisted that an authorized Three-Self Movement pastor perform the baptism. Church members understood that this was a delay tactic and they again decided to conduct the baptism without government recognition.

Baptismal candidates were carefully prepared and had to take a written exam on Bible doctrines. Those who passed the exam were given a numbered entrance card and told to arrive at the baptismal site at 6:00 a.m. At the appointed time, candidates lined up in groups for baptism according to their numbers. The aging local elders in the church did not have sufficient strength to physically baptize the people, so church members assisted. As the elders spoke the baptismal vows, the deacons and deaconesses quickly lowered the candidates into the water and raised them again.

Around 8:00 a.m., government officials arrived to stop the baptism. They found a huge crowd, quiet and well organized. After watching for several minutes, the officials allowed the baptism to continue.

The baptism continued for four days, until 4,415 new believers had been baptized! Truly Pentecost is happening in China!

With no financial assistance from outside the country, and no trained evangelists, this harvest has been the work of the Holy Spirit.

Eugene Hsu is secretary of the Eastern Asia Committee at the General Conference. The exact location of the church has been omitted due to threats of persecution.



Christ's Last Prayer With His Disciples



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: John 16:28-33; 17:1-26; Ps. 133:1-3.

MEMORY TEXT: "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:21).

KEY THOUGHT: Jesus prayed that His disciples would be so spiritually united to God and to one another that the world would be drawn to Him and prepared for His ultimate glorification at the Second Advent.

JESUS PRAYED FOR US. The apostle John records Jesus' last prayer offered in the presence of His disciples. Looming before Jesus is Gethsemane, His capture, and trial, all of which hovers over Him like a dark cloud. He longs to be glorified that the light of God's providence might illuminate the forthcoming darkness of His crucifixion. He appeals to His Father, with whom He enjoys perfect union and unbroken communication, to grant to His closest followers a union with the Father similar to His own. He prays that His disciples may be kept from the evil of this present world and that, as a result of their witnessing, multitudes may be added to His kingdom.

"Read John 17 over and over again. That prayer of our Saviour offered to His Father in behalf of His disciples, is worthy to be oft repeated, and carried in the practical life."—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 295.

THE SETTING FOR JESUS' PRAYER (John 16:28-33; 17:1).

How did Jesus seek to strengthen the disciples' faith in His messiahship? John 16:28-33.

The Saviour and His disciples had spent Thursday evening together celebrating the Passover meal in the upper room (John 13). He had instituted the ordinance of feet-washing and the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26:20-29). Possessed of an earnest desire that they would endure the dark days ahead, and knowing that His remaining time on earth was brief, He gave them the instruction recorded in John 14-16. Then He prayed for them the prayer of intercession recorded in John 17.

"This prayer is a lesson regarding the intercession that the Saviour would carry on within the veil, when His great sacrifice in behalf of men, the offering of Himself, should have been completed. Our Mediator gave His disciples this illustration of His ministration in the heavenly sanctuary in behalf of all who will come to Him in meekness and humility, emptied of all selfishness, and believing in His power to save."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1145.

What did Jesus mean by His request of the Father that He might be glorified? Had He not been glorified before? When did this glorification of Christ take place? Was it before or after His ascent to the heavenly abode? How is He being glorified now? John 17:1, 4, 5, 10, 22 (compare John 12:23, 28).

Notice that Jesus' work on earth glorified the Father (John 17:4). Christ was about to perform His greatest work on earth—His bearing the punishment for the sins of the entire world. (See 1 John 2:2.) The cross was the greatest evidence of the glory of God's character. After that Christ was glorified in heaven by being reinstated to the immediate presence of the Father (John 17:5).

Then "He declares Himself glorified in those who believe on Him. The church, in His name, is to carry to glorious perfection the work which He has commenced; and when that church shall be finally ransomed in the Paradise of God, He will look upon the travail of His soul and be satisfied. Through all eternity the ransomed host will be His chief glory."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1146.

Monday

February 20

RELIANCE UPON THE FATHER (John 17:2-12, 22-24).

How did Jesus Christ, the Lifegiver, affirm the power committed to Him by His Father? John 17:2 (compare Matt. 28:18-20).

What is essential to the reception of eternal life? John 17:3.

To know Christ as Saviour is much more than knowing about Him. Intellectual knowledge of the facts of Christianity—the life, death, resurrection, and heavenly ministry of Christ—is valuable, but this knowledge alone will save no one. Jesus made clear that *believers* have the gift of eternal life (John 5:24). This is because believers have Christ and the Father living in their hearts by the presence of the Holy Spirit (John 14:23).

"These words [John 17:3] mean much. It is only by knowing Christ that we can know God. The Sent of God calls upon all to listen to these words. They are the words of God, and all should give heed to them; for by them they will be judged. To know Christ savingly is to be vitalized by spiritual knowledge, to practice His words. Without this, all else is valueless."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pp. 1145, 1146.

Jesus confessed His total reliance upon His Father. Here was the source of His power. How are the same divine resources open to us? John 17:4-12, 22-24 (compare John 8:23-29, 42, 54, 55).

God gave Jesus (1) "power over all flesh" (John 17:2); (2) a special work on earth (verse 4); (3) His disciples as witnesses (verses 6, 9, 11, 12); (4) words to speak (verse 8), and (5) His glory to reveal (verses 22, 24).

As Jesus fulfilled the earthly ministry assigned to Him by His Father, so in these last days God's remnant people will finish the gospel work assigned to them. (See Rom. 9:27, 28; Matt. 28:18-20; 24:14.) The Lord Himself will cut short by miraculous intervention the work of sharing the three angels' messages with the whole world (Rev. 14:6-12).

What steps are the members of your church taking to co-operate with God in answering Jesus' prayer?

Tuesday

February 21

SPECIFIC REQUESTS IN JESUS' PRAYER (John 17:9, 11, 13, 15, 20, 24).

What were Jesus' specific requests for His disciples? John 17:9, 11, 13, 15.

As they heard His earnest petition, the disciples were greatly encouraged to know that their Lord and Master had prayed for them. Think of Peter's experience. Did not Jesus pray for him (Luke 22:31, 32)? Stop and think; Christ has taken your name upon His lips. In His intercessory work in heaven He has asked the Father to bless you. He has actually mentioned you by name!

Jesus has power over all flesh (John 17:2), that is, power and authority over the whole creation. It is also true that He has power over men and women who battle with sin (Rom. 8:1-5, 9-13). He can "save . . . to the uttermost" all "that come unto God by him" (Heb. 7:25).

"Every soul is as fully known to Jesus as if he were the only one for whom the Saviour died. The distress of every one touches His heart. The cry for aid reaches His ear. He came to draw all men unto Himself."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 480.

What was Jesus' prayer for the ultimate destiny of the converts won by His disciples? John 17:20, 24.

A man arose in one of Dwight L. Moody's meetings and said, "'I have lived on the Mount of Transfiguration for five years.' 'How many souls have you led to Christ?' was Mr. Moody's reply. 'I do not really know,' replied the gentleman. 'Have you led any?' Mr. Moody again asked. 'I do not know that I have.' 'Sit down, then,' said Mr. Moody, 'for we do not want that kind of mountain-top experience in our church.'"—G. B. F. Hallock, *2,500 Best Modern Illustrations* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1935), p. 342.

"O, how the divine Head longed to have His church with Him! They had fellowship with Him in His suffering and humiliation, and it is His highest joy to have them with Him to be partakers of His glory. . . . To have them with Him is according to covenant promise and agreement with His Father."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1148.

Jesus' prayer can be our daily petition—that we and our families be kept from evil.

ONENESS WITH GOD AND ONE ANOTHER (John 17:14-23).

What is the meaning of the request "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us"? John 17:21-23.

Christ in the Father and the Father in Christ is the model for the Christian—Christ in us and we in Christ. As the Father's will was embedded and implanted in the mind and heart of Jesus and fulfilled in His activities, so Christ was in the heart of His Father—loved, honored, and cherished. This oneness of thought, will, purpose, activity, and affection presents a picture of order and unity for all to behold. God is in Christ and His earthly children. All are involved in this family embrace, united in one life and purpose by prayer and divine attachment.

What does oneness with God do for our individuality? 1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 12:10.

Are we to be so absorbed with faith in God and with God's involvement with us that we cease to function normally? Should the native personality with which God has endowed us cease to manifest itself? No! The individual Christian's personality becomes the active video screen upon which the vital life and righteousness of God is portrayed.

"Let us always remember . . . that no matter how great and good a work the human agent may do, he does not gain the ownership of those who through his instrumentality have been converted to the truth. . . . In our ministry we are to bring souls direct to Christ. They are Christ's property, and must ever be amenable to Him alone. Every person possesses an individuality that no other person can claim."—*Evangelism*, p. 331.

"Although possessing different temperaments and dispositions, they [God's people] will see eye to eye in all matters of religious belief. They will speak the same things, they will have the same judgment, they will be one in Christ Jesus."—Ellen G. White in *Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventist Church* (Basle, Switzerland: Imprimerie Polyglotte, 1886), p. 124.

On the basis of John 17:17 how would you evaluate the ecumenical call for unity of the churches? Is doctrinal unity important?

Thursday

February 23

THE FATHER'S NAME DECLARED BY JESUS (John 17:4-8, 12, 26.)

By what means did Jesus reveal the Father to His disciples?
John 17:6, 12, 26 (compare Ps. 8:1; 22:22).

God's name is a symbol of His character. To a world that mis-understands God, Jesus portrays His Father's character (John 14:8-11). In Christ's ministry and sacrifice are seen the infinite wisdom, love, justice, and mercy of God. Knowing Jesus, which is knowing the Father, both informs and transforms. (See 2 Cor. 3:18.)

By what divine instrument does God sanctify His people?
John 17:14-20.

The Bible is the standard by which to test the claims of all who profess sanctification. But the Bible must be interpreted by the Holy Spirit. We may understand the major teachings of the Word, and we may employ them to judge others, while, at the same time failing to submit ourselves to the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. Unless we enjoy the blessings of Spirit-filled holiness and the resulting conformity to the principles of God's Word, we are in no way qualified to pass judgment on other beliefs. We must be sanctified by God's Word (John 16:13; 17:14, 17).

Why did Christ "sanctify" (KJV) or "consecrate" (RSV) Himself? John 17:19. What commission did Jesus give His disciples? Verses 18, 20. With what results? Acts 2:1-4, 41-47; 1 Thess. 1:5-8; Col. 1:28.

As the gospel was preached to the world in that first century, so in these final times God's message will go to all humanity. How are you involved in this general proclamation?

What was the final request Jesus made of the Father? John 17:24-26.

Do you long to have a part in that celestial celebration? Have you entered into an experience with Him that you can transport to heaven in that great day?

FURTHER STUDY: Compare Jesus' last prayer in John 17 with the prayers of Nehemiah (Neh. 1:5-11; 2:4), Ezra (Ezra 9:5-15), Daniel (Dan. 9:3-23), Hannah (1 Sam. 1:27-2:10), and Jabez (1 Chron. 4:9, 10). As you read these prayers, what similarities do you find? What differences?

If you have the *SDA Bible Dictionary*, look up the word *glory*. Read *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 186-188; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 83; *That I May Know Him*, p. 97.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Jesus' prayer was audible to His disciples. How would you have reacted if you had been present to hear Jesus utter this prayer?
2. How can we actually achieve the "oneness experience" called for in Jesus' petition?
3. Jesus prayed that we might be kept from the evils of this world. Ask yourself, "How well am I doing?" Name some of the hindrances in the way. "Do I trust God enough? Have I forgotten that I have the power of will, which I may place on God's side in the battle? (See *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 511-513.) Do I have a quiet time every day with Jesus?" (Read Matt. 4:1-11 and 1 John 2:15-17.)

SUMMARY: In this model prayer, Jesus prayed for all of us, not only for His disciples. Now as our High Priest in heaven, He makes intercession for us with the Father. Oneness with Him and with one another is the high purpose envisioned in this remarkable intercessory prayer. Like His disciples, we are sent to reveal the glory and power of the Father and the Son. But we can do this only as we know God by personal experience. In heaven at last we shall behold in glory the Son of God, enthroned and worshiped by the angels and redeemed alike.



The Man Whose Name Was Changed

Ken Flemmer

One of ADRA's relief programs distributes 6,000 tons of corn each year in Eastern Mozambique. The corn is enough to provide each of 140,000 people with one pound of corn a day.

Civil war makes work in Mozambique difficult and dangerous. Gunfire and land mines threaten even the simplest relief operations. The first time we went to one village to distribute food, we hit a small land mine and blew a tire off the truck.

When local workers were unloading ADRA's first shipment of relief food, they noticed a man carrying a stick, keeping people back while the crew carried sacks of corn to the waiting trucks. Even the children had to wait until the barge was unloaded before this "policeman" allowed them to gather the kernels that had fallen.

An ADRA worker learned that this "policeman" was known as "Manual the Thief." Villagers said he beat his wife and neglected his family responsibilities; some said he had killed some people.

When the next shipment arrived, Manual was again there with his stick, to keep law and order. Suddenly the director looked up and saw Manual with a bag of corn on his head, walking from the dock. The director expected Manual to disappear into the crowd with the bag of corn, but he walked to the loading area and dumped his bag onto the truck.

The director decided to offer Manual a job. Word of Manual's "promotion" spread through the village. Wasn't Manual known to be a thief, a violent person, perhaps even a murderer?

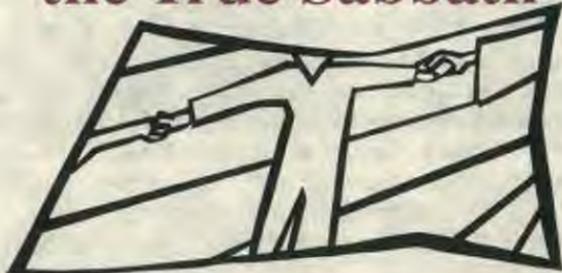
Later, Manual's father came to ADRA's office and asked what we had done to Manual. "He is different. He quit drinking, he doesn't beat his family, he supports them, and he no longer steals," the father exclaimed.

Manual has changed; now workers in the warehouse refer to him as "Manual our friend." Even though his job is only carrying bags of corn from here to there, it helped him to see how he fit into a bigger plan, and it gave him a reason to live and to change his ways.



Ken Flemmer is assistant vice president of ADRA International.

The True Fast, the True Restorers, and the True Sabbath



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Isaiah 58.

MEMORY TEXT: “Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?” (Isaiah 58:6).

KEY THOUGHT: Professed piety, religious ritual, and self-denial are meaningless unless motivated by, and associated with, loving service for others. Righteousness that is worth anything involves acts of mercy, generosity, and relief for those less fortunate.

ISAIAH 58 OUTLINES THE BEST METHOD OF WITNESSING FOR CHRIST. This chapter contrasts true and false religion. The people of Israel, like many churches today, were preoccupied with ritual, fasting, and ceremony. They wanted to attract the attention and favor of God. Instead, the Lord gave His stern rebuke, “Cry aloud, spare not . . . declare to my people their transgression” (verse 1, RSV). The prophet points out a true fast, chosen by God—heart change and compassion for the poor. There must be a new and spiritual view of Sabbathkeeping. God would bless Israel if they would exchange the façade of piety for heartfelt and unselfish outreach to the sick, the poor, and the helpless. The message is for Seventh-day Adventists today, not simply for the Israelites of old.

“The work that . . . [Adventists] are to do is outlined in the fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah. Who is doing this work?”—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, Dec. 17, 1901.

ISRAEL'S PAINFUL ILLS (Isa. 58:1).

Why did the Israel of Isaiah's time need to be shown their true condition? Isa. 58:1; 56:10; 59:2-8. How about the latter-day church of Laodicea? Rev. 3:14-17.

The chosen people's pious profession of external religion left them powerless to govern human passion and selfishness; hence the outbreak of carnality in gross form (Isa. 1:4-6). This historical fact accents the existence of the greatest error ever; namely, that a form of religion will suffice to gain heaven and God's favor.

"There are those who profess to serve God, while they rely upon their own efforts to obey His law, to form a right character, and secure salvation. Their hearts are not moved by any deep sense of the love of Christ, but they seek to perform the duties of the Christian life as that which God requires of them in order to gain heaven. Such religion is worth nothing. When Christ dwells in the heart, the soul will be so filled with His love, with the joy of communion with Him, that it will cleave to Him; and in the contemplation of Him, self will be forgotten. Love to Christ will be the spring of action."—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 44, 45. (Compare Matt. 23:25-28.)

What brand of religion will be practiced in the last days? 2 Timothy 3:5 (compare Titus 1:16; Isa. 29:13).

Religious profession without spiritual power manifests itself in a number of ways. There may be great enthusiasm, considerable noise, and much public display, but a decided lack of the Holy Spirit's presence. While religion of this kind may engender warm feelings and stimulated emotions, it tends to be self-focused. Sacrificial service for others is often ignored. On the other hand, formal religious exercises that insist on traditional modes of expression may involve meaningful liturgy, beautiful music, and matchless homiletics but be totally barren of genuine spiritual motivation. Worshipers are regaled with culturally acceptable art forms and left totally unconcerned about their suffering neighbors.

Without attempting to judge others, ask yourself to what extent Isaiah's counsel applies to you?

SOUL AFFLICTION AND FASTING (Isa. 58:2-5).

What was the Lord's concern regarding His people? Isa. 58:2. What complaint comes forth from the lips of the Lord's people? Isa. 58:3.

Self-righteous people cannot diagnose their real problem. Notice that Isaiah 58:2 and 3 depict God as viewing the people one way, and the people viewing themselves quite differently. The people were afflicted by the spiritual malady that Paul describes as prevalent in his day: "Israel who pursued the righteousness which is based on law did not succeed in fulfilling that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it through faith, but as if it were based on works" (Rom. 9:31, 32, RSV).

Why were the people's fasts and other religious observances unacceptable? What rebuke comes forth from God's lips? Isa. 58:3(last part)-5. How does the Lord indicate His disapproval of the fast of the Israelites?

Spiritual inconsistency alienates us from the Lord and His blessings. Prostrating ourselves before the Lord while cherishing bitter, resentful feelings toward others produces no beneficial spiritual results. Appearing to our fellow believers as sanctified, dedicated Christians when, in fact, we would like "to quarrel and to fight" (Isa. 58:4, RSV) is to invite God's displeasure.

Jesus addressed this very problem: "And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you" (Matt. 6:16-18, RSV).

Is there a place for fasting in the Christian pattern of service and worship? Matt. 17:14-21.

While fasting cannot, and is not intended to, earn credit with God, it may, over a limited period of time, clear the mind and provide opportunity for the soul to reach out for God's blessing upon the sick and the needy.

THE TRUE FAST (Isa. 58:6-11).

What are the characteristics of a true fast as the Lord outlined them? Isa. 58:6, 7, 9 (second part), 10.

The Jews' fast was a religious act. It satisfied the demands of their self-deception—their idea of acceptance with God, but it was self-centered. T. S. Eliot wrote, "Nothing dies harder than the desire to think [too] well of oneself." The people's fasts were designed to attract attention and admiration.

Sin has these characteristics: (1) self-sufficiency in place of faith, (2) self-will in place of submission, (3) self-righteousness in place of humility.

The true fast involves a ministry that emulates the healing ministry of Jesus. It includes the healing of the sick and the relief of the needy. But its primary focus is "to loose the bonds of wickedness" (Isa. 58:6, RSV). Jesus healed the sick to save them from sin. If our fasting is motivated by our burden for souls, by the all-consuming desire for lost ones to be released from their bondage, it is the kind of fasting the Lord approves.

List the Lord's promises to those who practice the true fast. Isa. 58:8, 9 (first part), 10 (second part), 11.

"And your healing shall spring up speedily" (Isa. 58:8, RSV). What blessings there are for those who engage in medical missionary work for the primary purpose of leading souls to Christ! "The Holy Spirit never has, and never will in the future, divorce the medical missionary work from the gospel ministry. They can not be divorced."—Ellen G. White, Series "B," no. 7, p. 64.

What blessings there are for those who, though lacking the skill to minister to the sick, do all they can to encourage others and relieve their emotional and spiritual pain! "Many are in obscurity. They have lost their bearings. They know not what course to pursue. Let the perplexed ones search out others who are in perplexity, and speak to them words of hope and encouragement. When they begin to do this work, the light of heaven will reveal to them the path that they should follow. By their words of consolation to the afflicted they themselves will be consoled. By helping others, they themselves will be helped out of their difficulties."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1151.

BUILDERS AND REPAIRERS (Isa. 58:12-14).

What names are given to those whose religious life is directed toward service for others? Isa. 58:12.

The restoration and sharing of Bible truth always involves compassionate ministry to the needy. The doctrines of God's Word, revived by the various phases of the sixteenth-century Reformation, created new communities of Christians committed to more exalted ethical and moral standards, and directed toward ministry for others. But the Reformation left much of the golden ore of truth unmined. The remnant (Rev. 12:17) are builders of "the old waste places," in the sense that they revive the truths of God's Word buried by centuries of neglect.

"Here are given the characteristics of those who shall be reformers, who will bear the banner of the third angel's message, those who avow themselves God's commandment-keeping people, and who honor God, and are earnestly engaged, in the sight of all the universe, in building up the old waste places. Who is it that calls them, The repairers of the breach, The restorers of paths to dwell in? It is God. Their names are registered in heaven as reformers, restorers, as raising the foundations of many generations."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1151.

What is the final call of those who "build the old waste places"? Rev. 14:12; 18:1-4.

"As the end approaches, the testimonies of God's servants will become more decided and more powerful, flashing the light of truth upon the systems of error and oppression that have so long held the supremacy. The Lord has sent us messages for this time to establish Christianity upon an eternal basis, and all who believe present truth must stand, not in their own wisdom, but in God; and raise up the foundation of many generations. These will be registered in the books of heaven as repairers of the breach, the restorers of paths to dwell in. We are to maintain the truth because it is truth, in the face of the bitterest opposition. God is at work upon human minds; it is not man alone that is working. The great illuminating power is from Christ; the brightness of His example is to be kept before the people in every discourse."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1152.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SABBATH AND SERVICE (Isa. 56:1-8; 58:13, 14).

What promise is given to Sabbath reformers? Isa. 56:1-8; 58:13, 14.

True Sabbath observers "keep justice and do righteousness" (Isa. 56:1, RSV). Heaven accepts their works as righteous because they result from their born-again fellowship with Christ. (See 1 John 2:29; 3:7.) By allowing Christ to rule in their lives, they refrain from "doing any evil" (Isa. 56:2, RSV; compare Rom. 6:18). They "hold fast my [God's] covenant" (Isa. 56:4, RSV) because His law is written on their hearts (Heb. 8:10-12).

Isaiah 58:13, 14, in the context of the chapter, emphasizes that true Sabbath observance, like true fasting, is inextricably bound up with rejection of sin and with loving service for others. The Sabbath was not given as leisure time in which we are to focus exclusively on our own physical and spiritual needs. The Sabbath is a day for ministry, not only by preachers but by every committed Seventh-day Adventist.

Sabbathkeeping of the right sort is possible only when Jesus Christ is our delight, our Pearl of great price, our loving and loved Saviour. Then His day becomes fragrant with the memory of His Creation and salvation for us. A heartfelt observance of the Sabbath constitutes a seal of loyalty to God and His law (Ex. 31:12-17; Rev. 7:1-3).

What last-day message makes possible the restoration of the Sabbath? Rev. 14:6-12.

"The message of the third angel will be proclaimed. As the time comes for it to be given with greatest power, the Lord will work through humble instruments, leading the minds of those who consecrate themselves to His service. The laborers will be qualified rather by the unction of His Spirit than by the training of literary institutions. Men of faith and prayer will be constrained to go forth with holy zeal, declaring the words which God gives them. The sins of Babylon will be laid open. The fearful results of enforcing the observances of the church by civil authority, the inroads of Spiritualism, the stealthy but rapid progress of the papal power—all will be unmasked. By these solemn warnings the people will be stirred."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 606.

FURTHER STUDY: On the importance of obedience to God and service for Him and others read: 1 Sam. 15:22, 23; Ps. 40:5-11; Prov. 21:3; Isa. 1:11-17. Read *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 677, 678; *Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 231, 232; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 447, 452, 453; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 278.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Have you ever fasted? Why? For health reasons? Religious reasons? What benefit did you gain?
2. What kind of fasting could be dangerous to your health?
3. In what way should Isaiah's definition of the fast God has chosen make any difference in your life?
4. Is Isaiah 58 more applicable to the last days than to Isaiah's historical situation? Why, or why not?
5. Have you ever seriously thought of yourself as a restorer or a repairer, a sort of spiritual repair person? If so, what specific contribution do you see yourself as making by means of the power bestowed by God's Spirit?
6. Tell how the observance of the true Sabbath can become a "delight."

SUMMARY: God's true people in the last days will distinguish themselves in their mission—first to the poor and downtrodden by their community services, second by their healing ministry to the sick, and third by their teaching of Bible truth. They will restore the law of God to its rightful place, exalt Jesus as the foundation of their faith, and repair the breach in God's law by giving the Sabbath its rightful place of honor.



Former Enemies Unite to Evangelize

Joaquim Dias

Recently a large number of African refugees from the Portuguese-speaking countries of Africa have settled in Lisbon, Portugal. Many of these refugees come from Angola, a country torn by civil war. Refugees often are quite receptive to the gospel. Some of these refugees already know about the Adventist church or have attended the church services in their homeland. Some have Seventh-day Adventist relatives.

Many of the African Adventists already living in Portugal also came to this country to escape the civil war, or to search for better living conditions. Now they have united in an effort to reach and win the new refugees for Christ.

The unity of the African Portuguese-speaking Adventist community is amazing. Most came from warring sections of Angola, from tribes that fought fiercely among themselves. Now they put aside their old tribal quarrels and live in peace and harmony, united in the common project of bringing the good news to their compatriots. Recently one of these brothers summed up their experience in the following words: "If our families in Angola knew how united we are as we work peacefully together, they simply wouldn't believe it!"

This unity and brotherly love is only possible by the power of the Holy Spirit that can bring us together as a people working in a soul-winning project. For these African brothers and sisters, Global Mission means an opportunity to work for the salvation of their fellow countrymen regardless of their differing ethnic backgrounds or the ancient hatred that might separate them. This work is so challenging that a young African pastor, recently graduated from the French Seminary in Collonges, has been appointed to lead out in this Global Mission project.

Joaquim Dias is president of the Portuguese Union of the Euro-African Division.

“When Shall These Things Be?”



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Matt. 23:37–25:46.

MEMORY TEXT: “Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh” (Matthew 24:44).

KEY THOUGHT: Jesus revealed the events that would occur shortly before His second advent, because He wants His people to be spiritually prepared to meet Him.

THE SETTING OF MATTHEW 24 AND 25. Jesus had just openly exposed the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 23). He solemnly declared, “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate” (Matt. 23:38). As Jesus left the temple area, His disciples pointed out the magnificent white stones that comprised the beautiful structure. Jesus replied that the time would come when not one stone would be left standing upon another. The disciples asked, “When will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?” (Matt. 24:3, RSV).

In His reply, Jesus foretold events that would illustrate the nature of the events surrounding His advent. “The prophecy which He uttered was twofold in its meaning; while foreshadowing the destruction of Jerusalem, it prefigured also the terrors of the last great day.” “The Saviour’s prophecy concerning the visitation of judgments upon Jerusalem is to have another fulfillment, of which that terrible desolation was but a faint shadow.”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 25, 36.

THE GATHERING STORM (Matt. 24:4-14).

In His discourse Jesus did not describe the destruction of Jerusalem in some sections and His second coming in others. "*He mingled the description of these two events. . . . In mercy to them He blended the description of the two great crises, leaving the disciples to study out the meaning for themselves. . . . This entire discourse was given, not for the disciples only, but for those who should live in the last scenes of this earth's history.*"—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 628 (italics supplied; see *The Great Controversy*, p. 25).

Applying the principles of interpretation outlined above, how would you relate Jesus' predictions in Matthew 24:4-8 to our day?

The twentieth century has witnessed the three phenomena mentioned in these verses to an extent unprecedented in history—the claims of false messiahs, the most devastating wars in history, and famines and earthquakes of great extent and frequency. The recent famines in Africa and Eastern Europe dramatically fulfill Jesus' prediction. The history of earthquakes, from the Lisbon earthquake of 1755 to the more recent quakes in such places as California, Japan, Chile, Peru, Morocco, the Soviet Union, and Mexico, testifies to the truth of Jesus' words.

What events can we expect as the final effort is being made to preach the gospel worldwide? Matt. 24:9-14.

The hatred shown to God's remnant people is in view of their determination to obey, through the power of Christ, all God's commandments, including the seventh-day Sabbath command. (See Rev. 12:17; 13:15-17; 14:9-11.) Professed believers who give in to the demands of nations that they break the Sabbath command will betray their former brothers and sisters (Matt. 24:10).

"As the storm approaches, a large class who have professed faith in the third angel's message, but have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, abandon their position and join the ranks of the opposition. . . . Men of talent and pleasing address, who once rejoiced in the truth, employ their powers to deceive and mislead souls. They become the most bitter enemies of their former brethren."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 608.

MIDNIGHT DARKNESS (Matt. 24:15-28).

What events fulfill Jesus' forecasts contained in Matthew 24:15-22? Compare Dan. 8:13, 14; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11.

The work of the "little horn" described in Daniel 8:9-14 establishes "the transgression that makes desolate" (Dan. 8:13, RSV), or "the abomination that makes desolate" (Dan. 11:31, RSV). Jesus was referring to "the desolating sacrilege spoken of by the prophet Daniel" (Matt. 24:15, RSV), which does not finally end until the second coming of Jesus. (See Dan. 8:25; compare 2:45.)

The tribulation of Matthew 24:15-22 has a threefold application:

1. The armies of Rome led by Cestius besieged Jerusalem late in A.D. 66. Cestius withdrew, and the Christians escaped from the city. Finally Jerusalem was overthrown and the temple destroyed by the armies of Titus in A.D. 70.

"[Matt. 24:15, 16 quoted. . .] When the idolatrous standards of the Romans should be set up in the holy ground, which extended some furlongs outside the city walls, then the followers of Christ were to find safety in flight."

"Not one Christian perished in the destruction of Jerusalem."—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 26, 30. (See Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1145.)

2. The tribulation also refers to the work of the church-state union of the Middle Ages in Europe, which enforced an unbiblical mode of worship. (See *The Great Controversy*, pp. 39, 266, 267.) Once again God's faithful people were forced to flee.

3. The tribulation Jesus mentioned also refers to the events shortly before His second advent when, once again, the papal power, united with spiritism and apostate Protestantism, will dictate to the world. (Compare Matt. 24:21; Dan. 12:2; 2 Thess. 2:7, 8; Rev. 19:20.)

"The time is not far distant, when, like the early disciples, we shall be forced to seek a refuge in desolate and solitary places. As the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman armies was the signal for flight to the Judean Christians, so the assumption of power on the part of our nation in the decree enforcing the papal sabbath will be a warning to us. [See Matt. 24:20.] It will then be time to leave the large cities, preparatory to leaving the smaller ones for retired homes in secluded places among the mountains."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 464, 465. (See *The Great Controversy*, pp. 36, 37; *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1166.)

Tuesday

March 7

THE SON OF MAN COMES (Matt. 24:29-31).

At what stage in history do the dark day and the falling of the stars occur? Matt. 24:29 (compare verses 21, 22).

As we have seen, the great tribulation of Matthew 24:21, 22 refers to the suffering of the chosen people in A.D. 70, the persecutions of Bible-loving believers during the Middle Ages, and the persecution of Christ's loyal people shortly before He comes. (The tribulation during the period of papal supremacy [A.D. 538-1798; Dan. 7:25] largely ended before 1798. See Matt. 24:22; Mark 13:24.)

The two great historical tribulations (A.D. 70 and 538-1798) were types or examples of the ultimate tribulation that will occur after the end-time church-state union enforces "the desolating sacrilege" (Matt. 24:15, RSV). Daniel speaks of this tribulation commencing before the close of probation (Dan. 11:44). Then comes the close of probation after which "there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been" (Dan. 12:1, RSV).

The dark day and the falling of the stars refer to:

(1) natural events after the worst persecutions of the medieval and early modern period (Mark 13:24)—the dark day of May 19, 1780 and the meteoric shower of November 13, 1833. (See *The Great Controversy*, pp. 306, 307, 333, 334.)

(2) The events at the conclusion of the end-time tribulation, immediately prior to the Day of the Lord, the second coming of Jesus. (See Isa. 13:9-11; 34:1-4; Eze. 32:7, 8; Joel 2:10, 11, 30-32; Rev. 6:12, 13.) "With shouts of triumph, jeering, and imprecation, throngs of evil men are about to rush upon their prey, when, lo, a dense blackness, deeper than the darkness of the night, falls upon the earth."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 334.

Will Jesus' second coming be a secret or a public event? What happens when He comes? Matt. 24:30, 31 (compare 1 Thess. 4:16-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-54; Rev. 1:7).

All earth's lost inhabitants mourn when they see Jesus coming, because they are not spiritually ready to meet Him. (See Rev. 6:15-17.) But God's faithful people are ready. Those who died believing are raised (1 Thess. 4:16), and with the living believers are gathered by the angels to meet the Lord in the air (verse 17). Together they are taken to the heavenly kingdom (John 14:3; Rev. 7:13-17).

Wednesday

March 8

PREPARING TO MEET THE LORD (Matt. 24:32-51).

**How can we be sure that the second coming of Jesus is near?
Matt. 24:32-35.**

Jesus pointed out that no one has difficulty in detecting the coming of summer. Springtime is a beautiful time of promise and renewal in nature. Even so, those who witness the final signs of Jesus' coming will live to see the Second Advent.

What will be the state of our world socially and morally in the period just prior to Jesus' advent? Matt. 24:36-38. How did Jesus intend us to follow His counsel in verses 42-44? 1 Thess. 5:1-23.

Postmillennialists argue that Christ will come after 1,000 years of peace on earth. They point to vast improvements in the human situation, economically, morally, and spiritually. But Jesus taught that world conditions will become progressively worse until He comes to end the night of gloom. (Compare 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 2 Peter 3:3-7.)

By following the counsel contained in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-23 and other passages, we are to draw progressively nearer to the Lord and, by His indwelling Spirit, experience victory over sin. (See 2 Cor. 7:1.) We are to "come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ" (Eph. 4:13, NRSV).

Apart from being prepared ourselves, what is our responsibility to others? Matt. 24:45-51.

Every Christian believer has been set over some feature of Christ's household (verse 45). We each have a spiritual responsibility to those around us, not to "beat" others because they do not see things our way, but to gently lead them to the Saviour. To enjoy the blessings the church has to offer, to revel in the spiritual delights the Lord provides, while exercising little or no effort to give others "their food at the proper time" is to fail dismally in the task Jesus has given us.

How do you answer for yourself the issues raised in the above paragraph?

Thursday

March 9

**THE STATE OF THE CHURCH BEFORE JESUS COMES
(Matt. 25:1-46).**

**What is the central message in the parable of the ten virgins?
Matt. 25:1-13.**

The three parables of Matthew 25 warn us of spiritual unpreparedness in the period when our Lord's return is delayed. These parables also reveal the two classes that will coexist in the last-day church—those who have sufficient oil in their lamps and those who do not. In the parable of the ten virgins, the lamps represent the Word of God. (See Ps. 119:105.) The oil represents the Holy Spirit dwelling in the hearts of believers. (See Zech. 4:1-6.)

"Without the Spirit of God a knowledge of His word is of no avail. The theory of truth, unaccompanied by the Holy Spirit, cannot quicken the soul or sanctify the heart. One may be familiar with the commands and promises of the Bible; but unless the Spirit of God sets the truth home, the character will not be transformed. Without the enlightenment of the Spirit, men will not be able to distinguish truth from error, and they will fall under the masterful temptations of Satan."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 408-411.

In the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30), why did the master take a servant's one talent and give it to the servant who had ten talents (verse 28)?

The greatest talent available to Christian believers is the gift of the Holy Spirit (John 14:15-24). He imparts spiritual gifts to all those who come to Christ (1 Cor. 12:8-11). In addition, everyone has natural endowments, inherited or cultivated abilities. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we have the capacity to employ all these talents in Christ's service.

Until Christ comes, there will be those who are cooperating with the Spirit in using their talents, and others who are refusing to cooperate, burying their abilities. Talents unused are ultimately talents lost.

In the parable of the great judgment scene (Matt. 25:31-46), how did Jesus suggest we should all employ our talents? What does this message have to do with righteousness and salvation by faith? What is the one reason Jesus saves some and rejects others? In the light of this, are you ready to meet Him?

FURTHER STUDY: On preparation to meet Christ read Joel 2:28-32, Rom. 13:11-14, Titus 2:11-15, and Rev. 3:1-5. Read "On the Mount of Olives" in *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 627-636.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Jesus provide signs of the times for the church? Give at least three reasons.
2. In the light of the many forecasts of Jesus' second advent, would you say that there is much or little yet to be fulfilled?
3. Why did not the Lord give us the exact day, month, and year of His appearing?
4. In this, the time of the end, are we looking for and hastening the advent of the Lord? How can we hasten (2 Peter 3:12) His return? 1 John 3:1-3.
5. How would you explain to a questioner why Seventh-day Adventists are so focused on the end of the world?

SUMMARY: In Matthew 24 Jesus traces prophetically the future of His church in the Christian Era; first, in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem; second, during the great tribulation period of the Middle Ages; third, in the time of the end, just prior to His second advent. History repeats itself. The events of history illustrate the events of the end time. The triumph of the gospel is assured and, in spite of horrendous times of persecution, Jesus calls for patient endurance and warns of the danger of eternal loss. Because the return of Christ is imminent, as the fulfilling signs indicate, Scripture challenges us to identify with the wise virgins, who represented Spirit-filled believers.



A Missionary to Earth

Terri Jean Webb

"Last call for Flight 892 to San Francisco." *Oh, no! It's still not my flight,* I thought. I had been sitting in the Narita Airport in Japan for five hours, awaiting the connecting flight that would take my parents and me to the Philippines. The longer I sat there feeling miserable, the more resentment grew inside me. *How could I ever have agreed to be dragged halfway around the world to the Philippines? I am so hungry and thirsty! I would love to buy a soda, but it costs more than \$3.00! Is this what my life will be like for the next two years?* Anger grew inside me.

With these angry thoughts rolling around in my mind, I stretched on the seats to take nap. I fell into a troubled sleep and began to dream. In my dream I saw a panoramic view of Christ's life. I saw Him leave His holy, sinless home in heaven to come to our sinful earth. I saw him lying in a wretched stable with smelly cows. I saw Him being ridiculed by his brothers. I saw Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, His face twisted in agony. I heard him breathe the words "Not my will, but Thine." I saw Him on the cross as the soldier pierced His side.

I awoke with a start. I felt as if tons of guilt were laid on my heart. What was I complaining about? Sure, I had to leave my friends and family. But at least, I can go back home in two years. Jesus chose to go through a whole lifetime of humiliation, ridicule and torment! And He died on the cross, not for His sins, but for mine! Wow! I guess giving just two short years isn't so bad. I slid to my knees and prayed. "Thank You, Jesus, for giving me a chance to be a missionary to the Philippines. And thanks for being a missionary to Earth!"



Terri Webb, 12, lives with her parents, Fred and Arlene Webb, at Mountain View College in the Philippines, where her father is business consultant and director of development. Terri loves the Philippines and has no regrets.

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The Gospel for the End-Time



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Rev. 14:1-20; 15:2-4.

MEMORY TEXT: "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12).

KEY THOUGHT: The Lord will give spiritual victory to those who respond to the three angels' messages and remain true to Him. He will "reap" them from the earth at Jesus' second coming.

REVELATION 14 PRESENTS HEAVEN'S LAST APPEAL TO A FALLEN WORLD. Verses 1-5 describe the character of the redeemed saints who live through the tribulation of the last days and who will stand triumphant with Jesus on the heavenly Mount Zion. Verses 6-14 describe the messages that shape the characters of God's people. These are the messages they proclaim to the world. Motivated and empowered by angels of mercy, believers are sent by God to minister messages of salvation to the whole world. Verses 15-20 depict a second trio of angels, who give the command to harvest the ripe sheaves of grain and supervise the awful judgment upon the world of impenitent souls. Then Jesus returns in power and glory seated on the throne, to awaken the righteous dead and translate the living saints.

The three angels' messages proclaimed by God's people prepare those who respond to stand triumphant when Jesus appears (Rev. 6:17; 15:2-4). They have overcome the deceptions of Satan and are qualified to enter the perfection of the eternal world.

GOD'S SEAL FOR THE SAVED (Rev. 7:1-8; Rev. 14:1-5).

What is the seal in the foreheads of the 144,000? (Compare Rev. 7:1-3 with 14:1.)

First, we should note that 144,000 are standing on "Mount Zion" (Rev. 14:1, RSV). This is the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22). Because they were sealed on earth, they could be translated to heaven at Jesus' second coming. (See John 14:1-3.)

Second, we should note that the seal in their foreheads (Rev. 7:3) is "his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads" (Rev. 14:1, RSV). Because Christ's name and the Father's name are symbols of their character (Ps. 18:49), we conclude that the 144,000 have been given the character of God by the indwelling Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9-17). The earthly high priest wore "the golden plate, the holy crown" on his turban (Lev. 8:9, RSV), on which were the words, "Holy to the Lord" (Ex. 39:30, RSV). Just so, because the 144,000 possess the holiness of Christ, they are set apart for a holy purpose.

A further dimension to the seal is that in Scripture the words *sign*, *seal*, and *mark* are sometimes used synonymously. (Compare Rev. 7:3 with Eze. 9:4; Rom. 4:11; Rev. 13:16, 17.) God's seal, or sign, of the everlasting covenant relationship between Himself and His people is the Sabbath (Ex. 31:13, 17; Eze. 20:12, 20). The end-time seal of God (Rev. 7:3; 14:1) is given to those who are enjoying the fullness of the righteousness-by-faith experience and who are faithfully observing the Sabbath.

When do the 144,000 receive the end-time seal of God? Rev. 6:14-17; 7:1-3.

The 144,000 are able to "stand" amidst the outpouring of God's wrath at Jesus' second coming because *before this event* God will have sealed them with His end-time seal. Moreover, Joel 2:28 predicts the "latter rain" outpouring of the Holy Spirit before the coming of Jesus.

Ellen White wrote, "Reference to our published works will show our belief that the living righteous will receive the seal of God prior to the close of probation."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 66.

Why must we seek to receive both the Holy Spirit's initial seal (Eph. 1:13, 14) and end-time seal (Rev. 7:3; 14:1)?

HOW CAN WE BE AMONG THE 144,000? (Rev. 14:5).**Who are the 144,000? Rev. 6:17; 7:1-8; 14:3, 4.**

To answer the question How can we be among the 144,000? we must have some idea who the 144,000 are. When the impenitent are crying out in despair at the second advent of Jesus (Rev. 6:14-16), their question is "The great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand before it?" (Rev. 6:17, RSV). John's answer is, the 144,000 who were sealed before the winds of strife were let loose, before the close of probation. The 144,000 are the righteous living on the earth when Jesus comes. They are "redeemed from the earth," "from among men" (Rev. 14:3, 4). When Jesus comes, "we which are alive and remain" (1 Thess. 4:17) are the 144,000.

"These, having been translated from the earth, from among the living, are counted as 'the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.' Revelation 15:2, 3; 14:1-5. 'These are they which came out of great tribulation;' they have passed through the time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation; they have endured the anguish of the time of Jacob's trouble; they have stood without an intercessor through the final outpouring of God's judgments. But they have been delivered, for they have 'washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'"—*The Great Controversy*, p. 649.

Why do we regard the number 144,000 as *symbolic* of the total number of the sealed believers when Jesus comes? (1) Because the prophecy is symbolic. The "four corners," the "four winds," the "east," the "seal," the "earth," "sea," "trees," are all symbols (Rev. 7:1-3). Likewise, the 12 tribes are symbols; they do not exist today in that form. The 144,000 are not only Jews. The number 144,000 (12 times 12 times 1,000) is a symbol of perfect symmetry, spiritual perfection. (See Rev. 21:12, 14-17, 27.)

What must our characters be like if we are to be among God's living people when Jesus comes? Rev. 14:5 (compare Eph. 1:4; 5:27; Col. 1:22; Jude 24).

"None but those who have been overcoming by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony will be found with the loyal and true, without spot or stain of sin, without guile in their mouths. We must be divested of our self-righteousness and arrayed in the righteousness of Christ."—*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 380.

Tuesday

March 14

THE VOICE OF THE FIRST ANGEL (Rev. 14:6, 7).

What is the heart and soul of the first angel's proclamation?
Rev. 14:6.

The “everlasting” (KJV) or “eternal” (RSV) gospel is good news containing a number of emphases: (1) Jesus is the Lamb of God, who died for the sins of the whole world and arose from the dead (1 Cor. 15:1-4). (2) Because Jesus intercedes for us in the heavenly sanctuary, applying the merits of His sacrifice, all our sins can be forgiven (1 Tim. 2:5; 1 John 1:9; 2:1). (3) We can have the righteousness of Christ in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:1-10). (4) Jesus will return to make eternal life a reality for those who believe (John 3:36; 1 Peter 5:10).

The gospel message is so important that it takes on global significance. It must be proclaimed worldwide before Jesus comes (Matt. 24:14).

Because the message of the first angel is the gospel, the special features of this proclamation must be part of the gospel. What are those features? Rev. 14:7.

The first angel's message is a solemn call to return to Creator-worship.

“Fear God”: To fear God is not to be afraid of Him, but to give Him reverence and respect, to do His will. The distinction between being afraid of God and reverencing Him is spelled out in Exodus 20:20.

“Give glory to him”: We glorify God by allowing Him to live out His life through us (Gal. 2:20) so that our characters are a reflection of His (John 17:22, 23).

“The hour of his judgment is come”: Because the end comes after the gospel has gone into all the world, the judgment, which is announced as part of the gospel message, must occur before the end of the world. (See Dan. 7:9-14, 21, 22, 25-27; 8:14.) Daniel 8:14; 9:24-27 pinpoint the beginning of the pre-advent judgment as 1844. Christ's righteousness qualifies us to stand in the judgment.

“Worship him that made”: God is to be worshiped because He is the Creator of heaven and earth. This takes us back to the origin of humanity and the world, back to Genesis 1 and 2. God created our world in six days and six nights, and rested on the seventh day, setting it apart as the day to worship Him as Creator. (See Isa. 56:1, 2; 58:13, 14; Matt. 24:20.)

Wednesday

March 15

THE SECOND ALARM (Rev. 14:8).

What startling announcement does the second angel make concerning the city of Babylon? What does "Babylon" symbolize? Why does it fall? Rev. 14:8.

The Medes and Persians conquered the literal city of Babylon in the days of Belshazzar (Daniel 5). Centuries before, the Tower of Babel fell when God toppled the tower. The rebellious builders found themselves speaking in foreign tongues, unable to understand one another. They spread out over the plains and populated the earth, leaving behind them the ruins produced by their false worship. (See Gen. 11:1-9.)

The second angel's message does not refer to the literal history of an ancient kingdom. It is a call to abandon the worship espoused and taught by the false religious system of today, the "Babylon" of apostasy.

In 1843 and 1844 the loyal Adventists who had announced the first angel's message with power, also proclaimed the second angel's message. It applied to those people in the popular churches who had heard the warning message and refused to accept it. Now the popular churches had fallen, and the Lord turned from them to bestow His blessing upon those who had accepted the light.

Because modern "Babylon" began with the false teachings that came into the early Christian church, why do we believe that Revelation 14:8 applies especially in our day? What prophetic evidence is provided by Revelation 17:1-6, 15-18; 18:1-4 that the message announcing the fall of Babylon is especially relevant in our contemporary world?

Any church that accepts the nonbiblical doctrines taught by the medieval church can be regarded as a daughter of "Babylon the great, the mother of harlots" (Rev. 17:5). Those doctrines include: (1) Sunday sacredness; (2) the immortality of the soul; (3) an eternally burning hell; (4) the belief that human works contribute to our justification; (5) the contention that Christ is not the only Head of the church; (6) that priests can forgive sins.

More recent falsehoods taught by popular churches include: (1) salvation by grace releases us from keeping the Ten Commandments; (2) Christ is not the Deity in the fullest sense; (3) Christ will translate His people to heaven by means of a secret rapture.

Thursday

March 16

THE THIRD ANGEL'S MESSAGE (Rev. 14:9-12).

Explain the warning sounded by the third angel. Rev. 14:9-11. Identify the beast of Revelation 13:1-10; the mark of the beast (verses 11-17); the image and the number of the beast (verse 18).

"The Sabbath question will be the issue in the great conflict in which all the world will act a part [Rev. 13:4-8, 10 quoted]. . . . This entire chapter is a revelation of what will surely take place [Rev. 13:11, 15-17 quoted]. . . .

"The third angel's message has been sent forth to the world, warning men against receiving the mark of the beast or of his image in their foreheads or in their hands. To receive this mark means to come to the same decision as the beast has done, and to advocate the same ideas, in direct opposition to the Word of God."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 979. (See the last half of "God's Law Immutable," *The Great Controversy*, pp. 437-450.)

The third angel's message is intended to point us to Christ as the source of righteousness and salvation. Those who maintain faith in Christ, experiencing the gift of His righteousness and the joy of present salvation, will be immune from the terrible judgments upon unbelievers (Rev. 14:12). If they die before Jesus comes, they are assured the blessing of eternal life (verse 13).

Is the fire of God's judgment an endless burning? Rev. 14:11. Is the "eternal fire" that fell on Sodom still burning? Jude 7 (compare 2 Peter 2:6).

How does John describe the second coming of Christ? Rev. 14:14-16. What signal does Christ give to reap the harvest of His saints? Verse 15. What does the picture of a winepress filled with ripe grapes symbolize (verses 17-20)?

These six dramatic verses (15-20), while punctuated with God's judgment and wrath, are also brightened by the radiant pictures of deliverance for the Lord's suffering saints. The hour has come at last for the dividing of the sheep and the goats (Matt. 25:31-46), the wise and foolish virgins (Matt. 25:1-13). (See *The Great Controversy*, p. 650.)

Friday

March 17

FURTHER STUDY: Noah had a warning message for the antediluvians (Gen. 6:3-7; 2 Peter 2:5). Elijah brought the message of decision to apostate Israel in the days of King Ahab (1 Kings 18:1-46). Lot witnessed in Sodom (Luke 17:28-30). John the Baptist proclaimed the arrival of the Saviour (Mark 1:7-11). Wycliffe in England, Huss in Bohemia, Luther in Germany, Zwingli and Calvin in Switzerland, Knox in Scotland, Miller in America—all proclaimed the gospel. Likewise, Adventists are to sound the Elijah message prior to the Second Advent (Mal. 4:5, 6).

Read "The Final Warning" in *The Great Controversy*, pp. 603-612.

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

1. Why do you think so many writers on religious themes tend to avoid the book of Revelation?
2. How can we restate the second and third angels' messages in more positive terms?
3. Why is it especially important to teach the first angel's message along with the other two?
4. A friend cannot understand why God endeavors to arrest the attention of nonbelievers by the terrible threat of punishment in the third angel's message. How would you explain this?

SUMMARY: In the three angels' messages one can feel the strong heart-longings of the Creator God for His earthly children. At different crises in the church and in the world God has commissioned His messengers to go to the people with the warning message, the eleventh-hour call, the third alarm, the last call. The three alarms of the trio of angels of Revelation 14 are the final call to earth's inhabitants. The issues center in God's holy law, His sovereignty, and the transforming grace of Jesus Christ in the gospel. Eternal life is the gift for those who accept it.



God Changed Me

Dimiter Stoyanov

My name is Dimiter Stoyanov. I am a Gypsy, living in Bulgaria with my wife and two little children. I have been handicapped all my life and must walk with crutches, but this did not prevent me from going from town to town cheating people, selling false gold jewelry, and using counterfeit money. Many people in the towns and villages of Bulgaria would like to beat me to death if they saw me.

I have led a violent life. I drank and smoked, and I never looked after the needs of my family. Most of the local criminals protected me when I needed to escape.

One day, I heard that an American evangelist was holding some meetings for the Gypsy community nearby. Like most Gypsies, I scoffed at Christians, and my friends and I decided to attend the meetings—to rob the evangelist! I went to the meeting and stood behind the stage. I half listened as the evangelist, Robert Wagley, spoke of the love of God to all sinners. I do not know what happened to me, but something broke in my heart, and I began to cry. This was the first time I had considered letting God into my life.

From that moment on, my life was changed. I gave up alcohol and cigarettes immediately. The change surprised my friends and relatives. I began studying the Bible, and was baptized together with 200 other Gypsies in my community.

The police do not yet know of the change in my life. They still are looking for me for crimes I have committed. I owe much money to the bank and to individuals, but I know that with God's help, I can repay my debts and more. There is nothing impossible for God. Now my greatest desire is to help my wife and family to know Jesus and His power to change lives.

Dimiter Stoyanov and hundreds of Gypsies living throughout Europe have found new meaning in life through Christ. Instead of stealing, they now are giving to others the hope they have found.

God's Care in Storm and Stress



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Ps. 91:1-16; Ps. 46:1-11.

MEMORY VERSE: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust" (Psalm 91:1, 2).

KEY THOUGHT: In times of trial, God's faithful people are assured of His constant presence, protection, and reassurance. Even when the Lord chooses to allow His people to suffer physically, He is an impenetrable fortress against their spiritual enemies.

GOD PROVIDES SHELTER IN TIME OF STORM. "In the ninety-first psalm is a most wonderful description of the coming of the Lord to bring the wickedness of the wicked to an end, and to give to those who have chosen Him as their Redeemer the assurance of His love and protecting care. . . .

"In the time when God's judgments are falling without mercy, oh, how enviable to the wicked will be the position of those who abide 'in the secret place of the Most High'—the pavilion in which the Lord hides all who have loved Him and have obeyed His commandments! . . . But the door of mercy is closed to the wicked, no more prayers are offered in their behalf, after probation ends.

"But this time has not yet come. Mercy's sweet voice is still to be heard. The Lord is now calling sinners to come to Him."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1150.

Sunday

March 19

GOD OUR REFUGE AND DWELLING PLACE (Ps. 91:1; Ps. 46:1-3).

Why can we be sure of God's protection in time of trouble? Ps. 91:1; 46:1-3.

Among the most quoted verses of Scripture is the Lord's promise in Psalm 91:1 of His sheltering care and protection in the soon-to-come time of trouble. The promise is embossed, as it were, lifted high above many verses of Scripture—comforting words, poetic and warmly descriptive. The Lord is a refuge in time of storm, a fortress, a safe place beneath His outstretched wings, and His truth a shield to guide and to protect.

How did David's personal life and experience prepare him to write this prophetic psalm? Ps. 32:1-11.

Saul's pursuit of David taught the future king of Israel that there is no other refuge than God. After his sin with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah the Hittite, David found God to be a shelter, a forgiving Lord, One who still accepted him in spite of his fall (Ps. 51:1-10). The subsequent tragedies in his family life brought David to his knees in total dependence upon God. He had already experienced a time of trouble, and he knew he could depend upon God.

In what ways does Psalm 91 have meaning for God's children in every age? Deut. 33:27-29; Acts 5:17-21; Rev. 2:10.

God is eternally present with His people generation after generation. He is with us today and will be with us until the end, even during that "time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book" (Dan. 12:1). Consider Jesus' promise in Matthew 28:20, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

What testimony can you give of the protecting, guiding hand of the Lord in your life? How would you explain to an enquirer that, although God always provides spiritual shelter for His people, there are times when He allows trial and tragedy to come upon them?

THE PEOPLE WHO CLAIM GOD'S PROMISES (Ps. 91:2).

How would you describe those who "dwell in the secret place of the most High"? Ps. 91:1, 2, 9, 14, 15.

Those who are extended the protection of the Almighty, who abide under the shadow of the Most High, are identified in different ways in many Scripture passages:

1. The sheep whom He leads in paths of righteousness (Ps. 23:3);
2. The upright and truthful (Ps. 15:1-5);
3. The wise virgins of Jesus' parable (Matt. 25:1-13);
4. The blessed people of the beatitudes (Matt. 5:1-12);
5. The lightbearers and salty saints (Matt. 5:13-16);
6. Those who keep His Word (Rev. 3:10).

"Not every one that saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 7:21). It is not ritual-ridden worshipers who dwell in the shadow of the almighty, but godly people who communicate with the Lord and with their fellow human beings. In times of suffering, danger, and calamity, they are assured of God's sustaining presence.

What promises are made to those who abide in Christ? Rev. 3:10-12; Isa. 26:1-9.

There are many "places" that capture our attention and demand our time and affection. The family room with its VCR and television set, the theater with its fantasy and allurements; the workplace that demands so much of us, the stadium filled with powerful athletes—all of these offer excitement and pleasure. But the secret place of the Most High is the place of peace and rest, of strength and renewal.

With what pertinent questions did Jeremiah confront backslidden Israel? Jer. 12:5. How would you personally answer these questions?

Not the Christian who occasionally prays and darts in and out of the "quiet place," but the Christian who "dwells" in God's presence "abides" under the constant shadow of God's care. Are you dwelling in His presence and enjoying the security that He brings? How do you know?

Tuesday

March 21

THE NATURE OF GOD'S DELIVERANCE (Ps. 91:3-7, 10, 13, 16).

From what perils are the people of the Lord delivered in the time of trouble? Ps. 91:3-7.

The idea of a covering is strongly emphasized in this psalm. The figure is that of a mother hen sheltering her helpless brood from attack by a swift flying falcon or predatory owl. The trusting chicks press close to their mother, alert and watchful but not panicky. What a figure by which to represent God's care for His children! Contrast this with the actions of Greek, Roman, or Egyptian mythological deities. We have a right to expect God, unlike false deities, to protect us, since He created and redeemed us, and since all things are subject to Him—all things. Even when, for reasons we do not know, the Lord chooses to allow His people to suffer, they are assured of His unfailing love and reassuring presence.

What is the attitude of the Lord to those who do not accept His Lordship? Ps. 91:8; Eze. 33:11.

The righteous people of God actually see the punishment of the wicked but experience no part in it themselves (Ps. 37:34). The Israelite slaves saw the calamities that came upon their Egyptian overlords. They stood in awe-struck silence as the Egyptians perished in the Red Sea (Ex. 14:31).

Will the people of God suffer when the end-time plagues are being poured out (Revelation 16)? Ps. 91:10; 1 Peter 4:12-14, 19; 5:7-11. Can you give examples of innocent Bible characters who suffered despite their innocence? What was the purpose of their suffering?

What special promises does the Lord make to His suffering people? Ps. 91:9-13, 16.

There have been times when, for reasons we will know only in the kingdom, God has allowed His people to suffer calamity. Job is a classic example. But we are assured that, in the great last-day time of trouble after the close of probation, God will shelter those whom He has eternally vindicated (Dan. 12:1).

Wednesday

March 22

DANGERS THAT THREATEN THE PEOPLE OF GOD (Ps. 46:1-11).

Consider the dangers that surround God's saints in the last day: (1) earthquakes, Ps. 46:2, 3; Isa. 24:19-20; (2) floods, Ps. 46:2, 3; Luke 21:25; (3) rage of the heathen, Ps. 46:6; Rev. 16:14; Rev. 11:18; (4) the breakup of the earth, Ps. 46:6; 2 Peter 3:10, 11; (5) God's judgments, Ps. 46:8; Rev 16:20, 21; (6) weapons of war, Ps. 46:9; (7) hostile governments, Ps. 46:6, 10; Rev. 11:18.

When God's people are feeling forsaken what is His attitude toward them? Isa. 49:13-16; Ps. 13:1-6.

J. Wilbur Chapman illustrates God's protecting providence: "Some years ago the King of Abyssinia took a British subject prisoner. They carried him to the fortress of Magdala, and in the heights of the mountains put him in a dungeon, without cause assigned. Britain demanded his instantaneous release. King Theodore refused, and in less than ten days ten thousand British soldiers were on shipboard and sailing down the coast. They marched seven hundred miles beneath the burning sun, up the mountains to the very dungeon where the prisoner was held, and there they gave battle. The gates were torn down. Presently the prisoner was lifted upon their shoulders, carried down the mountain, and placed upon the white-winged ship which sped him in safety to his home. It cost the English government \$25,000,000 to release that man. I belong to a better kingdom than that, and do you suppose that earthly powers will protect their subjects and God will leave me without help?"—G. B. F. Hallock, ed., *2,500 Best Modern Illustrations* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1935), p. 288.

Identify the manner in which God protected His faithful ones in the following situations:

Dan. 3:13-28 _____

Dan. 6:11-23 _____

Acts 7:9, 10 _____

Cite an incident in which a servant of God was not delivered. (For example, Stephen, Acts 7:54-60.) How have you been able to reconcile yourself to your own suffering or that of a loved one? Why are God's promises in Psalm 91 still valid?

Thursday

March 23

ANGEL GUARDIANS (Ps. 91:11-16).

Whom has God appointed to protect and “take charge” of His people? Heb. 1:14; Ps. 103:19-21; 34:7. How large is the company of guardian angels willing to do God’s bidding? Dan. 7:9, 10 (compare Rev. 5:11; 2 Kings 6:11-19).

“A guardian angel is appointed to every follower of Christ. These heavenly watchers shield the righteous from the power of the wicked one. This Satan himself recognized when he said: ‘Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not Thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?’ (Job 1:9, 10).”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 512, 513.

Describe the angel ministry in the last-day time of trouble. Ps. 91:11, 12.

“Could men see with heavenly vision, they would behold companies of angels that excel in strength stationed about those who have kept the word of Christ’s patience. With sympathizing tenderness, angels have witnessed their distress and have heard their prayers. They are waiting the word of their Commander to snatch them from their peril. But they must wait yet a little longer. The people of God must drink of the cup and be baptized with the baptism. The very delay, so painful to them, is the best answer to their petitions. As they endeavor to wait trustingly for the Lord to work they are led to exercise faith, hope, and patience, which have been too little exercised during their religious experience. Yet for the elect’s sake the time of trouble will be shortened. . . . The end will come more quickly than men expect. The wheat will be gathered and bound in sheaves for the garner of God; the tares will be bound as fagots for the fires of destruction.”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 630, 631.

To whom are we indebted for the comparative peace we now enjoy? Rev. 7:1-3.

“Men cannot discern the sentinel angels restraining the four winds that they shall not blow until the servants of God are sealed; but when God shall bid His angels loose the winds, there will be such a scene of strife as no pen can picture.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 408.

FURTHER STUDY: On the question of suffering, study 1 Peter 4:12-19. On patient preparation to meet Jesus at His return, study 2 Peter 3:1-18. Read "The Time of Trouble" in *The Great Controversy*, pp. 613-634.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. How can we know the Lord better than we do now?
2. Is there any limit to the spiritual growth of one who is abiding in Christ? Will we continue to grow spiritually during the time of trouble? Does this mean that we will continue to sin and repent? (See Rev. 3:5; 19:7, 8; 22:11.)
3. Why must Christians endure great trials and afflictions? Are they good for us or bad? Can we avoid much of the trouble we experience? How?

SUMMARY: Psalm 91 presents in 16 verses a positive attribution of faith and confidence in the protection and care of God over His tried and faithful people. This faith expressed by David and learned by Israel's king through much affliction, is to become an expression of our faith as we near the time of trouble. We too must learn to trust God more fully and be prepared to live by faith during the disastrous times ahead. The present state of danger in the world is but a breeze compared with the storm soon to burst upon men and women everywhere. But we are assured: "When you pass through the waters I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through the fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you" (Isa. 43:2, RSV).



Creative Evangelism

James H. Zachary

I stood in the parking lot of the General Santos Seventh-day Adventist Church in the South Philippines. The roar of motorcycle engines in the distance grew louder. As they neared the church, they slowed down, then one by one they pulled into the church yard.

These motorcycles, equipped with a side car, served the city as taxis. Each taxi driver was a member of the Adventist Taxi Association. The cyclists' leader excitedly told me that with their own funds they were conducting radio evangelism. One of their drivers was the "radio evangelist." Another was the announcer. Their program had been on the air for several months.

Now they were planning evangelistic meetings. All of the expenses would come from their club budget. No wonder the General Santos Church was overflowing with members! Satellite churches were planned in other parts of the city.

The children in the primary division were also holding evangelistic meetings. They had targeted 20 non-Adventist parents in the school most of the students attended.

The children divided topics into three or four sections, and memorized their sermonettes. Other children prepared special music, offered prayer, or announced the program. Parents were invited to come to the meetings.

How touching it was to listen to a 7-year-old child tell the audience that Jesus is coming soon, and to hear a child's voice read the Scriptures with power and understanding.

At the time of my visit, the children had reached half of their goal—ten parents were being prepared for baptism by the pastor.

Members of the General Santos Church have learned something every Adventist needs to know: Everyone's help is needed so that Global Mission can complete its task. What are you doing to help?



James H. Zachary is associate secretary in the Ministerial Association of the General Conference.

Lessons for Second Quarter, 1995

The adult Sabbath School lessons for the second quarter of 1995, entitled "Entering God's Rest," direct us in study of the book of Joshua.

Lesson 1: Joshua, God's Man

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Exodus 17:8-14; Numbers 13:1-14:38; 27:12-23.

MEMORY TEXT: Numbers 27:18.

KEY THOUGHT: The life of Joshua before the conquest of Canaan reveals the experience and depth of character that prepared this great leader of Israel.

OUTLINE:

Joshua the General (Ex. 17:8-14).

Joshua the Prime Minister (Ex. 24:12-14; 33:11; Num. 11:28).

Joshua the Scout (Num. 13:1-14:38; 32:11, 12).

Joshua the Spirit-Filled Leader (Num. 27:12-23).

Joshua the Twice-Commissioned Successor of Moses (Deut. 31: 1-6, 14, 23).

Lesson 2: The Two Joshuas

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Numbers 13:6; Joshua 1:2-5; 3:7; Deuteronomy 18:15-19; 34:10-12; Hebrews 3 and 4.

MEMORY TEXT: Hebrews 4:8, 9.

KEY THOUGHT: Joshua is a type of the New Testament Joshua, Jesus Christ, who provides victory and rest for spiritual Israel.

OUTLINE:

What's in a Name (Num. 13:16; Matt. 1:21; Heb. 4:8).

The Second Moses (Joshua 1:2-5; 3:7; Deut. 18:15-17; 34:10-12).

The New Joshua (Isa. 49:10).

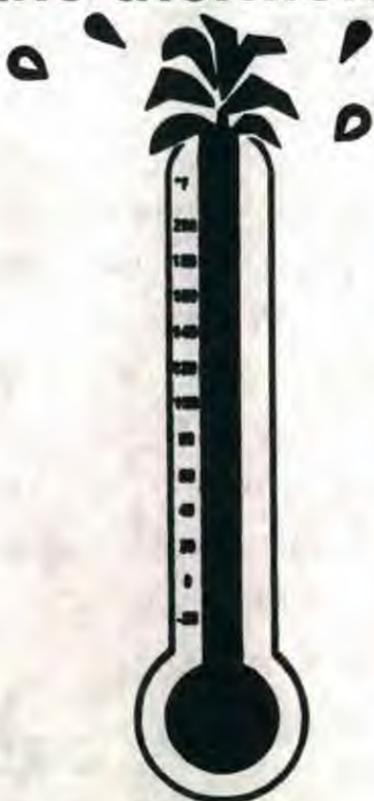
Entering God's Rest (Hebrews 3, 4; 12:2, 22; Eph. 2:6).

Joshua in Type and Antitype.

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It's Time for Action!

Would you like your Sabbath School to be aglow with Christ's love—a dynamic center of spiritual nurture and outreach? Would you like your Sabbath School members to be genuinely caring for and supporting one another while also reaching out systematically with loving concern to inactive and former members? Would you like to see them involved in united outreach to the community? Would you like to see them offering greater assistance to the World Mission of the church?

If you would like to see all this, and also experience virtually total participation in lesson discussion combined with a significant increase in daily lesson study and daily devotions, then Sabbath School Action Units in your Sabbath School are the answer.

Many Sabbath Schools have discovered that the small group Sabbath School class Action Unit can, if properly conducted, provide the supporting fellowship and relevant nurture that is so greatly needed in the church today. It can also provide the caring atmosphere, inspiration, and training needed to bring our missing members back, so they will stay and assist us in reaching the world with the Three Angels' Messages.

When the Action Unit plan is followed, such warm interaction and mutual trust develop that the Sabbath School class members will not allow any of their closely knit group to miss Sabbath School without immediately reaching out to them with concern. Loving class members immediately plug the "leak in the bucket," as it were, so it can be filled.

What's it like to be a part of an Action Unit? Each week, members share witnessing experiences and pray for specific individuals. But beware—it's contagious! When even one active class member shares what God is doing, others follow suit. And it's not long before everyone's involved in outreach.

Here's just a sampling of the exciting results that occur when Sabbath School Action Units are put into action!

The Plan Spreads Like Wildfire

- Fifty churches, large and small, including the large Sao Paulo, Brazil, College (SAD), began following the plan within three months of its introduction.
- The South Brazil Union Sabbath School Director says, "We are unable to meet the requests [for starting Action Units]. It is spreading like fire in the straw."
- Eighty percent of the 441 churches in Negros Mission, Philippines (FED), responded to the plan within a six-month period.
- Ninety percent of the churches of the North Mindahasa Mission, Indonesia (FED), began active outreach units within six months of being introduced to the plan.

A Caring Atmosphere Prevails

- Four non-Adventist husbands in California attended one Sabbath

School to find out why their wives had changed so much.

Personal Bible Study Increases

- A church in Michigan experienced an increase in daily lesson study from 15 percent studying daily to 90 percent within two months.

Sabbath School Attendance Increases

- Sabbath School attendance jumped from 20 to 100 in only six weeks at a church in Oregon.
- A New Jersey Sabbath School reported an increase in attendance from 15 (including children) to 70 (excluding children) within two months.

Inactive Members Return

- After starting the Action Unit plan, a church in Michigan reported that 50 families returned to Sabbath School.
- Four of 31 people who returned to a Sabbath School of 60 in Michigan stated they were "impressed" to return.
- Twenty-eight backsliders have returned to a church in India because of Action Units.

More Outreach

- "I have more outreach in one small Sabbath School class than we had in the entire church before," reports one pastor from one of the more than 30 churches in the Upper Columbia Conference (NAD) now using Sabbath School Action Units.
- The number of members giving Bible studies at a church in Michigan jumped from 3 to 30 in just a few months.

Baptisms Increase

- Forty-four Moslem families were ready for baptism as a result of Sabbath School Action Units in one village in the West Indonesia Union Mission (FED) only six months after the plan was introduced. Baptisms tripled in Irian Jaya during the same time period.
- In one Michigan church (NAD), there were 24 baptisms during the first four months of the fourth year following the Action Unit plan. Previously, this church had experienced only one or two baptisms per year over a ten-year period. After Action Units were initiated, however, there were 4 baptisms the first year, 16 the second year, and 27 the third year!

Tithe and Offerings Skyrocket

- Several churches have reported a 200 percent increase in Sabbath School offerings, and a 200 percent increase in tithing.

- One church in India reports a 500 percent increase in tithing!

Would you like to see similar results in your church? Then, Sabbath School Action Units are the answer! For more information on how to get the Action Unit plan going in your church, or to subscribe to *ACTION*, an international resource journal for Sabbath School and Personal Ministries, contact Calvin Smith at the Department of Church Ministries, General Conference of SDA, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, Maryland 20904. Or call, 301-680-6153. It's time to get into ACTION!



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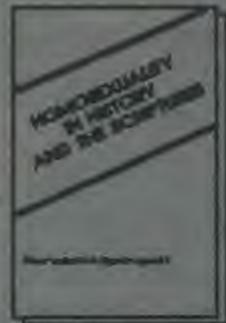


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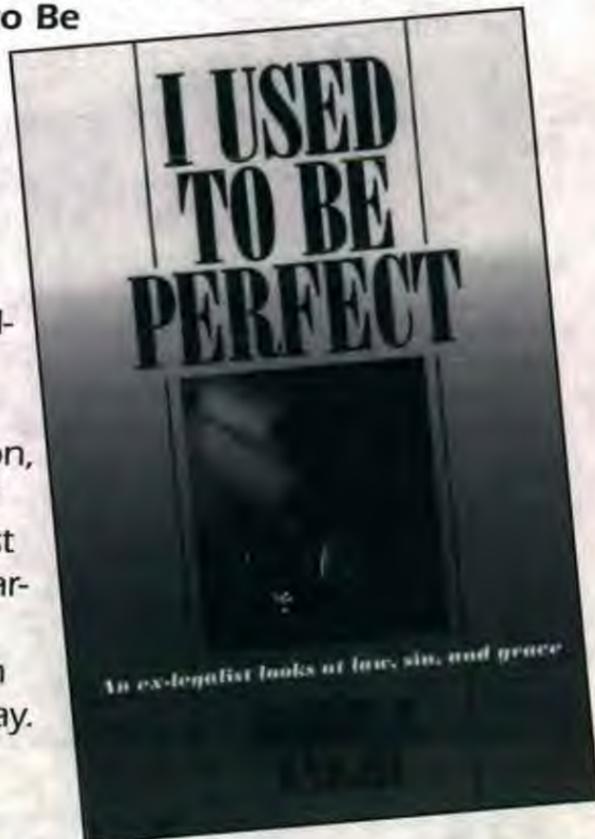
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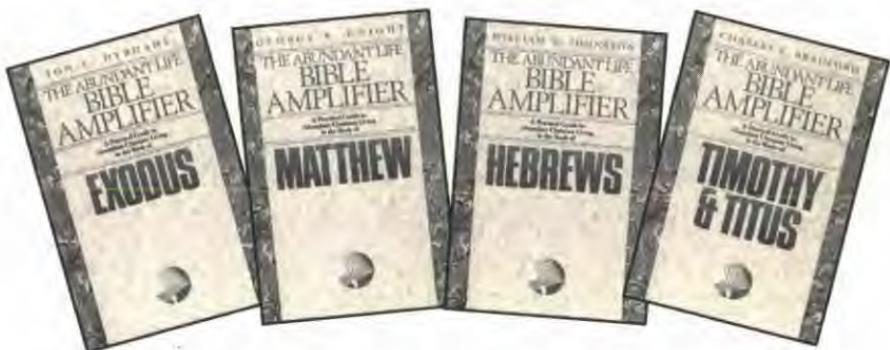
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