

SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS

For the First Half Year 2016

First Quarter

Keep the Truth Faithfully, Part 3

Second Quarter

You Did It unto Me

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CONTENTS

First Quarter: Keep the Truth Faithfully, Part 3

Introduction	5
1. Taking Oaths	7
2. The Earthly and Heavenly Sanctuaries	11
3. The 2,300 Days	15
4. Preaching of the Gospel	19
5. Means to Spread the Gospel	23
6. The Three Angels' Messages	28
7. The Angel of Revelation 18	32
8. Sealing of the 144,000	36
9. Jesus Is Coming Back	40
<i>Missionary Report from the Computer Science School in Guatemala</i>	<i>45</i>
10. State of the Dead	47
11. The Resurrection	51
12. The Thousand Years	55
13. Home of the Redeemed	59

Second Quarter: You Did It unto Me

Introduction	65
1. You Are Brothers	67
2. Where Is Your Brother?	71
3. Am I My Brother's Keeper?	75
4. Looking for His Brothers	79
5. Two Noble Widows	83
<i>Missionary Report from The Good Samaritan Department</i>	<i>88</i>
6. True Friendship	91
7. Brotherly Love, Part 1	95
8. Brotherly Love, Part 2	99
9. Brotherly Love, Part 3	102
10. Friends, Fire, and Faith	106
11. How Pleasant It Is	111
12. If Your Brother Sins	116
13. You Did It unto Me	120
<i>Missionary Report from Bangalore, India</i>	<i>125</i>

INTRODUCTION

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto Him, Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.” Later, referring to the word of God, He stated: “Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth.” John 14:1-6; 17:17. Thus, Jesus and God’s holy word are the truth; we have this truth in our hands, just as Pilate had Jesus in his presence. Did the governor value for His excellence the One who was the truth? And what about us? What use are we making of this great treasure?

Knowing the great darkness of error and sin existing in the world, Jesus gave the great commission to His people to go and preach the truth of the gospel. “And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:18-20. Faithful to this mandate, the apostle Paul could say that he had “not shunned to declare ... all the counsel of God.” To the believers in his charge he repeated that “by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.” Acts 20:27, 31.

To carry out the divine commission, we have to study the word of the Lord with all that it contains. The Spirit of prophecy states: “If we are to be sanctified through a knowledge of the truth found in the word of God, we must have an intelligent knowledge of His will therein revealed. We must search the Scriptures, not merely rush through a chapter and repeat it, taking no pains to understand it, but we must dig for the jewel of truth which will enrich the mind, and fortify the soul against the wiles and temptations of the arch-deceiver.” —*Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 19.

These Sabbath School Lessons have been prepared so we can understand “all the counsel of God.” They cover the list of subjects found in the Principles of Faith. In the first quarter of 2016, we will complete the study of the Principles in order. It is our sincere desire that this will result in a great blessing for God’s people all around the world.

Truth is like light; and as light scatters darkness, so truth reveals and conquers error. More than this, divine truth has the capacity to transform. “The

Scriptures are the great agency in ... transformation of character.... If studied and obeyed, the word of God works in the heart, subduing every unholy attribute. The Holy Spirit comes to convict of sin, and the faith that springs up in the heart works by love to Christ, conforming us, body, soul, and spirit, to His will." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 100.

Let us make this wonderful experience of transformation as from Sabbath to Sabbath we study the truth deeply, not just consider it as a theoretical message from God. We are urged to go even further, bringing all truth into our daily lives, for "However enlightened the youth may be through Bible studies, their nature is such that unless the truth of which they have knowledge is practiced in the daily life, every attempt to elevate and ennoble will be unavailing." —*Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 68.

Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, let us study these lessons not only to know the truth and be able to present it to others, but with a much higher goal—to obey it, to "be established in the present truth." And being established in the truth, let us be purified in our "souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit." 2 Peter 1:12; 1 Peter 1:22.

"The Father," writes the Spirit of prophecy, "sets His love upon His elect people who live in the midst of men. These are the people whom Christ has redeemed by the price of His own blood; and because they respond to the drawing of Christ, through the sovereign mercy of God, they are elected to be saved as His obedient children. Upon them is manifested the free grace of God, the love wherewith He hath loved them. Everyone who will humble himself as a little child, who will receive and obey the word of God with a child's simplicity will be among the elect of God." —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1114.

Let us pray earnestly together that this will be our experience as from day to day and from Sabbath to Sabbath we study and live the precious truth that the Lord permits to shine on our pathway.

—*The brothers and sisters of the General Conference*

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1

Sabbath, January 2, 2016

Taking Oaths

“Everything that Christians do should be as transparent as the sunlight. Truth is of God; deception, in every one of its myriad forms, is of Satan; and whoever in any way departs from the straight line of truth is betraying himself into the power of the wicked one. Yet it is not a light or an easy thing to speak the exact truth. We cannot speak the truth unless we know the truth; and how often preconceived opinions, mental bias, imperfect knowledge, errors of judgment, prevent a right understanding of matters with which we have to do! We cannot speak the truth unless our minds are continually guided by Him who is truth.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 68.

SWEARING UNDER SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

- 1. What was required in the past and still is today under special circumstances to hold an individual accountable for speaking the truth or for carrying out a promise?**

GENESIS 21:23, 24 *Now therefore swear unto me here by God that thou wilt not deal falsely with me, nor with my son, nor with my son's son: but according to the kindness that I have done unto thee, thou shalt do unto me, and to the land where-in thou hast sojourned. ²⁴And Abraham said, I will swear.*

EXODUS 22:11 *Then shall an oath of the Lord be between them both, that he hath not put his hand unto his neighbour's goods; and the owner of it shall accept thereof, and he shall not make it good.*

“In every business transaction be rigidly honest. However tempted, never deceive or prevaricate in the least matter. At times a natural impulse may bring temptation to diverge from the straightforward path of honesty, but do not vary one hairsbreadth. If in any matter you make a statement as to what you will do, and afterward find that you have favored others to your own loss, do not vary a hairsbreadth from principle. Carry out your agreement. By seeking to change your plans you would show that you could not be depended on. And should you draw back in little transactions, you would draw back in larger ones. Under such circumstances some are tempted to deceive, saying, I was not understood. My words have been taken to mean more than I intended. The fact is, they meant just what they said, but lost the good impulse, and then wanted to draw back from their agreement, lest it prove a loss to them. The Lord requires us to do justice, to love mercy, and truth, and righteousness.” —*Child Guidance*, p. 154.

2. What is expected with such an oath? In the past, how was a violation of an oath considered, especially if it was made in the Lord's name?

PSALM 15:4 *In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.*

JOSHUA 9:18, 19 *And the children of Israel smote them not, because the princes of the congregation had sworn unto them by the Lord God of Israel. And all the congregation murmured against the princes. ¹⁹But all the princes said unto all the congregation, We have sworn unto them by the Lord God of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them.*

2 CHRONICLES 36:13 *And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the Lord God of Israel.*

"In all the details of life the strictest principles of honesty are to be maintained.... Deviation from perfect fairness in business deal may appear as a small thing in the estimation of some, but our Saviour did not thus regard it. His words on this point are plain and explicit: 'He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much.' A man who will overreach his neighbor on a small scale will overreach in a larger scale if the temptation is brought to bear upon him. A false representation in a small matter is as much dishonesty in the sight of God as falsity in a larger matter.

"Honesty should stamp every action of our lives. Heavenly angels examine the work that is put into our hands; and where there has been a departure from the principles of truth, 'wanting' is written in the records." —*Child Guidance*, pp. 154, 155.

ABUSES AND FALSEHOOD

3. What does the Bible record about people who took oaths and promises lightly and misused God's name?

MALACHI 3:5 *And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts.*

ISAIAH 48:1 *Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, which swear by the name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth, nor in righteousness.*

"Through the apostle Paul, Christ bids us, 'Let your speech be alway with grace.' 'Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.' Colossians 4:6; Ephesians 4:29. In the light of these scriptures the words of Christ upon the mount are seen to condemn jesting, trifling, and unchaste conversation. They require that our words should be not only truthful, but pure.

"Those who have learned of Christ will 'have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.' Ephesians 5:11. In speech, as in life, they will be simple, straightforward, and true; for they are preparing for the fellowship of those holy ones in whose mouth 'was found no guile.' Revelation 14:5." —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 68, 69.

4. What clear prohibitions were part of the law to prevent such sins? Who was dishonored when oaths were not respected?

LEVITICUS 6:3; 19:12 *Or have found that which was lost, and lieth concerning it, and sweareth falsely; in any of all these that a man doeth, sinning therein:...*

^{19:12}*And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the Lord.*

EXODUS 20:7 *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.*

“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. By the thoughtless mention of God in common conversation, by appeals to Him in trivial matters, and by the frequent and thoughtless repetition of His name, we dishonor Him. ‘Holy and reverend is His name.’ Psalm 111:9. All should meditate upon His majesty, His purity and holiness, that the heart may be impressed with a sense of His exalted character; and His holy name should be uttered with reverence and solemnity.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 306, 307.

“Reverence should be shown also for the name of God. Never should that name be spoken lightly or thoughtlessly. Even in prayer its frequent or needless repetition should be avoided.” —*My Life Today*, p. 282.

5. What was going on at the time of Jesus in regard to swearing, not only among the people but also among the scribes and Pharisees?

MATTHEW 23:16-22 *Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! ¹⁷Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? ¹⁸And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. ¹⁹Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? ²⁰Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. ²¹And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. ²²And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.*

“The Jews understood the third commandment as prohibiting the profane use of the name of God; but they thought themselves at liberty to employ other oaths. Oath taking was common among them. Through Moses they had been forbidden to swear falsely, but they had many devices for freeing themselves from the obligation imposed by an oath. They did not fear to indulge in what was really profanity, nor did they shrink from perjury so long as it was veiled by some technical evasion of the law.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 66.

JESUS’ TEACHING ABOUT TAKING AN OATH

6. What did Jesus teach about such abuses as well as frequent common swearing? What is the reason for this?

MATTHEW 5:33-36 *Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: ³⁴But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God’s throne: ³⁵Nor by*

the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.

“The reason for this command is given: We are not to swear ‘by the heaven, for it is the throne of God; nor by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, for thou canst not make one hair white or black.’ R.V....

“All things come of God. We have nothing that we have not received; and, more than this, we have nothing that has not been purchased for us by the blood of Christ. Everything we possess comes to us stamped with the cross, bought with the blood that is precious above all estimate, because it is the life of God. Hence there is nothing that we have a right to pledge, as if it were our own, for the fulfillment of our word.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 66.

7. Was Jesus forbidding judicial oaths required by authorities? How did He respond when he was required to take such an oath?

MATTHEW 26:63, 64 *But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. ⁶⁴Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.*

“Jesus condemned their practices, declaring that their custom in oath taking was a transgression of the commandment of God. Our Saviour did not, however, forbid the use of the judicial oath, in which God is solemnly called to witness that what is said is truth and nothing but the truth. Jesus Himself, at His trial before the Sanhedrin, did not refuse to testify under oath. The high priest said unto Him, ‘I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God.’ Jesus answered, ‘Thou hast said.’ Matthew 26:63, 64. Had Christ in the Sermon on the Mount condemned the judicial oath, He would at His trial have reproved the high priest and thus, for the benefit of His followers, have enforced His own teaching.

“If there is anyone who can consistently testify under oath, it is the Christian. He lives constantly as in the presence of God, knowing that every thought is open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do; and when required to do so in a lawful manner, it is right for him to appeal to God as a witness that what he says is the truth, and nothing but the truth.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 66, 67.

8. To avoid all doubt and misunderstanding, what principle should govern our speech, including everyday communication?

MATTHEW 5:37 *But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.*

JAMES 5:12 *But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.*

“Jesus proceeded to lay down a principle that would make oath taking needless. He teaches that the exact truth should be the law of speech. ‘Let your speech be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: and whatsoever is more than these is of the evil one.’ R.V....”

“These words condemn all those meaningless phrases and expletives that border on profanity. They condemn the deceptive compliments, the evasion of truth, the flattering phrases, the exaggerations, the misrepresentations in trade, that are current in society and in the business world. They teach that no one who tries to appear what he is not, or whose words do not convey the real sentiment of his heart, can be called truthful.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 67, 68.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

1 Samuel 24:21, 22 [in some versions verses 22, 23]

“Those who are brought into covenant relation with God are pledged to speak of Him in the most respectful, reverential manner....

“Swearing, and all words spoken in the form of an oath, are dishonoring to God. The Lord sees, the Lord hears, and He will not hold the transgressor guiltless. He will not be mocked. Those who take the name of the Lord in vain will find it a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” —*My Life Today*, p. 282.

“If these words of Christ [Matthew 5:37] were heeded, they would check the utterance of evil surmising and unkind criticism; for in commenting upon the actions and motives of another, who can be certain of speaking the exact truth? How often pride, passion, personal resentment, color the impression given! A glance, a word, even an intonation of the voice, may be vital with falsehood. Even facts may be so stated as to convey a false impression. And ‘whatsoever is more than’ truth, ‘is of the evil one.’” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 68.

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2

Sabbath, January 9, 2016

The Earthly and Heavenly Sanctuaries

“Through Christ was to be fulfilled the purpose of which the tabernacle was a symbol—that glorious building, its walls of glistening gold reflecting in rainbow hues the curtains inwrought with cherubim, the fragrance of ever-burning incense pervading all, the priests robed in spotless white, and in the deep mystery of the inner place, above the mercy seat, between the figures of the bowed, worshiping angels, the glory of the Holiest. In all, God desired His people to read His purpose for the human soul. It was the same purpose long afterward set forth by the apostle Paul, speaking by the Holy Spirit.” —*The Faith I Live By*, p. 192.

COMMAND TO BUILD A SACRED SANCTUARY

- 1. What did God command concerning building a sanctuary for Him? What was the purpose of this?**

EXODUS 25:8, 9 *And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.*

⁹*According to all that I show thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.*

“During his stay in the mount, Moses received directions for the building of a sanctuary in which the divine presence would be specially manifested. ‘Let them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them’ (Exodus 25:8), was the command of God.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 313.

“God commanded Moses for Israel, ‘Let them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them’ (Exodus 25:8), and He abode in the sanctuary, in the midst of His people. Through all their weary wandering in the desert, the symbol of His presence was with them. So Christ set up His tabernacle in the midst of our human encampment. He pitched His tent by the side of the tents of men, that He might dwell among us, and make us familiar with His divine character and life. ‘The Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the Only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth.’ John 1:14, R.V., margin.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 23, 24.

2. What other name was it given, and why? Where did the people go to seek the Lord?

Exodus 29:42, 43; 33:7 *This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord: where I will meet you, to speak there unto thee. ⁴³And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory.... ^{33:7}And Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the congregation. And it came to pass, that every one which sought the Lord went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp.*

“Henceforth the people were to be honored with the abiding presence of their King. ‘I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God,’ ‘and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by My glory’ (Exodus 29:45, 43), was the assurance given to Moses. As the symbol of God’s authority and the embodiment of His will, there was delivered to Moses a copy of the Decalogue engraved by the finger of God Himself upon two tables of stone (Deuteronomy 9:10; Exodus 32:15, 16), to be sacredly enshrined in the sanctuary, which, when made, was to be the visible center of the nation’s worship.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 314.

DAILY SACRIFICES

3. What offerings were presented daily—every morning and evening? What was the Lord’s purpose for the sanctuary and its services?

Exodus 29:38, 39, 45, 46 *Now this is that which thou shalt offer upon the altar; two lambs of the first year day by day continually. ³⁹The one lamb thou shalt offer in the morning; and the other lamb thou shalt offer at even:... ⁴⁵And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. ⁴⁶And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the Lord their God.*

“The daily service consisted of the morning and evening burnt offering, the offering of sweet incense on the golden altar, and the special offerings for individual sins. And there were also offerings for sabbaths, new moons, and special feasts....

Every morning and evening a lamb of a year old was burned upon the altar, with its appropriate meat offering, thus symbolizing the daily consecration of the nation to Jehovah, and their constant dependence upon the atoning blood of

Christ.... Only an offering 'without blemish' could be a symbol of His perfect purity who was to offer Himself as 'a lamb without blemish and without spot.' 1 Peter 1:19. The apostle Paul points to these sacrifices as an illustration of what the followers of Christ are to become. He says, 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.' Romans 12:1. We are to give ourselves to the service of God, and we should seek to make the offering as nearly perfect as possible.... Those who love Him with all the heart, will desire to give Him the best service of the life, and they will be constantly seeking to bring every power of their being into harmony with the laws that will promote their ability to do His will." –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 352, 353.

YEARLY ATONEMENT

- 4. In addition to many other offerings presented on different occasions for the benefit of individuals and the people as a whole, what special service took place on the Day of Atonement? What was the purpose of this service?**

LEVITICUS 16:15, 16, 20-22 *Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the veil, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat: ¹⁶And he shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness.... ²⁰And when he hath made an end of reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat: ²¹And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: ²²And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.*

"Once a year, on the great Day of Atonement, the priest entered the most holy place for the cleansing of the sanctuary. The work there performed completed the yearly round of ministration. On the Day of Atonement two kids of the goats were brought to the door of the tabernacle, and lots were cast upon them, 'one lot for the Lord, and the other lot for the scapegoat.' Verse 8. The goat upon which fell the lot for the Lord was to be slain as a sin offering for the people. And the priest was to bring his blood within the veil and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat and before the mercy seat. The blood was also to be sprinkled upon the altar of incense that was before the veil." –*The Great Controversy*, p. 419.

THE TRUE SACRIFICE FOR SIN

- 5. To whom did all the sacrifices for sin point? What happens to man's sin through the divine atonement?**

ISAIAH 53:7 *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.*

JOHN 1:29 *The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*

HEBREWS 5:8-10 *Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; ⁹And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; ¹⁰Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.*

“Christ was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. To many it has been a mystery why so many sacrificial offerings were required in the old dispensation, why so many bleeding victims were led to the altar. But the great truth that was to be kept before men, and imprinted upon mind and heart, was this, ‘Without shedding of blood is no remission.’ In every bleeding sacrifice was typified ‘the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.’” —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 932.

THE HIGH PRIEST IN HEAVEN

6. Who is now our High Priest? Where does the true Lamb of God and perfect High Priest minister?

HEBREWS 9:11, 12; 8:1, 2 *But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; ¹²Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.... ^{8:1}Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; ²A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.*

“As a priest, Christ is now set down with the Father in His throne. Revelation 3:21. Upon the throne with the eternal, self-existent One is He who ‘hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows,’ who ‘was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin,’ that He might be ‘able to succor them that are tempted.’ ‘If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father.’ Isaiah 53:4; Hebrews 4:15; 2:18; 1 John 2:1. His intercession is that of a pierced and broken body, of a spotless life. The wounded hands, the pierced side, the marred feet, plead for fallen man, whose redemption was purchased at such infinite cost.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 416.

CONTINUAL INTERCESSION

7. Since returning to heaven after His service and great sacrifice on earth, how has Jesus been ministering on man’s behalf? What are all invited to do in full trust?

HEBREWS 7:25; 4:16 *Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.... ^{4:16}Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

“Jesus stands in the holy of holies, now to appear in the presence of God for us. There He ceases not to present His people moment by moment, complete in Himself. But because we are thus represented before the Father, we are not to

imagine that we are to presume upon His mercy, and become careless, indifferent, and self-indulgent. Christ is not the minister of sin. We are complete in Him, accepted in the Beloved, only as we abide in Him by faith.

“Do not let your thoughts dwell upon yourselves. Think of Jesus. He is in His holy place, not in a state of solitude and grandeur, but surrounded by ten thousand times ten thousand of heavenly beings who wait to do their Master’s bidding. And He bids them go and work for the weakest saint who puts his trust in God. High and low, rich and poor, have the same help provided.” —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 933.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

“‘And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities into a land not inhabited.’ Not until the goat had been thus sent away did the people regard themselves as freed from the burden of their sins. Every man was to afflict his soul while the work of atonement was going forward. All business was laid aside, and the whole congregation of Israel spent the day in solemn humiliation before God, with prayer, fasting, and deep searching of heart.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 355.

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3

Sabbath, January 16, 2016

The 2,300 Days

“Such subjects as the sanctuary, in connection with the 2,300 days, the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, are perfectly calculated to explain the past Advent movement and show what our present position is, establish the faith of the doubting, and give certainty to the glorious future. These, I have frequently seen, were the principal subjects on which the messengers should dwell.” —*Early Writings*, p. 63.

THE DESTRUCTIVE WORK OF THE LITTLE HORN

- 1. What power was presented to the prophet Daniel in vision? What destructive, sacrilegious work did prophecy declare that it would carry out during its existence?**

DANIEL 8:9-12 *And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land. ¹⁰And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. ¹¹Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. ¹²And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practiced, and prospered.*

"This little horn must be understood to symbolize Rome in its entire history including its two phases, pagan and papal." —Uriah Smith, *The Prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation*, p. 159.

"Among the leading causes that had led to the separation of the true church from Rome was the hatred of the latter toward the Bible Sabbath. As foretold by prophecy, the papal power cast down the truth to the ground. The law of God was trampled in the dust, while the traditions and customs of men were exalted. The churches that were under the rule of the papacy were early compelled to honor the Sunday as a holy day. Amid the prevailing error and superstition, many, even of the true people of God, became so bewildered that while they observed the Sabbath, they refrained from labor also on the Sunday. But this did not satisfy the papal leaders. They demanded not only that Sunday be hallowed, but that the Sabbath be profaned; and they denounced in the strongest language those who dared to show it honor. It was only by fleeing from the power of Rome that any could obey God's law in peace." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 65.

CLEANSING OF THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY

2. For how long would the little horn carry out its activities? What would happen in the heavenly sanctuary at the end of the 2,300 prophetic days?

DANIEL 8:13, 14 *Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? ¹⁴And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.*

"At the termination of the 2,300 days, in 1844, there had been no sanctuary on earth for many centuries. Thus the prophecy, 'Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed,' unquestionably points to the sanctuary in heaven....

"What is the cleansing of the sanctuary? That there was such a service in connection with the earthly sanctuary is stated in the Old Testament Scriptures. But can there be anything in heaven to be cleansed? In Hebrews 9 the cleansing of both the earthly and the heavenly sanctuary is plainly taught. 'Almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these [the blood of animals]; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these' (Hebrews 9:22, 23), even the precious blood of Christ." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 417.

THE PRINCIPLE OF A DAY FOR A YEAR

3. How do the Bible verses present the prophetic principle of "a day for a year"—one day in prophecy equals one year in fulfillment? According to this principle, how long would the 2,300 days last?

NUMBERS 14:34 *After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise.*

EZEKIEL 4:6 *And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year.*

"Following his rule of making Scripture its own interpreter, Miller learned that a day in symbolic prophecy represents a year (Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:6); he saw that the period of 2,300 prophetic days, or literal years, would extend far beyond the close of the Jewish dispensation, hence it could not refer to the sanctuary of that dispensation." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 324.

THE BEGINNING OF THE 2,300 YEARS

4. With what prophetic period did the long time of 2,300 years begin? Who was to be anointed at the end of the seventy prophetic weeks?

DANIEL 9:24 *Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.*

"The word here translated 'determined' literally signifies 'cut off.' Seventy weeks, representing 490 years, are declared by the angel to be cut off, as specially pertaining to the Jews. But from what were they cut off? As the 2,300 days was the only period of time mentioned in chapter 8, it must be the period from which the seventy weeks were cut off; the seventy weeks must therefore be a part of the 2,300 days, and the two periods must begin together. The seventy weeks were declared by the angel to date from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem. If the date of this commandment could be found, then the starting point for the great period of the 2,300 days would be ascertained." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 326.

5. What was the starting date for the seventy weeks, and thus also for the 2,300 years? When was the decree to restore Jerusalem issued?

DANIEL 9:25 *Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.*

EZRA 7:6-8 *This Ezra went up from Babylon; and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given: and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the Lord his God upon him. ⁷And there went up some of the children of Israel, and of the priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, unto Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king. ⁸And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king.*

"The 2,300 days had been found to begin when the commandment of Artaxerxes for the restoration and building of Jerusalem went into effect, in the autumn of B.C. 457. Taking this as the starting point, there was perfect harmony in the application of all the events foretold in the explanation of that period in Daniel 9:25-27.... The seventy weeks, or 490 years, were to pertain especially to the Jews. At the expiration of this period, the nation sealed its rejection of Christ by the persecution of His disciples, and the apostles turned to the Gentiles, A.D. 34. The first 490 years of the 2,300 having then ended, 1810 years would remain. From A.D. 34, 1810 years extend to 1844. 'Then,' said the angel, 'shall the sanctuary be cleansed.' " —*The Faith I Live By*, p. 208.

END OF THE 2,300 DAYS AND CLEANSING OF THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY

- 6. Beginning in B.C. 457, the prophetic period of the 2,300 days would be completed in what year? What began in the heavenly sanctuary at that time and would finally bring Jesus' mediatorial work to a close?**

DANIEL 8:14 *And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.*

HEBREWS 9:22, 23 *And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. ²³It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.*

"For eighteen centuries this work of ministration continued in the first apartment of the sanctuary. The blood of Christ, pleaded in behalf of penitent believers, secured their pardon and acceptance with the Father, yet their sins still remained upon the books of record. As in the typical service there was a work of atonement at the close of the year, so before Christ's work for the redemption of men is completed, there is a work of atonement for the removal of sin from the sanctuary. This is the service which began when the 2,300 days ended. At that time ... our High Priest entered the most holy, to perform the last division of His solemn work—to cleanse the sanctuary...." —*Maranatha*, p. 248.

"The blood of Jesus was then shed, which was to be offered by Himself in the heavenly sanctuary. As the priest entered the most holy once a year to cleanse the earthly sanctuary, so Jesus entered the most holy of the heavenly, at the end of the 2,300 days of Daniel 8, in 1844, to make a final atonement for all who could be benefited by His mediation, and thus to cleanse the sanctuary." —*Early Writings*, p. 253.

A PROPHECY FOR THE TIME OF THE END

- 7. What confirmation do we have that this prophecy of the 2,300 prophetic days and the cleansing of the sanctuary is for our time? How does the prophecy present this?**

DANIEL 8:17, 26 *So he came near where I stood: and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end shall be the vision.... ²⁶And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true: wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days.*

"Thus far every specification of the prophecies is strikingly fulfilled, and the beginning of the seventy weeks is fixed beyond question at 457 B.C., and their expiration in A.D. 34. From this data there is no difficulty in finding the termination of the 2,300 days. The seventy weeks—490 days—having been cut off from the 2,300, there were 1810 days remaining. After the end of 490 days, the 1,810 days were still to be fulfilled. From A.D. 34, 1,810 years extend to 1844. Consequently the 2,300 days of Daniel 8:14 terminate in 1844. At the expiration of this great prophetic period, upon the testimony of the angel of God, 'the sanctuary shall be cleansed.' Thus the time of the cleansing of the sanctuary—which was almost universally believed to take place at the second advent—was definitely pointed out." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 328.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

Luke 13:32, 33

“For eighteen centuries this work of ministration continued in the first apartment of the sanctuary. The blood of Christ, pleaded in behalf of penitent believers, secured their pardon and acceptance with the Father, yet their sins still remained upon the books of record. As in the typical service there was a work of atonement at the close of the year, so before Christ’s work for the redemption of men is completed, there is a work of atonement for the removal of sin from the sanctuary. This is the service which began when the 2,300 days ended. At that time ... our High Priest entered the most holy, to perform the last division of His solemn work—to cleanse the sanctuary....” —*The Faith I Live By*, p. 207.

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4

Sabbath, January 23, 2016

Preaching of the Gospel

“It is the very essence of all right faith to do the right thing at the right time. God is the great Master Worker, and by His providence He prepares the way for His work to be accomplished. He provides opportunities, opens up lines of influence and channels of working. If His people are watching the indications of His providence, and stand ready to cooperate with Him, they will see a great work accomplished. Their efforts, rightly directed, will produce a hundredfold greater results than can be accomplished with the same means and facilities in another channel where God is not so manifestly working. Our work is reformatory, and it is God’s purpose that the excellence of the work in all lines shall be an object lesson to the people.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 24, 25.

THE BEGINNING OF THE GOSPEL

- 1. How did John the Baptist carry out his mission in the Judean desert? From the very beginning of Jesus’ ministry, what activity characterized His work?**

MATTHEW 3:1, 2; 4:17 *In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand....^{4:17}From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

“Repent, repent, was the message rung out by John the Baptist in the wilderness. Christ’s message to the people was, ‘Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.’ Luke 13:5. And the apostles were commanded to preach everywhere that men should repent.” —*Evangelism*, p. 179.

“His work there had continued some months before the Sermon on the Mount was given. The message He had proclaimed throughout the land, ‘The kingdom of

heaven is at hand' (Matthew 4:17), had arrested the attention of all classes, and had still further fanned the flame of their ambitious hopes. The fame of the new Teacher had spread beyond the limits of Palestine, and, notwithstanding the attitude of the hierarchy, the feeling was widespread that this might be the hoped-for Deliverer. Great multitudes thronged the steps of Jesus, and the popular enthusiasm ran high." —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 2, 3.

SENDING HIS DISCIPLES TO PREACH THE GOSPEL

- 2. What urgent need did Jesus see when He looked upon the spiritually ripe fields, ready for the harvest? After schooling His disciples, on what mission did He send them?**

MATTHEW 9:36-38; 10:5-7 *But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. ³⁷Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plentiful, but the labourers are few; ³⁸Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.... ^{10:5}These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: ⁶But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

"During His ministry, Jesus had kept constantly before the disciples the fact that they were to be one with Him in His work for the recovery of the world from the slavery of sin. When He sent forth the twelve and afterward the seventy, to proclaim the kingdom of God, He was teaching them their duty to impart to others what He had made known to them. In all His work He was training them for individual labor, to be extended as their numbers increased, and eventually to reach to the uttermost parts of the earth. The last lesson He gave His followers was that they held in trust for the world the glad tidings of salvation." —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 32.

- 3. As the number of Jesus' disciples grew, for what work did He educate them? What did they experience?**

LUKE 10:1, 17 *After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.... ¹⁷And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.*

"Calling the twelve about Him, Jesus bade them go out two and two through the towns and villages. None were sent forth alone, but brother was associated with brother, friend with friend. Thus they could help and encourage each other, counseling and praying together, each one's strength supplementing the other's weakness. In the same manner He afterward sent forth the seventy. It was the Saviour's purpose that the messengers of the gospel should be associated in this way. In our own time evangelistic work would be far more successful if this example were more closely followed." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 350.

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE TO REACH THE WHOLE WORLD

- 4. According to the Saviour's great prophecy, how far is the preaching of the eternal gospel to reach? With what invitation is this compared?**

MATTHEW 24:14; 22:9, 10 *And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come....* ^{22:9}*Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.* ¹⁰*So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.*

“The vineyard includes the whole world, and every part of it is to be worked. There are places which are now a moral wilderness, and these are to become as the garden of the Lord. The waste places of the earth are to be cultivated, that they may bud and blossom as the rose. New territories are to be worked by men inspired by the Holy Spirit. New churches must be established, new congregations organized. At this time there should be representatives of present truth in every city and in the remote parts of the earth. The whole earth is to be illuminated with the glory of God’s truth. The light is to shine to all lands and all peoples. And it is from those who have received the light that it is to shine forth. The daystar has risen upon us, and we are to flash its light upon the pathway of those in darkness.

“A crisis is right upon us. We must now by the Holy Spirit’s power proclaim the great truths for these last days. It will not be long before everyone will have heard the warning and made his decision. Then shall the end come.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 24.

THE CHURCH’S GREAT COMMISSION

5. In harmony with the previous prophecy, what commission did Jesus entrust to His disciples and the church for all time? What will happen in the very last phase of the gospel?

MATTHEW 28:18-20 *And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.* ¹⁹*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:* ²⁰*Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

MARK 16:15-18 *And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.* ¹⁶*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.* ¹⁷*And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;* ¹⁸*They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.*

“The gospel commission is the great missionary charter of Christ’s kingdom. The disciples were to work earnestly for souls, giving to all the invitation of mercy. They were not to wait for the people to come to them; they were to go to the people with their message.” –*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 28.

“The commission given to the disciples is given also to us. Today, as then, a crucified and risen Saviour is to be uplifted before those who are without God and without hope in the world. The Lord calls for pastors, teachers, and evangelists. From door to door His servants are to proclaim the message of salvation. To every nation, kindred, tongue, and people the tidings of pardon through Christ are to be carried. Not with tame, lifeless utterances is the message to be given, but with clear, decided, stirring utterances. Hundreds are waiting for the warning to escape

for their lives. The world needs to see in Christians an evidence of the power of Christianity. Not merely in a few places, but throughout the world, messages of mercy are needed.” —*Gospel Workers*, p. 29.

BLESSING OF THE GOSPEL PREACHER

6. What great promise is connected with the preaching of the saving message?

ACTS 2:16-18; 1:8 *But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; ¹⁷And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: ¹⁸And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:...*
^{1:8}*But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

“Servants of God, with their faces lighted up and shining with holy consecration, will hasten from place to place to proclaim the message from heaven. By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given. Miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers. Satan also works, with lying wonders, even bringing down fire from heaven in the sight of men. Revelation 13:13. Thus the inhabitants of the earth will be brought to take their stand.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 612.

“Provision is made by God Himself for every soul that turns to the Lord, to receive His immediate cooperation. The Holy Spirit becomes His efficiency.

“It is the Spirit’s power that we need. This can do more for us in one minute than we can ever accomplish by talking.” —*My Life Today*, p. 47.

7. What joy will experienced by those who spread the good news and lead souls to Christ?

ISAIAH 52:7 *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!*

PSALM 126:5, 6 *They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. ⁶He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.*

DANIEL 12:3 *And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.*

“The converted soul lives in Christ. His darkness passes away, and a new and heavenly light shines into his soul. ‘He that winneth souls is wise.’ And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.’ What is done through the cooperation of men with God is a work that shall never perish, but endure through the eternal ages. He that makes God his wisdom, that grows up into the full stature of a man in Christ Jesus, will stand before kings, before the so-called great men of the world, and show forth the praises of Him who hath called him out of darkness into His marvelous light.” —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 199.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

“‘Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature’ (Mark 16:15), is Christ’s command to His followers. Not that all are called to be ministers or missionaries in the ordinary sense of the term; but all may be workers with Him in giving the ‘glad tidings’ to their fellow men. To all, great or small, learned or ignorant, old or young, the command is given.” —*Education*, p. 264.

“Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of the Saviour shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim His own. It is the privilege of every Christian, not only to look for, but to hasten, the coming of our Lord. Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel! Quickly the last great harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come.” —*Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Students*, p. 324.

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5

Sabbath, January 30, 2016

Means to Spread the Gospel

“God has made men His stewards. The property which He has placed in their hands is the means that He has provided for the spread of the gospel. To those who prove themselves faithful stewards He will commit greater trusts. Saith the Lord, ‘Them that honor Me I will honor.’ 1 Samuel 2:30. ‘God loveth a cheerful giver,’ and when His people, with grateful hearts, bring their gifts and offerings to Him, ‘not grudgingly, or of necessity,’ His blessing will attend them, as He has promised. ‘Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in Mine house, and prove Me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.’ Malachi 3:10.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 529.

SOURCE OF ALL

1. To whom does the earth and everything in it belong? In His great love and generosity, what privilege has He given to man?

DEUTERONOMY 10:14 *Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord’s thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is.*

PSALM 24:1; 8:6-8 *The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.... ^{8,6}Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: ⁷All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; ⁸The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.*

“Although now almost wholly in the possession of wicked men, all the world, with its riches and treasures, belongs to God. ‘The earth is the Lord’s, and the

fulness thereof.' 'The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, saith the Lord of hosts.' 'Every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the mountains; and the wild beasts of the field are Mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; for the world is Mine, and the fulness thereof.' O that Christians might realize more and still more fully that it is their privilege and their duty, while cherishing right principles, to take advantage of every heaven-sent opportunity for advancing God's kingdom in this world." —*Christian Service*, p. 168.

"'He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.' Acts 17:25. The Lord declares, 'Every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.' Psalm 50:10. 'The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine.' Haggai 2:8. And it is God who gives men power to get wealth. Deuteronomy 8:18." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 525.

THE TITHE RESERVED FOR THE LORD'S WORK

2. From the beginning, what part of His people's income has God reserved as sacred for Himself? For what purpose was the tithe used in the time of ancient Israel?

LEVITICUS 27:30, 32 *And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's: it is holy unto the Lord.... ³²And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord.*

NUMBERS 18:21 *And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.*

"In the Hebrew economy one tenth of the income of the people was set apart to support the public worship of God." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 525.

"God's plan in the tithing system is beautiful in its simplicity and equality. All may take hold of it in faith and courage, for it is divine in its origin. In it are combined simplicity and utility, and it does not require depth of learning to understand and execute it. All may feel that they can act a part in carrying forward the precious work of salvation. Every man, woman, and youth may become a treasurer for the Lord and may be an agent to meet the demands upon the treasury. Says the apostle: 'Let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him.' —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, pp. 388, 389.

"As an acknowledgment that all things came from Him, the Lord directed that a portion of His bounty should be returned to Him in gifts and offerings to sustain His worship." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 525.

THE TITHING SYSTEM CONFIRMED

3. How did Jesus and the apostles confirm the principle of returning tithes and offerings to the Lord?

MATTHEW 23:23 *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.*

HEBREWS 7:1, 2, 4, 8 *For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; ²To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all... ⁴Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.... ⁸And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.*

"In these words Christ again condemns the abuse of sacred obligation. The obligation itself He does not set aside. The tithing system was ordained by God, and it had been observed from the earliest times. Abraham, the father of the faithful, paid tithes of all that he possessed....

"All that God commands is of consequence. Christ recognized the payment of tithes as a duty; but He showed that this could not excuse the neglect of other duties. The Pharisees were very exact in tithing garden herbs, such as mint, anise, and rue; this cost them little, and it gave them a reputation for exactness and sanctity. At the same time their useless restrictions oppressed the people and destroyed respect for the sacred system of God's own appointing. They occupied men's minds with trifling distinctions, and turned their attention from essential truths. The weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy, and truth, were neglected. 'These,' Christ said, 'ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.' –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 616, 617.

SUPPORT FOR THE GOSPEL MINISTRY

4. What is necessary in the New Testament period to support the preaching of the gospel?

1 CORINTHIANS 9:13, 14 *Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? ¹⁴Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.*

2 CORINTHIANS 11:8, 9 *I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service. ⁹And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself.*

"The apostle here referred to the Lord's plan for the maintenance of the priests who ministered in the temple. Those who were set apart to this holy office were supported by their brethren, to whom they ministered spiritual blessings. 'Verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law.' Hebrews 7:5. The tribe of Levi was chosen by the Lord for the sacred offices pertaining to the temple and the priesthood. Of the priest it was said, 'The Lord thy God hath chosen him ... to stand to minister in the name of the Lord.' Deuteronomy 18:5. One tenth of all the increase was claimed by the Lord as His own, and to withhold the tithe was regarded by Him as robbery.

"It was to this plan for the support of the ministry that Paul referred when he said, 'Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.' And later, in writing to Timothy, the apostle said, 'The laborer is worthy of his reward.' 1 Timothy 5:18." –*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 336.

FIRST FRUITS AND OFFERINGS

5. What is taught in the Scriptures concerning giving to God first fruits and offerings?

PROVERBS 3:9 *Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase.*

PSALM 96:8 *Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts.*

1 CORINTHIANS 16:1 *Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.*

“Not only does the Lord claim the tithe as His own, but He tells us how it should be reserved for Him. He says, ‘Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase.’ This does not teach that we are to spend our means on ourselves and bring to the Lord the remnant, even though it should be otherwise an honest tithe. Let God’s portion be first set apart. The directions given by the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul in regard to gifts present a principle that applies also to tithing. ‘Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him.’ Parents and children are here included.” —*The Adventist Home*, p. 389.

“It is God who blesses men with property, and He does this that they may be able to give toward the advancement of His cause. He sends the sunshine and the rain. He causes vegetation to flourish. He gives health and the ability to acquire means. All our blessings come from His bountiful hand. In turn, He would have men and women show their gratitude by returning Him a portion in tithes and offerings—in thank offerings, in freewill offerings, in trespass offerings. Should means flow into the treasury in accordance with this divinely appointed plan—a tenth of all the increase, and liberal offerings—there would be an abundance for the advancement of the Lord’s work.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 75.

PROMISES OF BLESSINGS

6. What great blessings are promised to those who faithfully return to the Lord the tithe and offerings? What happened when people joyfully gave their first fruits, tithe, and offerings to the Lord?

MALACHI 3:10-12 *Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. ¹¹And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts. ¹²And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightful land, saith the Lord of hosts.*

“The contributions required of the Hebrews for religious and charitable purposes amounted to fully one fourth of their income. So heavy a tax upon the resources of the people might be expected to reduce them to poverty; but, on the contrary, the faithful observance of these regulations was one of the conditions of their prosperity. On condition of their obedience God made them this promise: ‘I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your

ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field.... And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts.' Malachi 3:11." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 527.

7. What is the foundation of the divine principle that it is more blessed to give than to receive? What will happen to those who sow abundantly?

ACTS 20:35 *I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.*

2 CORINTHIANS 9:6, 7 *But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. ⁷Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.*

"Those who realize their dependence upon God will feel that they must be honest with their fellow men, and, above all, they must be honest with God, from whom come all the blessings of life. The evasion of the positive commands of God concerning tithes and offerings is registered in the books of heaven as robbery toward Him." —*Child Guidance*, p. 152.

"This is not a request of man; it is one of God's ordinances, whereby His work may be sustained and carried on in the world. God help us to repent. 'Return unto Me,' He says, 'and I will return unto You.' Men who have a desire to do their duty, have it all laid down in clear lines in this chapter. No one can excuse himself from paying his tithes and offerings to the Lord." —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 307.

GOD GIVES CONTINUALLY

8. Following the heavenly principle of giving, what other great gift has the Lord given in addition to life and material goods?

2 PETER 1:3 *According as 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.*

JOHN 3:16 *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

ROMANS 8:32 *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*

"It should be kept before the young and tender minds that God is constantly giving His blessing to His dependent children, in the sunshine and showers, which cause vegetation to flourish, and the earth to yield her bounties for the service of man. These blessings are not bestowed upon us to encourage our selfish natures, by retaining the treasures of God's bounty, and fixing our affections on them, but that we may render back to the Giver, gifts and offerings. This is the least expression of gratitude and love that we can return to our benevolent Creator." —*Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 140.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

2 Chronicles 31:10

"In many cases God tests man with blessings, and if unfaithfulness is manifested in rendering to Him tithes and offerings, His blessing is withdrawn. 'He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly.' By the mercies of Christ and the riches of His goodness, and for the honor of truth and religion, we beseech you who are followers of Christ to dedicate yourselves and your property anew to God. In view of the love and compassion of Christ, which brought Him from the royal courts to suffer self-denial, humiliation, and death, let each ask himself the question, 'How much do I owe my Lord?' and then let your grateful offerings be in accordance with your appreciation of the great gift of heaven in God's dear Son." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 484.

"The only means which God has ordained to advance His cause is to bless men with property. He gives them the sunshine and the rain; He causes vegetation to flourish; He gives health, and ability to acquire means. All our blessings come from His bountiful hand. In turn He would have men and women show their gratitude by returning Him a portion in tithes and offerings—in thank offerings, in freewill offerings, in trespass offerings." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 150.

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Sabbath, February 6, 2016

The Three Angels' Messages

"To prepare a people to stand in the day of God, a great work of reform was to be accomplished. God saw that many of His professed people were not building for eternity, and in His mercy He was about to send a message of warning to arouse them from their stupor and lead them to make ready for the coming of the Lord.

"This warning is brought to view in Revelation 14. Here is a threefold message represented as proclaimed by heavenly beings and immediately followed by the coming of the Son of man to reap 'the harvest of the earth.'" —*The Great Controversy*, p. 311.

THE FIRST MESSAGE

- 1. Whom did God's servant see flying in the midst of heaven? What great message did the first angel proclaim?**

REVELATION 14:6 *And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.*

"John in the Revelation foretells the proclamation of the gospel message just before Christ's second coming. He beholds an angel flying 'in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and

to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come.' Revelation 14:6, 7.

"In the prophecy this warning of the judgment, with its connected messages, is followed by the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven. The proclamation of the judgment is an announcement of Christ's second coming as at hand. And this proclamation is called the everlasting gospel. Thus the preaching of Christ's second coming, the announcement of its nearness, is shown to be an essential part of the gospel message." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 227, 228.

2. What compelling invitation did he extend to the earth's inhabitants? What hour has this earth's history reached?

REVELATION 14:7 *Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.*

"By the first angel, men are called upon to 'fear God, and give glory to Him' and to worship Him as the Creator of the heavens and the earth. In order to do this, they must obey His law. Says the wise man: 'Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.' Ecclesiastes 12:13. Without obedience to His commandments no worship can be pleasing to God. 'This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.' 'He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.' 1 John 5:3; Proverbs 28:9.

"The duty to worship God is based upon the fact that He is the Creator and that to Him all other beings owe their existence." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 436.

THE SECOND MESSAGE

3. What shocking message did this messenger proclaim? What power can be identified as "Babylon," that has made all the nations drink of its wine?

REVELATION 14:8 *And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.*

"In Revelation 14 the first angel is followed by a second proclaiming: 'Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.' Revelation 14:8. The term 'Babylon' is derived from 'Babel,' and signifies confusion. It is employed in Scripture to designate the various forms of false or apostate religion. In Revelation 17 Babylon is represented as a woman—a figure which is used in the Bible as the symbol of a church, a virtuous woman representing a pure church, a vile woman an apostate church." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 381.

"I saw that since the second angel proclaimed the fall of the churches, they have been growing more and more corrupt. They bear the name of being Christ's followers; yet it is impossible to distinguish them from the world." —*Early Writings*, p. 273.

THE THIRD MESSAGE

4. Is there a difference between worshiping God and worshiping the beast? What will those who support the worship of the beast and its image receive?

REVELATION 14:9 *And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand.*

“This angel is seen flying in the midst of heaven... This is the people that are repairing the breach in the law of God. They see that the Sabbath of the fourth commandment has been supplanted by a spurious sabbath, a day that has no sanction in the Word of God. Amid great opposition they become loyal to their God, and take their position under the standard of the third angel.” —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1152.

“The third angel’s warning is: ‘If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God.’ ‘The beast’ mentioned in this message, whose worship is enforced by the two-horned beast, is the first, or leopard-like beast of Revelation 13—the papacy.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 445.

5. What will be the consequence of staying in Babylon and accepting its mark?

REVELATION 14:10, 11 *The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: ¹¹And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.*

“The world and the churches are breaking God’s law, and the warning must be given, ‘If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation.’ With such a curse hanging over the transgressors of God’s holy Sabbath, should we not show greater earnestness, greater zeal? Why are we so indifferent, so selfish, so engrossed in temporal interests? Is our interest separated from Jesus?...

“All should have a living faith—a faith which works by love, and purifies the soul. Men and women are ready to do anything to indulge self, but how little are they willing to do for Jesus, and for their fellow men who are perishing for the want of the truth!” —*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 51.

6. While the beast will force people to drink of its cup, who will refuse to do so? What will they steadfastly uphold, despite persecution?

REVELATION 14:12; 12:17 *Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.... ^{12:17}And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

“The third angel is flying in the midst of heaven, heralding the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. This represents the work which is to be done in these

last days. The message loses none of its power in its onward flight. John sees the work increasing in power till the whole earth is filled with the glory of God. The message, 'Fear God and keep His commandments; for the hour of His judgment is come,' is to go with a loud voice. With intensified zeal and energy human beings are to carry forward the work of the Lord. In the home, in the school, and in the church men, women, and youth are to be prepared to give the message to the world.... Now, just now, we need Calebs and Joshuas. We need strong, devoted, self-sacrificing young men and young women, who will press to the front." —*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 207.

7. What is said of those who die from henceforth in the Lord? What blessing will those who pass through the great conflict and gain the victory receive?

REVELATION 14:13; 21:7 *And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them....*^{21:7} *He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.*

"There are living upon our earth men who have passed the age of fourscore and ten. The natural results of old age are seen in their feebleness. But they believe God, and God loves them. The seal of God is upon them, and they will be among the number of whom the Lord has said, 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.' With Paul they can say, 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also which love His appearing.' There are many whose grey hairs God honors because they have fought a good fight and kept the faith." —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 982.

"If we would be overcomers, we must search our hearts to be sure that we are not cherishing anything that is offensive to God. If we are, we cannot wear the white raiment that is here promised. If we would stand before God in the white linen, which is the righteousness of the saints, we must now do the work of overcoming." —*Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists*, p. 138.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

"With the issue thus clearly brought before him, whoever shall trample upon God's law to obey a human enactment receives the mark of the beast; he accepts the sign of allegiance to the power which he chooses to obey instead of God." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 604.

"The third angel's message is to be proclaimed with a loud voice. Tremendous issues are before us. We have no time to lose. God forbid that we should allow minor matters to eclipse the light which should be given to the world.

"The warning message is to be carried to all parts of the world. Our books are to be published in many different languages. With these books, humble, faithful men are to go forth as colporteur evangelists, bearing the truth to many who otherwise would never be enlightened." —*Colporteur Ministry*, p. 120.

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The Angel of Revelation 18

“Revelation 18 points to the time when, as the result of rejecting the threefold warning of Revelation 14:6-12, the church will have fully reached the condition foretold by the second angel, and the people of God still in Babylon will be called upon to separate from her communion. This message is the last that will ever be given to the world; and it will accomplish its work. When those that ‘believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness’ (2 Thessalonians 2:12), shall be left to receive strong delusion and to believe a lie, then the light of truth will shine upon all whose hearts are open to receive it, and all the children of the Lord that remain in Babylon will heed the call: ‘Come out of her, My people.’ Revelation 18:4.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 390.

BABYLON

1. How is Babylon portrayed in the book of Revelation? How does it influence the earth’s inhabitants?

REVELATION 17:1-5 *And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: ²With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. ³So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. ⁴And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: ⁵And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.*

“The power that for so many centuries maintained despotic sway over the monarchs of Christendom is Rome. The purple and scarlet color, the gold and precious stones and pearls, vividly picture the magnificence and more than kingly pomp affected by the haughty see of Rome. And no other power could be so truly declared ‘drunken with the blood of the saints’ as that church which has so cruelly persecuted the followers of Christ. Babylon is also charged with the sin of unlawful connection with ‘the kings of the earth.’ It was by departure from the Lord, and alliance with the heathen, that the Jewish church became a harlot; and Rome, corrupting herself in like manner by seeking the support of worldly powers, receives a like condemnation.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 382.

ANOTHER ANGEL

2. After the scene of the harlot sitting upon a horrible beast, what did the prophet see? What happened to the earth as this messenger descended?

REVELATION 18:1 *And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.*

"I saw angels hurrying to and fro in heaven, descending to the earth, and again ascending to heaven, preparing for the fulfillment of some important event. Then I saw another mighty angel commissioned to descend to the earth, to unite his voice with the third angel, and give power and force to his message. Great power and glory were imparted to the angel, and as he descended, the earth was lightened with his glory. The light which attended this angel penetrated everywhere...." —*Early Writings*, p. 277.

"A work of worldwide extent and unwonted power is here foretold." —*The Faith I Live By*, p. 335.

3. Is this angel coming down from heaven and proclaiming his message to be considered as literal or symbolic? What clues can be found in the book of Malachi? According to the Spirit of prophecy, whom does this angel represent?

MALACHI 2:7; 3:1 *For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger angel of the Lord of hosts....^{3:1} Behold, I will send my messenger angel, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.*

" 'Another angel' is to come down from heaven. This angel represents the giving of the loud cry, which is to come from those who are preparing to cry mightily, with a strong voice, 'Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.' Revelation 18:1, 2.

"As the members of the body of Christ approach the period of their last conflict, 'the time of Jacob's trouble,' they will grow up into Christ, and will partake largely of His Spirit. As the third message swells to a loud cry, and as great power and glory attend the closing work, the faithful people of God will partake of that glory. It is the latter rain which revives and strengthens them to pass through the time of trouble. Their faces will shine with the glory of that light which attends the third angel." —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 984.

THE MESSAGE

4. What terrible message does the glorious angel of Revelation 18 repeat? How is Babylon described in this message?

REVELATION 18:2 *And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.*

"The message of the fall of Babylon, as given by the second angel, is repeated, with the additional mention of the corruptions which have been entering the churches since 1844. The work of this angel comes in at the right time to join in the last great work of the third angel's message as it swells to a loud cry. And the people of God are thus prepared to stand in the hour of temptation, which they are soon to meet. I saw a great light resting upon them, and they united to fearlessly proclaim the third angel's message." —*Early Writings*, p. 277.

“Revelation 18 points to the time when, as the result of rejecting the threefold warning of Revelation 14:6-12, the church will have fully reached the condition foretold by the second angel, and the people of God still in Babylon will be called upon to separate from her communion.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 390.

5. Who drinks the wine offered by this power and is involved in spiritual fornication with it?

REVELATION 18:3 *For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.*

“The message in the eighteenth chapter of Revelation is plain and clearly defined. ‘For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies’ (verse 3). Anyone who reads this chapter need not be deceived.” —*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 68.

A CALL TO COME OUT

6. After Babylon’s fall is proclaimed, what message is heard directly from heaven? Why is it absolutely necessary for one to come out of Babylon and escape from its system?

REVELATION 18:4, 5 *And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. ⁵For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.*

“This message is the last that will ever be given to the world; and it will accomplish its work. When those that ‘believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness’ (2 Thessalonians 2:12), shall be left to receive strong delusion and to believe a lie, then the light of truth will shine upon all whose hearts are open to receive it, and all the children of the Lord that remain in Babylon will heed the call: ‘Come out of her, My people.’ Revelation 18:4.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 390.

“Angels were sent to aid the mighty angel from heaven, and I heard voices which seemed to sound everywhere, ‘Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins....’ This message seemed to be an addition to the third message, joining it as the midnight cry joined the second angel’s message in 1844. The glory of God rested upon the patient, waiting saints, and they fearlessly gave the last solemn warning, proclaiming the fall of Babylon and calling upon God’s people to come out of her that they might escape her fearful doom.” —*Early Writings*, pp. 277, 278.

7. What similar appeal was made to God’s people in times past? What is necessary to keep from being corrupted and to be God’s children?

ISAIAH 48:20, FIRST PART *Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans,...*

2 CORINTHIANS 6:14-18 *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? ¹⁵And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part*

hath he that believeth with an infidel? ¹⁶And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ¹⁷Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, ¹⁸And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

"The judgments of God are soon to be poured out upon the earth. 'Escape for thy life' is the warning from the angels of God." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 233.

"The same voice that warned Lot to leave Sodom bids us, 'Come out from among them, and be ye separate,... and touch not the unclean.' 2 Corinthians 6:17." —*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 354.

"God calls for separation from the world. Will you obey? Will you come out from among them, and remain separate and distinct from them? 'For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?' You cannot mingle with worldlings, and partake of their spirit, and follow their example, and be at the same time a child of God. The Creator of the universe addresses you as an affectionate Father. If you separate from the world in your affections, and remain free from its contamination, escaping the corruption that is in the world through lust, God will be your Father, He will adopt you into His family, and you will be His heir. In place of the world, He will give you, for a life of obedience, the kingdom under the whole heavens. He will give you an eternal weight of glory and a life that is as enduring as eternity." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 44.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

"You must remember that this angel represents the people that have this message to give to the world. Are you among that people? Do you really believe that this work in which we are engaged is truly the third angel's message? If so, then you understand that we have a mighty work to do, and that we ought to be about it. We must sanctify ourselves by a strict obedience to the truth, placing ourselves in right relation to God and His work." —*Review and Herald*, August 18, 1885.

Revelation 2:1, first part; 2:12; 3:1

"In vision I saw two armies in terrible conflict. One army was led by banners bearing the world's insignia; the other was led by the blood-stained banner of Prince Emmanuel. Standard after standard was left to trail in the dust, as company after company from the Lord's army joined the foe, and tribe after tribe from the ranks of the enemy united with the commandment-keeping people of God. An angel flying in the midst of heaven put the standard of Emmanuel into many hands, while a mighty general cried out with a loud voice: 'Come into line. Let those who are loyal to the commandments of God and the testimony of Christ now take their position. Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters. Let all who will, come up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.' " —*Christian Experience and Teachings of Ellen G. White*, p. 228.

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Sealing of the 144,000

“Soon we heard the voice of God like many waters, which gave us the day and hour of Jesus’ coming. The living saints, 144, 000 in number, knew and understood the voice, while the wicked thought it was thunder and an earthquake....

“The 144,000 were all sealed and perfectly united. On their foreheads was written, God, New Jerusalem, and a glorious star containing Jesus’ new name.” —*Early Writings*, pp. 14, 15.

CARE AND RESTRAINT OVER WORLD EVENTS

1. What would happen to people and the earth itself if God’s angels did not hold back the winds of strife and war? What did another angel have with him when he appeared?

REVELATION 7:1, 2 *And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. ²And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea.*

“Four mighty angels are still holding the four winds of the earth. Terrible destruction is forbidden to come in full. The accidents by land and by sea; the loss of life, steadily increasing, by storm, by tempest, by railroad disaster, by conflagration; the terrible floods, the earthquakes, and the winds will be the stirring up of the nations to one deadly combat, while the angels hold the four winds, forbidding the terrible power of Satan to be exercised in its fury until the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads.

“Angels are holding the four winds, which are represented as an angry horse seeking to break loose and rush over the face of the whole earth, bearing destruction and death in its path.” —*My Life Today*, p. 308.

THE NUMBER SEALED

2. What did the angel carrying God’s seal say to the angels holding back the winds of strife? According to what the prophet heard, how many would be sealed?

REVELATION 7:3, 4 *Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. ⁴And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.*

“A terrible conflict is before us. We are nearing the battle of the great day of God Almighty. That which has been held in control is to be let loose.... The principalities and powers of earth ... are filled with hatred against those who serve Him,

and soon, very soon, will be fought the last great battle between good and evil. The earth is to be the battlefield—the scene of the final contest and the final victory.

“While their hands were loosening, and the four winds were about to blow, the merciful eye of Jesus gazed on the remnant that were not sealed, and He raised His hands to the Father and pleaded with Him that He had spilled His blood for them. Then another angel was commissioned to fly swiftly to the four angels and bid them hold until the servants of God were sealed with the seal of the living God in their foreheads.” —*My Life Today*, p. 308.

THE SIGN OR SEAL OF THE LIVING GOD

3. What do the Holy Scriptures define as the sign between God and His people? What elements are included in the seal of the living God?

Exodus 31:13, 17; 20:8-11 *Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you....* ¹⁷*It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.* ^{20:8}*Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.* ⁹*Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:* ¹⁰*But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:* ¹¹*For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.*

“The Sabbath is a sign of the relationship existing between God and His people, a sign that they honor His law. It distinguishes between His loyal subjects and transgressors.

“The Sabbath given to the world as the sign of God as the Creator is also the sign of Him as the Sanctifier. The power that created all things is the power that re-creates the soul in His own likeness. To those who keep holy the Sabbath day it is the sign of sanctification. True sanctification is harmony with God, oneness with Him in character. It is received through obedience to those principles that are the transcript of His character. And the Sabbath is the sign of obedience. He who from the heart obeys the fourth commandment will obey the whole law. He is sanctified through obedience....

“The fourth commandment alone of all the ten contains the seal of the great Lawgiver, the Creator of the heavens and the earth.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 349, 350.

4. What characterizes God’s people, according to the Revelation? Accordingly to this information, what is impressed in their hearts and minds?

REVELATION 12:17; 14:12; 22:4 *And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ....* ^{14:12}*Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus....* ^{22:4}*And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.*

“Two classes were presented before me. One class embraced the great bodies of professed Christians. They were trampling upon God’s law and bowing to a papal institution. They were keeping the first day of the week as the Sabbath of the

Lord. The other class, who were but few in number, were bowing to the great Law-giver. They were keeping the fourth commandment. The peculiar and prominent features of their faith were the observance of the seventh day, and waiting for the appearing of our Lord from heaven." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 223.

"Those who have in their foreheads the seal of the infinite God will regard the world and its attractions as subordinate to eternal interests." —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 978.

VICTORY WITH THE LAMB

5. After receiving the seal of the living God, where were the 144,000 seen in the prophetic view? What will they sing before God's throne?

REVELATION 14:1-3 *And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. ²And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: ³And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.*

"John saw a Lamb on Mount Zion, and with Him 144,000 having His Father's name written in their foreheads. They bore the signet of heaven. They reflected the image of God. They were full of the light and the glory of the Holy One. If we would have the image and superscription of God upon us, we must separate ourselves from all iniquity. We must forsake every evil way, and then we must trust our cases in the hands of Christ. While we are working out our own salvation with fear and trembling, God will work in us to will and to do of His own good." —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 978.

6. What can be said of those who follow the Lamb? By God's grace, how are they found before His throne?

REVELATION 14:4, 5 *These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. ⁵And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.*

"The Lord has a people on the earth, who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. He has His thousands who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Such will stand with Him on Mount Zion. But they must stand on this earth, girded with the whole armor, ready to engage in the work of saving those who are ready to perish. Heavenly angels conduct this search, and spiritual activity is demanded of all who believe present truth, that they may join the angels in their work." —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 978.

A GREAT MULTITUDE OF REDEEMED

7. Besides the special group of 144,000 described as singing on Mount Zion, what other group of redeemed were seen in vision standing before the throne and before the Lamb? Who will feed them and guide them to the living fountains of water?

REVELATION 7:9, 15-17 *After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;... ¹⁵Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. ¹⁶They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. ¹⁷For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.*

“And beyond is the ‘great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues,... before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.’ Revelation 7:9. Their warfare is ended, their victory won. They have run the race and reached the prize. The palm branch in their hands is a symbol of their triumph, the white robe an emblem of the spotless righteousness of Christ which now is theirs.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 665.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

“‘And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Sion, and with Him a hundred forty and four thousand, having His Father’s name written in their foreheads.’ Revelation 14:1. In this world their minds were consecrated to God; they served Him with the intellect and with the heart; and now He can place His name ‘in their foreheads.’ ‘And they shall reign for ever and ever.’ Revelation 22:5. They do not go in and out as those who beg a place. They are of that number to whom Christ says, ‘Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’ He welcomes them as His children, saying, ‘Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.’ Matthew 25:34, 21.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 590, 591.

“Why were they so specially singled out? Because they had to stand with a wonderful truth right before the whole world, and receive their opposition, and while receiving this opposition they were to remember that they were sons and daughters of God, that they must have Christ formed within them the hope of glory.” —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 978.

“Then, in the results of His work, Christ will behold its recompense. In that great multitude which no man could number, presented ‘faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy’ (Jude 24), He whose blood has redeemed and whose life has taught us, ‘shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.’ Isaiah 53:11.” —*Education*, p. 309.

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***Please read the Missionary Report from the
Computer Science School
in Coatepeque, Guatemala, on page 45***

9

Sabbath, February 27, 2016

Jesus Is Coming Back

“Thus will be fulfilled Christ’s promise to His disciples, ‘I will come again, and receive you unto Myself.’ John 14:3. Those who have loved Him and waited for Him, He will crown with glory and honor and immortality. The righteous dead will come forth from their graves, and those who are alive will be caught up with them to meet the Lord in the air. They will hear the voice of Jesus, sweeter than any music that ever fell on mortal ear, saying to them, Your warfare is accomplished. ‘Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’ Matthew 25:34.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 34.

PROMISE AND CONFIRMATION

1. What amazing, powerful promise did Jesus give His disciples before He left this earth? Who provided a special confirmation of this?

JOHN 14:18, 1-3 *I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.... ¹Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. ²In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

ACTS 1:9-11 *And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. ¹⁰And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; ¹¹Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.*

“For your sake I came into the world. I am working in your behalf. When I go away, I shall still work earnestly for you. I came into the world to reveal Myself to you, that you might believe. I go to the Father to cooperate with Him in your behalf. The object of Christ’s departure was the opposite of what the disciples feared. It did not mean a final separation. He was going to prepare a place for them, that He might come again, and receive them unto Himself. While He was building mansions for them, they were to build characters after the divine similitude.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 663.

LOUD VOICE AND SOUND OF THE TRUMPET

2. What is the first thing that will draw the attention of everyone in the world when Jesus returns? Who will accompany Him on His descent from heaven?

JOHN 5:25, 28 *Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. ²⁸Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice.*

MATTHEW 24:31 *And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*

“Paul showed that those living when Christ should come would not go to meet their Lord in advance of those who had fallen asleep in Jesus. The voice of the Archangel and the trump of God would reach the sleeping ones, and the dead in Christ should rise first, before the touch of immortality should be given to the living.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 258.

“Soon there appears in the east a small black cloud, about half the size of a man’s hand. It is the cloud which surrounds the Saviour... He comes, victor in heaven and earth, to judge the living and the dead. ‘Faithful and True,’ ‘in righteousness He doth judge and make war.’ And ‘the armies which were in heaven’ (Revelation 19:11, 14) follow Him. With anthems of celestial melody the holy angels, a vast, unnumbered throng, attend Him on His way. The firmament seems filled with radiant forms—‘ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.’ No human pen can portray the scene; no mortal mind is adequate to conceive its splendor.” —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 640, 641.

BRILLIANT AS LIGHTNING

3. What else will rivet the people’s attention all over the world? How will Jesus appear in the clouds of heaven?

MATTHEW 24:26, 27, 30 *Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. ²⁷For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.... ³⁰And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.*

LUKE 9:26 *For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father’s, and of the holy angels.*

“When Christ shall come to the earth again, not as a prisoner surrounded by a rabble will men see Him. They will see Him then as heaven’s King. Christ will come in His own glory, in the glory of His Father, and the glory of the holy angels. Ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands of angels, the beautiful and triumphant sons of God, possessing surpassing loveliness and glory, will escort Him on His way. Then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all nations.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 739.

"Christ is coming with power and great glory.... While all the world is plunged in darkness, there will be light in every dwelling of the saints. They will catch the first light of His second appearing. The unsullied light will shine from His splendor, and Christ the Redeemer will be admired by all who have served Him. While the wicked flee from His presence, Christ's followers will rejoice." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 420, 421.

CHANGE OF THE LIVING AND RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

4. What will bring an immediate change to the living, waiting saints? When the trumpet sounds, what will happen to God's people who are sleeping the sleep of death?

1 CORINTHIANS 15:51-54 *Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵²In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. ⁵⁴So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.*

"The earth mightily shook as the voice of the Son of God called forth the sleeping saints. They responded to the call and came forth clothed with glorious immortality, crying, 'Victory, victory, over death and the grave! O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?' Then the living saints and the risen ones raised their voices in a long, transporting shout of victory. Those bodies that had gone down into the grave bearing the marks of disease and death came up in immortal health and vigor. The living saints are changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and caught up with the risen ones, and together they meet their Lord in the air. Oh, what a glorious meeting! Friends whom death had separated were united, never more to part." —*Early Writings*, p. 287.

ASCENSION

5. After the living are changed and the sleeping saints rise from the dead, what will take place for all of them at once? What prayer of Jesus will thus be fulfilled?

1 THESSALONIANS 4:14, 16, 17 *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.... ¹⁶For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ¹⁷Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

JOHN 17:24 *Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovest me before the foundation of the world.*

"Our personal identity is preserved in the resurrection, though not the same particles of matter or material substance as went into the grave. The wondrous works of God are a mystery to man. The spirit, the character of man, is returned to God, there to be preserved. In the resurrection every man will have his own char-

acter. God in His own time will call forth the dead, giving again the breath of life, and bidding the dry bones live. The same form will come forth, but it will be free from disease and every defect. It lives again bearing the same individuality of features, so that friend will recognize friend. There is no law of God in nature which shows that God gives back the same identical particles of matter which composed the body before death. God shall give the righteous dead a body that will please Him." —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1093; *Maranatha*, p. 301.

HOPE, FAITH, AND PREPARATION

6. Has Jesus provided information about the exact date of His return? Even though many signs of the times are everywhere all around the world, what will happen to many people?

MATTHEW 24:36 *But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.*

1 THESSALONIANS 5:2-4 *For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. ³For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. ⁴But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.*

"The times and seasons God has put in His own power. And why has not God given us this knowledge? Because we would not make a right use of it if He did. A condition of things would result from this knowledge among our people that would greatly retard the work of God in preparing a people to stand in the great day that is to come. We are not to be engrossed with speculations in regard to the times and the seasons which God has not revealed.... No one will be able to predict just when that time will come; for 'of that day and hour knoweth no man.' You will not be able to say that He will come in one, two, or five years, neither are you to put off His coming by stating that it may not be for ten or twenty years.... We are not to know the definite time either for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit or for the coming of Christ." —*Evangelism*, p. 221.

7. Since no one knows the day or hour of Jesus' return, what will God's children do as they wait for Him to come back? What will be said about those who watch, wait, and are faithful and wise as they wait for that supremely glorious event?

MATTHEW 24:44 *Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.*

1 THESSALONIANS 5:5-8 *Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. ⁶Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. ⁷For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. ⁸But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.*

MATTHEW 24:45, 46 *Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? ⁴⁶Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.*

"I have borne you a message of the near coming of the Son of God in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. I have not presented before you any definite time, but have repeated to you the injunction of Christ Himself, to watch unto prayer, 'For in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh.' The warning has come echoing down the ages to our time, 'Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.'" —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 137.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

1 Thessalonians 4:16, first part; 2 Thessalonians 1:10

"The world, who act as though there were no God, absorbed in selfish pursuits, will soon experience sudden destruction, and shall not escape. Many continue in the careless gratification of self until they become so disgusted with life that they kill themselves. Dancing and carousing, drinking and smoking, indulging their animal passions, they go as an ox to the slaughter. Satan is working with all his art and enchantments to keep men marching blindly onward until the Lord arises out of His place to punish the inhabitants of earth for their iniquities, when the earth shall disclose her blood and no more cover her slain. The whole world appears to be in the march to death....

"Jesus has told His disciples to 'watch,' but not for definite time. His followers are to be in the position of those who are listening for the orders of their Captain; they are to watch, wait, pray, and work, as they approach the time for the coming of the Lord." —*Evangelism*, pp. 26, 221.

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MISSIONARY REPORT

from the Computer Science School in Coatepeque, Guatemala

To be read on Sabbath, February 27, 2016

***The Special Sabbath School Offering will be gathered
on Sabbath, March 5, 2016***

“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” Proverbs 22:6.

“In every place where there is a church, large or small, there a school should be established.” —(Letter 108, 1899) Selected Messages, book 3, p. 227.

According to the Scriptures and the Spirit of prophecy, it is God’s plan that educational institutions be established to advance the comprehensive education of mind, heart, and body with a Christian focus, educating children and youth in the special truths for this time.

In 2007 with the help of God, we acquired the rights to the Computer Science School (Colegio Científico de Estudios en Computación), which encompasses education on three levels:

1. Primary Level
2. Basic Level
3. Advanced Level, with 6 pre-university high school diplomas (High School Computer Science with a Marketing focus, Accounting, Business Administration, Marketing and Advertising, Bilingual Secretary, and Secretary and Clerk).

Today this school is owned by the International Missionary Society, Seventh-day Adventist Church, Reform Movement, with the Spanish acronym SMIASDIMOR, in Guatemala. Our goal from the very beginning has been to provide the students at the primary, basic, and advanced levels with the knowledge of God’s word through a Bible course that is taught as well as daily devotionals. In addition, financial aid has been provided in this school year to two hundred students with scarce resources by distributing different levels of scholarships that were given by the General Conference Good Samaritan Department and the school.

We have obtained a loan to buy land, and it is the dream of the teachers, the administrative staff, and the students soon to see their own building erected. Therefore, with God’s help, we are progressing with the construction and need funds to make bricks for the first floor. The project consists of four modules housing a pre-university institution with the goal to become a university of the church in the near future.

We believe that God will continue to provide means through the generosity of His faithful children whose objective is also the desire for many people to come to the knowledge of His word and for this project to become a reality.

“Help will come to us. We expect to have a school building, in which the Bible can be taught, in which prayers can be offered to God, and in which the children can be instructed in Bible principles. We expect that every one who can take hold with us will want to have a share in erecting this building.”
—*Spalding and Magan Collection*, p. 245.

Therefore, we appeal to all our dear fellow believers, friends, and visitors around the world: Please give your financial support in accordance with the blessings you have received from God so that this project may be completed with God’s help and your support.

For more information on the progress of construction of the private Computer Science School, go to www.cec.edu.gt.

—*Danilo López Monterroso*
General Conference Education Department Leader

**Special Sabbath School Offering for the
COMPUTER SCIENCE SCHOOL IN COATEPEQUE, GUATEMALA**

May God multiply your generous offerings!

10

Sabbath, March 5, 2016

State of the Dead

“Nowhere in the Sacred Scriptures is found the statement that the righteous go to their reward or the wicked to their punishment at death. The patriarchs and prophets have left no such assurance. Christ and His apostles have given no hint of it. The Bible clearly teaches that the dead do not go immediately to heaven. They are represented as sleeping until the resurrection.” —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 549, 550.

NO WISDOM OR KNOWLEDGE IN THE GRAVE

- 1. What do the Scriptures say about a person's state after he dies? What does not exist for him then?**

ECCLESIASTES 9:5, 10 *For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.... ¹⁰Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.*

“A correct understanding of ‘what saith the Scriptures’ in regard to the state of the dead is essential for this time. God's word declares that the dead know not anything, their hatred and love have alike perished.... Unless we are rooted and grounded in the truth, we shall be swept away by Satan's delusive snares. We must cling to our Bibles. If Satan can make you believe that there are things in the word of God that are not inspired, he will then be prepared to ensnare your soul. We shall have no assurance, no certainty, at the very time we need to know what is truth.” —*Evangelism*, p. 249.

- 2. According to the holy word, after a person dies, does he have any knowledge of what is happening with his family or anyone else? Is he able to communicate with anyone?**

JOB 14:12, 21 *So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep.... ²¹His sons come to honour, and he knoweth it not; and they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them.*

ECCLESIASTES 9:6 *Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun.*

“The Bible declares that the dead know not anything, that their thoughts have perished; they have no part in anything that is done under the sun; they know nothing of the joys or sorrows of those who were dearest to them on earth.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 556.

NO REMEMBRANCE OF THE LORD

3. Does one who has died remember or praise the Lord? What else is he completely unaware of?

PSALM 6:5; 115:17; 88:10-12 *For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?...^{115:17}The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence....^{88:10}Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise and praise thee? Selah.¹¹Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave? or thy faithfulness in destruction?¹²Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?*

“When, in answer to his prayer, Hezekiah’s life was prolonged fifteen years, the grateful king rendered to God a tribute of praise for His great mercy. In this song he tells the reason why he thus rejoices: ‘The grave cannot praise Thee, death cannot celebrate Thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for Thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise Thee, as I do this day.’ Isaiah 38:18, 19. Popular theology represents the righteous dead as in heaven, entered into bliss and praising God with an immortal tongue; but Hezekiah could see no such glorious prospect in death. With his words agrees the testimony of the psalmist: ‘In death there is no remembrance of Thee: in the grave who shall give Thee thanks?’ ‘The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence.’ Psalms 6:5; 115:17.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 546.

4. What else ends when a person dies? According to the word of the Lord, to what does the body return?

JOB 17:11 *My days are past, my purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart.*

PSALM 146:3, 4 *Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.*

GENESIS 3:19 *In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.*

“Man is only mortal, and while he feels himself too wise to accept Jesus, he will remain only mortal.

“Physical life is ... not eternal or immortal; for God, the Life-giver, takes it again. Man has no control over his life.

“The word of God nowhere teaches that the soul of man is immortal. Immortality is an attribute of God only.

“Upon the fundamental error of natural immortality rests the doctrine of consciousness in death—a doctrine, like eternal torment, opposed to the teachings of the Scriptures, to the dictates of reason, and to our feelings of humanity.... What say the Scriptures concerning these things? David declares that man is not conscious in death. ‘His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.’ Psalm 146:4.” —*The Faith I Live By*, p. 174.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE SOUL AND SPIRIT

5. To whom does the spirit of life given by the Lord return? Where does the soul remain until the moment of the resurrection?

ECCLESIASTES 12:7 *Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.*

EZEKIEL 18:4, 20, FIRST PART *Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die....* ²⁰*The soul that sinneth, it shall die....*

PSALM 49:15 *But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me.*

ACTS 2:29 *Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.*

“Peter, on the day of Pentecost, declared that the patriarch David ‘is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.’ ‘For David is not ascended into the heavens.’ Acts 2:29, 34. The fact that David remains in the grave until the resurrection, proves that the righteous do not go to heaven at death. It is only through the resurrection, and by virtue of the fact that Christ has risen, that David can at last sit at the right hand of God.” —*The Faith I Live By*, p. 174.

IMMORTALITY AND GLORY GIVEN AT JESUS’ COMING

6. What did Jesus say about Lazarus, contradicting the idea that the dead are with Jesus in glory or in the torment of a burning hell? In what state do they remain until the resurrection day?

JOHN 11:11-13 *These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.* ¹²*Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well.* ¹³*Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep.*

REVELATION 14:13 *And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.*

“But if the dead are already enjoying the bliss of heaven or writhing in the flames of hell, what need of a future judgment? The teachings of God’s word on these important points are neither obscure nor contradictory; they may be understood by common minds....

“The theory of the immortality of the soul was one of those false doctrines that Rome, borrowing from paganism, incorporated into the religion of Christendom. Martin Luther classed it with the ‘monstrous fables that form part of the Roman dunghill of decretals.’ ... Commenting on the words of Solomon in Ecclesiastes, that the dead know not anything, the Reformer says: ‘Another place proving that the dead have no ... feeling. There is, saith he, no duty, no science, no knowledge, no wisdom there. Solomon judgeth that the dead are asleep, and feel nothing at all. For the dead lie there, accounting neither days nor years, but when they are awaked, they shall seem to have slept scarce one minute.’ ” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 549.

7. When will the righteous be given immortality and enter into glory? How will it be possible for one to receive the gift of eternal life?

1 CORINTHIANS 15:53, 54 *For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. ⁵⁴So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.*

JOHN 11:25 *Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.*

“They sleep; they are awakened by the trump of God to a glorious immortality. ‘For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible.... So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.’ I Corinthians 15:52-54. As they are called forth from their deep slumber, they begin to think just where they ceased. The last sensation was the pang of death; the last thought, that they were falling beneath the power of the grave. When they arise from the tomb, their first glad thought will be echoed in the triumphal shout: ‘O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?’ Verse 55.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 550.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

“In the very day when the silver cord is loosed and the golden bowl broken (Ecclesiastes 12:6), man’s thoughts perish. They that go down to the grave are in silence. They know no more of anything that is done under the sun. Job 14:21. Blessed rest for the weary righteous! Time, be it long or short, is but a moment to them. They sleep; they are awakened by the trump of God to a glorious immortality.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 550.

Psalms 16:10; Philippians 3:20, 21.

“When Christ comes, He takes those who have purified their souls by obeying the truth. Some will go into the grave who are now in active life, and some will be alive and be changed when Christ shall come. This mortal shall put on immortality and these corruptible bodies, subject to disease, will be changed from mortal to immortal. We shall then be gifted with a higher nature. The bodies of all who purify their souls by obeying the truth shall be glorified....” —*The Upward Look*, p. 97.

* * *

The Resurrection

“The hour is coming,” Christ said, “in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth.” That voice is to resound through all the habitations of the dead; and every saint who sleeps in Jesus will awake and leave his prisonhouse. Then the virtue of character we received from Christ’s righteousness will ally us to true greatness of the highest order.

“The victory of the sleeping saints will be glorious on the morning of the resurrection.... The Life-giver will crown with immortality all who come forth from the grave.”
—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 359.

A SHINING RAY OF HOPE

- 1. In the past, what did God’s children see concerning death—a dark cloud or rays of light? What hope sustained the patriarch Job in the middle of severe trials?**

PSALMS 16:10; 49:15 *For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption....^{49:15} But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me. Selah.*

JOB 19:25-27 *For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: ²⁶And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: ²⁷Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.*

“To God’s pilgrim people, so long left to sojourn in ‘the region and shadow of death,’ a precious, joy-inspiring hope is given in the promise of His appearing, who is ‘the resurrection and the life,’ to ‘bring home again His banished.’ The doctrine of the second advent is the very keynote of the Sacred Scriptures.... Holy men of old looked forward to the advent of the Messiah in glory, as the consummation of their hope.... The patriarch Job in the night of his affliction exclaimed with unshaken trust: ‘I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: ... in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.’ Job 19:25-27.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 299.

- 2. What amazing picture of the miracle of resurrection did the Lord give to the prophet Ezekiel? What other prophecy given around the same time confirms this view?**

EZEKIEL 37:1-5 *The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, ²And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry. ³And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest. ⁴Again he said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the*

word of the Lord. ⁵Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live.

DANIEL 12:2 *And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.*

"At one time the prophet Ezekiel was in vision set down in the midst of a large valley. Before him lay a dismal scene. Throughout its whole extent the valley was covered with the bones of the dead. The question was asked, 'Son of man, can these bones live?' The prophet replied, 'O Lord God, Thou knowest.' What could the might and power of man accomplish with these dead bones? The prophet could see no hope of life being imparted to them. But as he looked, the power of God began to work. The scattered bones were shaken, and began to come together, 'bone to his bone,' and were bound together by sinews. They were covered with flesh, and as the Lord breathed upon the bodies thus formed, 'the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.' " —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1165.

RESURRECTION POSSIBLE BECAUSE OF JESUS

3. How did Jesus confirm the absolute surety of the resurrection? What provides the assurance of one's being resurrected from death to life?

JOHN 6:39; 11:25 *And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.... ^{11:25}Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.*

"Christ claims all those as His who have believed in His name. The vitalizing power of the Spirit of Christ dwelling in the mortal body binds every believing soul to Jesus Christ. Those who believe in Jesus are sacred to His heart; for their life is hid with Christ in God. The command will come from the Life-giver, 'Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.' Isaiah 26:19.

"The Life-giver will call up His purchased possession in the first resurrection, and until that triumphant hour, when the last trump shall sound and the vast army shall come forth to eternal victory, every sleeping saint will be kept in safety and will be guarded as a precious jewel, who is known to God by name. By the power of the Saviour that dwelt in them while living and because they were partakers of the divine nature, they are brought forth from the dead." —*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 271.

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF THE RESURRECTION

4. What important facts did the apostle Paul present to some people who had doubts about the resurrection? What did he say about those whose hope in God is confined to the present life?

1 CORINTHIANS 15:16-23 *For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: ¹⁷And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. ¹⁸Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. ¹⁹If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. ²⁰But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. ²¹For since by man came death, by*

man came also the resurrection of the dead. ²²For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

"And said Paul: 'If the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.' I Corinthians 15:16-18. If for four thousand years the righteous had gone directly to heaven at death, how could Paul have said that if there is no resurrection, 'they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished'? No resurrection would be necessary." —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 546, 547.

"With convincing power the apostle set forth the great truth of the resurrection....

"The apostle carried the minds of the Corinthian brethren forward to the triumphs of the resurrection morn, when all the sleeping saints are to be raised, henceforth to live forever with their Lord." —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 320.

THE FIRST RESURRECTION

5. When will the resurrection take place? According to the clear teaching of the Scriptures, who will be resurrected and rise to meet Jesus first?

1 THESSALONIANS 4:14-18 *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. ¹⁵For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. ¹⁶For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ¹⁷Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. ¹⁸Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*

"Amid the reeling of the earth, the flash of lightning, and the roar of thunder, the voice of the Son of God calls forth the sleeping saints. He looks upon the graves of the righteous, then, raising His hands to heaven, He cries: 'Awake, awake, awake, ye that sleep in the dust, and arise!' Throughout the length and breadth of the earth the dead shall hear that voice, and they that hear shall live. And the whole earth shall ring with the tread of the exceeding great army of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. From the prison house of death they come, clothed with immortal glory, crying: 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?' 1 Corinthians 15:55. And the living righteous and the risen saints unite their voices in a long, glad shout of victory." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 644.

INCORRUPTIBLE AND IMMORTAL

6. What will the resurrected body of the saints be like? What great changes will be part of the resurrection?

1 CORINTHIANS 15:52, FIRST PART-54 ... *For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. ⁵⁴So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.*

"Our personal identity is preserved in the resurrection, though not the same particles of matter or material substance as went into the grave. The wondrous works of God are a mystery to man. The spirit, the character of man, is returned to God, there to be preserved. In the resurrection every man will have his own character. God in His own time will call forth the dead, giving again the breath of life, and bidding the dry bones live. The same form will come forth, but it will be free from disease and every defect. It lives again bearing the same individuality of features, so that friend will recognize friend. There is no law of God in nature which shows that God gives back the same identical particles of matter which composed the body before death. God shall give the righteous dead a body that will please Him."—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1093.

THE SECOND RESURRECTION

7. When will the second resurrection—the resurrection of the unjust—take place? In only what resurrection will those who receive life and blessing rise?

REVELATION 20:5, FIRST PART, 6 *But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished....* ⁶*Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.*

"At the close of the thousand years the second resurrection will take place. Then the wicked will be raised from the dead and appear before God for the execution of 'the judgment written.' Thus the revelator, after describing the resurrection of the righteous, says: 'The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.' Revelation 20:5. And Isaiah declares, concerning the wicked: 'They shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited.' Isaiah 24:22."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 661.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

"The Life-giver will call up His purchased possession in the first resurrection, and until that triumphant hour, when the last trump shall sound and the vast army shall come forth to eternal victory, every sleeping saint will be kept in safety and will be guarded as a precious jewel, who is known to God by name. By the power of the Saviour that dwelt in them while living and because they were partakers of the divine nature, they are brought forth from the dead."—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 359.

"He that used the two talents entrusted in this life, will, in the future life, show that his talents have not been corrupted. They will be used on a wider and nobler plan in the future life. There is appointed to every man his certain work. Those who are partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruptions which are in the world through lust, will reveal a purified life in this time of preparation for the higher life. The commence to live the life of the heavenly order here below, and carry the divine nature with them into every line of work. No swindlers have a place in the heavenly courts. No falsifiers, no liars, no adulterers, no cruel-minded persons will be there. They will never see His face."—*The Upward Look*, p. 97.

* * *

The Thousand Years

“The earth looked like a desolate wilderness. Cities and villages, shaken down by the earthquake, lay in heaps. Mountains had been moved out of their places, leaving large caverns.... Here is to be the home of Satan with his evil angels for a thousand years. Here he will be confined, to wander up and down over the broken surface of the earth and see the effects of his rebellion against God’s law. For a thousand years he can enjoy the fruit of the curse which he has caused. Limited alone to the earth, he will not have the privilege of ranging to other planets, to tempt and annoy those who have not fallen.” —*Early Writings*, p. 290.

THE ENEMY TO BE BOUND

1. **How is the prophecy concerning the thousand years introduced? Considering that Satan is a fallen angel, in reality what is the “great chain” that binds him for such a long time?**

REVELATION 20:1, 2 *And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. ²And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years.*

“The revelator foretells the banishment of Satan and the condition of chaos and desolation to which the earth is to be reduced, and he declares that this condition will exist for a thousand years....

“Here is to be the home of Satan with his evil angels for a thousand years. Limited to the earth, he will not have access to other worlds to tempt and annoy those who have never fallen. It is in this sense that he is bound: there are none remaining, upon whom he can exercise his power. He is wholly cut off from the work of deception and ruin which for so many centuries has been his sole delight.” —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 658, 659.

2. **What is the meaning of the word “abyss” (bottomless pit) where Satan will be cast and remain for the duration of the thousand years? How do the Scriptures describe another time when the earth was like an “abyss”—completely empty and dark?**

REVELATION 20:3 *And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.*

GENESIS 1:2 *And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.*

“That the expression ‘bottomless pit’ represents the earth in a state of confusion and darkness is evident from other scriptures. Concerning the condition of the earth ‘in the beginning,’ the Bible record says that it ‘was without form, and

void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.' Genesis 1:2. Prophecy teaches that it will be brought back, partially at least, to this condition. Looking forward to the great day of God, the prophet Jeremiah declares: 'I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down.' Jeremiah 4:23-26." —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 658, 659.

JESUS' RETURN AND THE BEGINNING OF THE THOUSAND YEARS

3. At what point will the thousand years begin, with Satan bound and the earth reduced to rubble and waste?

2 PETER 3:7, 10, 12 *But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men....¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up....¹²Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?*

2 THESSALONIANS 1:7, 8 *And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, ⁸In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

"At the coming of Christ the wicked are blotted from the face of the whole earth—consumed with the spirit of His mouth and destroyed by the brightness of His glory. Christ takes His people to the City of God, and the earth is emptied of its inhabitants. 'Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof.' 'The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the Lord hath spoken this word.' 'Because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned.' Isaiah 24:1, 3, 5, 6." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 657.

JUDGMENT IN HEAVEN

4. While Satan is confined to the abyss or the broken-down earth, what will take place in heaven? Who will participate in this important work?

REVELATION 20:4, 6 *And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years....⁶Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.*

1 CORINTHIANS 6:2, 3 *Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? ³Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?*

“During the thousand years between the first and the second resurrection the judgment of the wicked takes place. The apostle Paul points to this judgment as an event that follows the second advent. ‘Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.’ 1 Corinthians 4:5.... At this time the righteous reign as kings and priests unto God. John in the Revelation says: ‘I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them.’ ‘They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.’ Revelation 20:4, 6.... In union with Christ they judge the wicked, comparing their acts with the statute book, the Bible, and deciding every case according to the deeds done in the body. Then the portion which the wicked must suffer is meted out, according to their works; and it is recorded against their names in the book of death.” —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 660, 661.

END OF THE THOUSAND YEARS

5. What will be transported to the earth at the end of the thousand years? Who will be with it?

REVELATION 21:1-3, 10 *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. ²And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.... ¹⁰And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.*

“At the close of the thousand years, Christ again returns to the earth. He is accompanied by the host of the redeemed and attended by a retinue of angels. As He descends in terrific majesty He bids the wicked dead arise to receive their doom. They come forth, a mighty host, numberless as the sands of the sea. What a contrast to those who were raised at the first resurrection! The righteous were clothed with immortal youth and beauty. The wicked bear the traces of disease and death.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 662.

RESURRECTION OF THE UNJUST

6. Who will be resurrected after the thousand years? What does the prophecy say about Satan’s plans and actions?

REVELATION 20:5, 7, 8 *But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.... ⁷And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, ⁸And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.*

"At the close of the thousand years the second resurrection will take place. Then the wicked will be raised from the dead and appear before God for the execution of 'the judgment written.' Thus the revelator, after describing the resurrection of the righteous, says: 'The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.' Revelation 20:5. And Isaiah declares, concerning the wicked: 'They shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited.' Isaiah 24:22." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 661.

LAST ATTACK AND DEFEAT

7. With billions of supporters on his side, what will he do? What will be the final result for him and his followers?

REVELATION 20:9, 10 *And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. ¹⁰And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*

MALACHI 4:1 *For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.*

"Now Satan prepares for a last mighty struggle for the supremacy.... As the wicked dead are raised and he sees the vast multitudes upon his side, his hopes revive, and he determines not to yield the great controversy. He will marshal all the armies of the lost under his banner and through them endeavor to execute his plans....

"At last the order to advance is given, and the countless host moves on—an army such as was never summoned by earthly conquerors, such as the combined forces of all ages since war began on earth could never equal. Satan, the mightiest of warriors, leads the van, and his angels unite their forces for this final struggle.... With military precision the serried ranks advance over the earth's broken and uneven surface to the City of God. By command of Jesus, the gates of the New Jerusalem are closed, and the armies of Satan surround the city and make ready for the onset." —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 663, 664.

NEW HEAVEN AND EARTH

8. After the final victory of God, truth, and righteousness, what special, glorious work will take place?

2 PETER 3:13, 14 *Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. ¹⁴Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.*

REVELATION 21:1 *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.*

"Satan's work of ruin is forever ended. For six thousand years he has wrought his will, filling the earth with woe and causing grief throughout the universe. The whole creation has groaned and travailed together in pain. Now God's creatures are

forever delivered from his presence and temptations. 'The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet: they [the righteous] break forth into singing.' Isaiah 14:7. And a shout of praise and triumph ascends from the whole loyal universe. 'The voice of a great multitude,' 'as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thonderings,' is heard, saying: 'Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.' Revelation 19:6....

" 'I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away.' Revelation 21:1. The fire that consumes the wicked purifies the earth. Every trace of the curse is swept away. No eternally burning hell will keep before the ransomed the fearful consequences of sin." —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 673, 674.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

Isaiah 24:1, 3, 19, 20

"The wicked receive their recompense in the earth. Proverbs 11:31. They 'shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts.' Malachi 4:1. Some are destroyed as in a moment, while others suffer many days. All are punished 'according to their deeds.'...

"One reminder alone remains: our Redeemer will ever bear the marks of His crucifixion. Upon His wounded head, upon His side, His hands and feet, are the only traces of the cruel work that sin has wrought....

"The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love." —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 673, 674, 678.

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13

Sabbath, March 26, 2016

Home of the Redeemed

"Restored to the tree of life in the long-lost Eden, the redeemed will 'grow up' (Malachi 4:2) to the full stature of the race in its primeval glory. The last lingering traces of the curse of sin will be removed, and Christ's faithful ones will appear in 'the beauty of the Lord our God,' in mind and soul and body reflecting the perfect image of their Lord. Oh, wonderful redemption! long talked of, long hoped for, contemplated with eager anticipation, but never fully understood." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 644.

THE CITY BUILT BY GOD

1. Even though Abraham received the promise concerning the earthly Canaan and his descendants, what did he look forward to most of all? To whom is the new earth promised as their inheritance?

HEBREWS 11:10 *For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*

MATTHEW 5:5 *Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.*

"The earth promised to the meek will not be like this, darkened with the shadow of death and the curse. 'We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.' 'There shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him.' 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 22:3." —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 17.

A PLACE OF PEACE, RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND JOY

2. What will never exist in the new world? Will the redeemed remember their past with all its grief and turmoil?

REVELATION 21:4 *And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*

ISAIAH 65:17 *For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.*

"Pain cannot exist in the atmosphere of heaven. In the home of the redeemed there will be no tears, no funeral trains, no badges of mourning. 'The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.' Isaiah 33:24. One rich tide of happiness will flow and deepen as eternity rolls on." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 286.

3. What will characterize the new heaven and the new earth? How will the holy people who live there conduct their lives?

2 PETER 3:13 *Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.*

ISAIAH 32:17, 18; 65:22 *And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. ¹⁸And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places;... ^{65:22}They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.*

"The beautiful new earth, with all its glory, was the eternal inheritance of the saints. The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, was then given to the saints of the Most High, who were to possess it forever, even forever and ever." —*Early Writings*, p. 295.

"'My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.' 'Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise.' 'They shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat:... Mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.' Isaiah 32:18; 60:18; 65:21, 22." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 675.

4. What about the animals? What will they be like? Who will then even play with creatures that today are wild and dangerous?

ISAIAH 11:5-9 *And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. ⁶The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. ⁷And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. ⁸And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. ⁹They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.*

"The grass will be a living green, and will never wither. There will be roses and lilies and all kinds of flowers there. They will never blight or fade or lose their beauty and fragrance.

"The lion, we should much dread and fear here, will then lie down with the lamb, and everything in the New Earth will be peace and harmony. The trees of the New Earth will be straight and lofty, without deformity.

"In the New Earth there are no chilling winds, no disagreeable changes. The atmosphere is ever right and healthful." —*My Life Today*, p. 354.

THE TABERNACLE OF GOD WILL BE WITH MEN

5. Like the earthly Jerusalem, the capital city of the king and nation, what will be found in the heavenly Jerusalem? Who will live there with the redeemed of all ages?

REVELATION 22:3; 21:3 *And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:... ^{21:3}And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.*

"The work of redemption will be complete. In the place where sin abounded, God's grace much more abounds. The earth itself, the very field that Satan claims as his, is to be not only ransomed but exalted. Our little world, under the curse of sin the one dark blot in His glorious creation, will be honored above all other worlds in the universe of God. Here, where the Son of God tabernacled in humanity; where the King of glory lived and suffered and died—here, when He shall make all things new, the tabernacle of God shall be with men, 'and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God.' " —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 26.

RETURN TO THE FOOD OF EDEN

6. As in Eden, what will grow abundantly in support of its inhabitants' life, health and joy?

REVELATION 22:2 *In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*

ISAIAH 65:21 *And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them.*

EZEKIEL 47:12 *And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine.*

“There the Eden life will be lived, the life in garden and field. ‘They shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of My people, and Mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.’ Isaiah 65:21, 22.” —*Education*, pp. 303, 304.

“In the earth made new the redeemed will engage in the occupations and pleasures that brought happiness to Adam and Eve in the beginning. The Eden life will be lived, the life in garden and field. ‘They shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat.’ —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 730.

REGULAR SEASONS FOR WORSHIP

7. What is the Lord’s promise concerning regular times for worship, praise, and supreme joy for those whom He redeemed?

ISAIAH 66:22, 23 *For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. ²³And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord.*

“I was shown that the law of God would stand fast forever, and exist in the new earth to all eternity. At the creation, when the foundations of the earth were laid, the sons of God looked with admiration upon the work of the Creator, and all the heavenly host shouted for joy. It was then that the foundation of the Sabbath was laid. At the close of the six days of creation, God rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made; and He blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because that in it He had rested from all His work. The Sabbath was instituted in Eden before the fall, and was observed by Adam and Eve, and all the heavenly host. God rested on the seventh day, and blessed and hallowed it. I saw that the Sabbath never will be done away; but that the redeemed saints, and all the angelic host, will observe it in honor of the great Creator to all eternity.” —*Early Writings*, p. 217.

INDESCRIBABLE BEAUTY AND WONDER

8. Is it possible to describe or even imagine how wonderful life on the new earth will be? Only who will be there?

1 CORINTHIANS 2:9 *But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.*

REVELATION 2:7 *To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.*

“A fear of making the future inheritance seem too material has led many to spiritualize away the very truths which lead us to look upon it as our home. Christ assured His disciples that He went to prepare mansions for them in the Father’s house. Those who accept the teachings of God’s word will not be wholly ignorant concerning the heavenly abode. And yet ‘eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.’ Human language is inadequate to describe the reward of the righteous. It will be known only to those who behold it. No finite mind can comprehend the glory of the Paradise of God.” —*My Life Today*, p. 354.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

Isaiah 65:25; Revelation 21:5-7

“Every trace of the curse is swept away....

“One reminder alone remains: our Redeemer will ever bear the marks of His crucifixion. Upon His wounded head, upon His side, His hands and feet, are the only traces of the cruel work that sin has wrought....

“The people of God are privileged to hold open communion with the Father and the Son. ‘Now we see through a glass, darkly.’ 1 Corinthians 13:12. We behold the image of God reflected, as in a mirror, in the works of nature and in His dealings with men; but then we shall see Him face to face, without a dimming veil between. We shall stand in His presence and behold the glory of His countenance.” —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 674, 676, 677.

“The Garden of Eden remained upon the earth long after man had become an outcast from its pleasant paths.... When the tide of iniquity overspread the world, and the wickedness of men determined their destruction by a flood of waters, the hand that had planted Eden withdrew it from the earth. But in the final restitution, when there shall be ‘a new heaven and a new earth’ (Revelation 21:1), it is to be restored more gloriously adorned than at the beginning.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 62.

“In the Bible the inheritance of the saved is called a country. There the heavenly Shepherd leads His flock to fountains of living waters. The tree of life yields its fruit every month, and the leaves of the tree are for the service of the nations. There are ever-flowing streams, clear as crystal, and beside them waving trees cast their shadows upon the paths prepared for the ransomed of the Lord.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 675.

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SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS

For the Second Quarter 2016

You Did It unto Me

INTRODUCTION

Speaking to a relative while seeking a solution to some problems, a patriarch said: "... We be brethren." Genesis 13:8. This is a very great truth. We have come into existence because God, the Father of us all, has given us the precious gift of life. At birth, we all receive the same spirit; this should be enough to convince us that we derive our existence from the same source and thus all belong to one family. Although the circumstances of life separate us from one other, although we live in different cities, countries, and continents, and although we come from different races—generally with few possibilities to meet and know each other—we are still brothers, for we have the same original parents, the same Father in heaven, and the same Redeemer.

The concept of brotherhood is present in the family, in the church, and in society. Typically the word "brothers" is used to indicate individuals who have the same parents. We also speak of brothers in the Spirit, since we share the same faith. But how differently we understand what it means to be brothers! How differently we deal with each other! And, many times, how little harmony exists within the walls of the family where we live together for many years! For various reasons, in some cases we forget about others, focus our time and interest on ourselves, and deal with others as if they were perfect strangers, rather than seeing them as brothers!

Serious problems developed with the very first brothers in this world. And ever since that time, many difficulties have arisen to threaten such relationships. Nevertheless this doesn't change the fundamental reality that we need to rediscover the deep meaning that "we are brethren"! The Lord had this in mind when He said, "... All ye are all brethren." Matthew 23:8. He knows that differences of character, interest, culture, education, and opinion make

it difficult to achieve understanding and harmony between individuals. For that very reason, He reaffirmed the second great commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," and concluded: "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Matthew 22:39, 40. Jesus' words are clear, and He gave an example of what He meant: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." John 13:34.

In the lessons for this quarter, it is our desire to rediscover the sacred value of brotherly love. With this goal in mind, we will consider the Bible's teaching, examples, and promises, keeping in mind that our credibility in the world depends not just on our faith, but also on our brotherly love. "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another." John 13:35. The Lord even clarified that whatever we do is not done simply to poor mortals but to Him: "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." Matthew 25:40.

Citing a Bible verse, the Spirit of prophecy emphasizes: "We are to remember that it is more blessed to give than to receive." —*The Adventist Home*, p. 474. This is true not only in financial matters but also in love, service, and ministry. How is this possible? The inspired answer is: "We are in this world to be a help and a blessing to one another, uniting with Christ in the effort to restore the image of God in man. In order to do this work, we must learn of Jesus. 'Take My yoke upon you,' He says, 'and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.' In this promise there are no 'ifs.' Those who have experience in wearing Christ's yoke of restraint and obedience know that it means to have rest and peace in Him. In obedience there is joy and consolation. Holy angels hover round about the obedient to keep them in paths of peace." —*Atlantic Union Gleaner*, September 9, 1903.

"Picture a large circle, from the edge of which are many lines all running to the center. The nearer these lines approach the center, the nearer they are to one another.

"Thus it is in the Christian life. The closer we come to Christ, the nearer we shall be to one another. God is glorified as His people unite in harmonious action." —*The Adventist Home*, p. 179.

As we study these lessons, let us come closer to Jesus, while we see the lessons not just as a doctrine to be understood and accepted but also as an experience to be made in our daily life. Then, one day, as promised, we will not only be greeted but also welcomed: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For ... as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." Matthew 25:34, 35, 40.

—*The brothers and sisters of the General Conference*

You Are Brothers

“Love of self, pride and self-sufficiency lie at the foundation of the greatest trials and discords that have ever existed in the religious world.... ‘Press together, press together, be of one mind, of one judgment.’ Christ is the Leader, and you are brethren; follow Him. Walk in the light as He is in the light. Those who walk in the footsteps of Christ shall not walk in darkness, but those who draw apart in unsanctified independence cannot have God’s presence and blessing in the work....” —*Christian Leadership*, p. 11.

COUNSEL TO THOSE IN CONFLICT

- 1. Although Moses had access to the kingly court and was recognized as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, whom did he regard as his brothers?**

ACTS 7:23 *And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel.*

EXODUS 2:11 *And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren.*

“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.’ Hebrews 11:24-26.... Yet with the world before him, he had the moral strength to refuse the flattering prospects of wealth and greatness and fame, ‘choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.’...

“He looked beyond the gorgeous palace, beyond a monarch’s crown, to the high honors that will be bestowed on the saints of the Most High in a kingdom untainted by sin. He saw by faith an imperishable crown that the King of heaven would place on the brow of the overcomer. This faith led him to turn away from the lordly ones of earth and join the humble, poor, despised nation that had chosen to obey God rather than to serve sin.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 245, 246.

- 2. What did he witness when he visited his brothers in slavery? What did he say to the one who was in the wrong? How earnestly did he speak to both men?**

EXODUS 2:13 *And when he went out the second day, behold, two men of the Hebrews strove together: and he said to him that did the wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow?*

ACTS 7:26 *And the next day he showed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?*

"Impressions alone are not a safe guide to duty. The enemy often persuades men to believe that it is God who is guiding them, when in reality they are following only human impulse. But if we watch carefully, and take counsel with our brethren, we shall be given an understanding of the Lord's will; for the promise is, 'The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way.' Psalm 25:9." —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 279.

3. What was his motive in speaking to them in this manner? What did he hope to accomplish in telling them, "Ye are brethren"? Do we understand brotherhood as Moses did?

ACTS 7:25 *For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not.*

EPHESIANS 4:31, 32 *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: ³²And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

"Moses supposed that his education in the wisdom of Egypt had fully qualified him to lead Israel from bondage.... He felt that he was able to deliver them. He first set about his work by trying to gain the favor of his own people by redressing their wrongs." —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 342.

WE ARE BROTHERS

4. When Lot and Abram's herdsmen got into conflict, what did Abram say to his nephew? What should not take place among brethren?

GENESIS 13:7, 8 *And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land. ⁸And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren.*

COLOSSIANS 3:12, 13 *Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; ¹³Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.*

"Here the noble, unselfish spirit of Abraham was displayed. How many under similar circumstances would, at all hazards, cling to their individual rights and preferences! How many households have thus been rent asunder! How many churches have been divided, making the cause of truth a byword and a reproach among the wicked! 'Let there be no strife between me and thee,' said Abraham, 'for we be brethren;' not only by natural relationship, but as worshipers of the true God. The children of God the world over are one family, and the same spirit of love and conciliation should govern them. 'Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another' (Romans 12:10), is the teaching of our Saviour. The cultivation of a uniform courtesy, a willingness to do to others as we would wish them to do to us, would annihilate half the ills of life. The spirit of self-aggrandizement is the spirit of Satan; but the heart in which the love of Christ is cherished, will possess that charity which seeketh not her own. Such will heed the divine injunction, 'Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.' Philipians 2:4." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 132, 133.

BRETHREN, ACCUSERS, AND FORGIVENESS

- 5. When challenged, how did the deacon Stephen appeal to his hearers, who become his accusers? What divine principle did Jesus give, showing how one should act under such circumstances?**

ACTS 7:2 *And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran.*

LUKE 6:28 *Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.*

“The Saviour of the world would have His co-laborers represent Him; and the more closely a man walks with God, the more faultless will be his manner of address, his deportment, his attitude, and his gestures. Coarse and uncouth manners were never seen in our Pattern, Christ Jesus. He was a representative of heaven, and His followers must be like Him.” —*Gospel Workers*, p. 91.

- 6. Even when they became so angry that they prepared to execute him, what were Stephen’s final words before his life ended? Who ended His life in the same way with words of forgiveness for His persecutors?**

ACTS 7:60 *And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*

LUKE 23:34 *Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.*

“The Son of God is Himself the great Intercessor in the sinner’s behalf. He who has paid the price for its redemption knows the worth of the human soul. With an antagonism to evil such as can exist only in a nature spotlessly pure, Christ manifested toward the sinner a love which infinite goodness alone could conceive. In the agonies of the crucifixion, Himself burdened with the awful weight of the sins of the whole world, He prayed for His revilers and murderers, ‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.’ Luke 23:34.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 140.

“Jesus is your best Friend. Live by daily faith on the Son of God. Let your course of action be such that God can approve. Then you will be a blessing to others.... Do not outgrow the simple faith and trust of your childhood. When sick, your first request was, ‘Father, Mother, pray that the Lord will heal me and forgive my sins.’ When prayer was offered in your behalf, you made your simple prayer and thanked the Lord He had heard and answered, and with perfect faith and confidence you said, ‘I shall get well. The Lord has blessed me.’ You slept in perfect peace, in confidence that holy angels would guard your bed.” —*This Day with God*, p. 310.

- 7. Should there be contention between brothers? If a problem arises, what should one remember? What spiritual lesson did the Lord give concerning the relationship between brothers?**

JAMES 3:14, 16 *But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth....¹⁶For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.*

1 CORINTHIANS 4:12, SECOND PART, 13 ... *Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: ¹³Being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.*

1 PETER 3:9 *Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.*

"I hope that as Christians you will be awake to your ever-increasing responsibilities, and be prepared to act the part of faithful stewards, both of means and of talents. Will you lay aside all selfish interests, and all sectional feelings, and manifest your missionary zeal to work for the best interest of the cause of God? Will you put away all strife in the matter, and show that we are all one in Christ Jesus? God help us as a people to see how imperfect is our service to Him. May He help you to feel that you are brethren." —*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 21, pp. 459, 460.

FOR REFLECTION

- *What have I learned from this lesson?*
- *For me, is the word "brother" just a name or title like any other?*
- *What does it mean to have brothers?*
- *Should rifts exist among brethren?*
- *If we appreciate another person as our neighbor or brother, how will we act toward him?*
- *Why did the Lord give examples of how one should treat his brother?*

HOW TO "DESTROY" ONE'S ENEMIES

The story is told of a Chinese emperor who, when told that there was an uprising in one of the provinces of his empire, said to his government ministers and military leaders: "Come. Follow me. I will soon destroy my enemies."

When the emperor and his troops arrived at the place where the rebels were, he treated them kindly; and out of gratitude, they submitted to him again. Everyone in the emperor's company thought he would order the immediate execution of those who had revolted against him, so they were greatly surprised to see him treat the rebels humanely and even lovingly. Seeing this, the emperor's prime minister asked angrily: "How does this fulfill your promise, your Excellency? You said we came to destroy your enemies, but you have forgiven them all and treated them fondly."

With a kindly attitude, the emperor replied: "I promised to destroy my enemies, and you see that no one is my enemy. I have made all of them my friends!"

How good it would be if we, as members of the family of Christ, would act with such a kind, forgiving spirit toward our fellow brothers and sisters in the Lord. —Adapted from *Expositor Bíblico*, quoted in A. Lerín, *500 Ilustraciones*, No. 10.

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Where Is Your Brother?

“Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over His household?” Can we answer? Am I the steward, faithful to the sacred trust which is committed to me? To every man is given an individual responsibility. The watchmen have their specific work to discern the approach of danger and sound the note of warning. The soldiers of the cross of Christ are to have ears keen to hear. In their position of responsibility they are to give the trumpet a certain sound, that everyone may gird on the armor for action.” —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 236.

1. What generated dark thoughts and anger in the mind and heart of Adam and Eve’s firstborn son?

GENESIS 4:3-5 *And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. ‘And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: ‘But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.*

“Cain thought himself righteous, and he came to God with a thank offering only. He made no confession of sin, and acknowledged no need of mercy. But Abel came with the blood that pointed to the Lamb of God. He came as a sinner, confessing himself lost; his only hope was the unmerited love of God. The Lord had respect to his offering, but to Cain and his offering He had not respect. The sense of need, the recognition of our poverty and sin, is the very first condition of acceptance with God. ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’ Matthew 5:3.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 152.

2. What did the Lord do to help him come to reason? What kinds of thoughts open the door to Satan? What will happen to a person who permits satanic suggestions to enter and occupy his mind?

GENESIS 4:6, 7 *And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? ‘If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.*

JAMES 1:14, 15 *But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. ‘Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.*

“Christianity has a much broader meaning than many have hitherto given it. It is not a creed. It is the word of Him who liveth and abideth forever. It is a living, animating principle, that takes possession of mind, heart, motives, and the entire man. Christianity—oh, that we might experience its operations! It is a vital, personal experience, that elevates and ennobles the whole man. Every man is responsible to God, who has made provision for all to receive this blessing. But many do

not receive it, although Christ has purchased it for them at infinite cost. They have not grasped the blessing within their reach, and therefore they have retained their objectionable traits of character, and sin lieth at the door. While they profess piety, Satan has made them his agents to pull down and confuse where he thought best. They exert an influence deleterious to the souls of many who need an example that would help them heavenward.” —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, pp. 421, 422.

3. Was God’s counsel to Cain accepted and followed? What terrible action followed the tolerance and cultivation of sinful, hateful feelings toward his brother Abel?

GENESIS 4:8 *And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.*

1 JOHN 2:11 *But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.*

“The death of Abel was in consequence of Cain’s refusing to accept God’s plan in the school of obedience, to be saved by the blood of Jesus Christ, typified by the sacrificial offerings pointing to Christ. Cain refused the shedding of blood, which symbolized the blood of Christ to be shed for the world. This whole ceremony was prepared by God, and Christ became the foundation of the whole system. This is the beginning of its work as the schoolmaster to bring sinful human agents to a consideration of Christ.” —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1109.

WHERE IS YOUR BROTHER?

4. What question did the Lord ask the man who, following his fury, had reached the point of committing such a grave crime? What was God’s reason for asking this question?

GENESIS 4:9, FIRST PART *And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother?*

JOB 13:23, LAST PART ... *How many are mine iniquities and sins? make me to know my transgression and my sin.*

ROMANS 2:4 *Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?*

“Cain the murderer was soon called to answer for his crime. ‘The Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother’s keeper?’ Cain had gone so far in sin that he had lost a sense of the continual presence of God and of His greatness and omniscience. So he resorted to falsehood to conceal his guilt.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 77.

“There is a work to be done for the wealthy. They need to be awakened to their responsibility as those entrusted with the gifts of heaven. They need to be reminded that they must give an account to Him who shall judge the living and the dead. The wealthy man needs your labor in the love and fear of God. Too often he trusts in his riches, and feels not his danger. The eyes of his mind need to be attracted to things of enduring value. He needs to recognize the authority of true goodness, which says, ‘Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and

lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls; for My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.' Matthew 11:28-30." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 230.

WHERE ARE OUR BRETHREN?

5. What did the Lord say to make Cain—and all of us as well—sensitive to the value of and respect owed to our brother?

GENESIS 4:10 *And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.*

PSALM 40:12; 19:12 *For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me.... ^{19:12}Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults.*

"God had given Cain an opportunity to confess his sin. He had had time to reflect. He knew the enormity of the deed he had done, and of the falsehood he had uttered to conceal it; but he was rebellious still, and sentence was no longer deferred." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 77.

"In that day the Master will demand of His professed people, 'What have you done to save the souls of your neighbors? There were many who were connected with you in worldly business, who lived close beside you, whom you might have warned. Why are they among the unsaved?'

"Brethren and sisters, what excuse can you render to God for this neglect of souls? I would present this matter to you as it has been presented to me; and in the light from the life of the Master, from the cross of Calvary, I urge you to arouse. I entreat you to take upon your own hearts the burden of your fellowmen." —*Review and Herald*, May 22, 1888.

6. What will the Lord say to all who knew and helped their brethren?

MATTHEW 25:34-40 *Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ³⁵For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: ³⁶Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. ³⁷Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? ³⁸When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? ³⁹Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? ⁴⁰And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*

"In that day Christ does not present before men the great work He has done for them in giving His life for their redemption. He presents the faithful work they have done for Him.... But those whom Christ commends know not that they have been ministering unto Him. To their perplexed inquiries He answers, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.' ...

"But not to any class is Christ's love restricted. He identifies Himself with every child of humanity. That we might become members of the heavenly family, He became a member of the earthly family. He is the Son of man, and thus a brother to every son and daughter of Adam. His followers are not to feel themselves de-

tached from the perishing world around them. They are a part of the great web of humanity; and Heaven looks upon them as brothers to sinners as well as to saints. The fallen, the erring, and the sinful, Christ's love embraces; and every deed of kindness done to uplift a fallen soul, every act of mercy, is accepted as done to Him." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 637, 638.

7. What was Jesus' mission in coming to live among men? Where did He say He wants to take His disciples? Do we have the same desire for others' salvation from sin and death as He does?

MATTHEW 18:11 *For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.*

LUKE 19:10 *For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*

JOHN 14:3 *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

"The wisdom of God, His power and His love, are without a parallel. It is the divine guarantee that not one, even, of the straying sheep and lambs is overlooked and not one left unsuccored. A golden chain—the mercy and compassion of divine power—is passed around everyone of these imperiled souls. Then shall not the human agent cooperate with God? Shall he be sinful, failing, defective in character himself, regardless of the soul ready to perish? Christ has linked him to His eternal throne by offering His own life." —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 274.

FOR REFLECTION

"Our life is worse than a failure if we go through life without leaving waymarks of love and compassion. God will not work with a harsh, stubborn, loveless man. Such a man spoils the pattern that Christ desires His workers to reveal to the world. God's workers, in whatever line of service they are engaged, are to bring into their efforts the goodness and benevolence and love of Christ." —*Evangelism*, p. 629.

Imagine the Lord meeting you today and asking:

- ***Where is your brother? Your sister? Your wife or husband?***
- ***What have you done for them? Do they have a place in your life and heart?***
- ***Do you feel responsible for them? Have you been a light and help to them?***

BY HELPING OTHERS WE HELP OURSELVES

One day a young man named Eddie, who had become tired of life, decided to end his life by jumping from a bridge into a turbulent river. Jim, a total stranger, saw Eddie being swept downstream and plunged into the water in an effort to save him. Eddie, a good swimmer, noticed the man floundering desperately in the strong current and knew that without his help he would drown. Something stirred within him. With all of his strength, Eddie swam over to the man and rescued him. Saving that stranger, who had attempted to save him, brought new hope and meaning to Eddie's life.

Let us be aware and convinced of this—by helping others we will help ourselves. Let us not lose even one opportunity to practice God's love, and we will be the first to be blessed. —Adapted from T. Huffman Harris, *Open the Door Wide to Happy Living* and from *Apibs* web page.

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Am I My Brother's Keeper?

"It is not pleasing to God to see man looking only upon his own things, closing his eyes to the interests of others." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 137.

"By helping others they increase their own happiness and usefulness." —*The Adventist Home*, p. 485.

"It is in a life of service only that true happiness is found." —*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 272.

WHERE ARE THE OTHERS?

1. How did Cain answer the Lord's question as to where his brother was? Is this an uncommon thought, or is it a typical response? What does the Lord say of those who are unwilling to care for others?

GENESIS 4:9 *And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?*

PSALM 10:13, 14 *Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? he hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it. ¹⁴Thou hast seen it: for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand: the poor committeth himself unto thee; thou art the helper of the fatherless.*

JAMES 4:17 *Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.*

"They [some church members] do not seem to know or care whether such are saved or lost. That, they think, is not their business. With Cain they say: 'Am I my brother's keeper?' " —*The Adventist Home*, p. 168.

"At our very doors, all about us, on every side, there are souls to be saved, souls perishing—men and women dying without hope, without God—and yet we feel unconcerned, virtually saying by our actions, if not by our words, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' " —(*Review and Herald*, August 14, 1888) *Christian Service*, p. 93.

2. Should we care only about ourselves, or is it our duty and privilege to be our brother's keeper?

PHILIPPIANS 2:4 *Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*

ROMANS 15:1 *We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.*

EZEKIEL 34:6 *My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.*

"Brethren and sisters in the faith, does the question arise in your hearts, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' If you claim to be children of God, you are your brother's keeper. The Lord holds the church responsible for the souls of those whom they might be the means of saving. (*Historical Sketches*, p. 291)....

"These men who lost their lives in trying to save others are eulogized by the world as heroes and martyrs. How should we who have the prospect of eternal life before us feel, if we do not make the little sacrifices that God requires of us, for the salvation of the souls of men?" —(*Review and Herald*, August 14, 1888) *Christian Service*, pp. 13, 93, 94.

IMPLICATIONS OF BROTHERHOOD

3. Although we are of different races, nations, tongues, and cultures, what is said about humankind? Therefore, what are we all by creation?

ACTS 17:26 *And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.*

MALACHI 2:10 *Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?*

ACTS 7:26 *And the next day he showed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?*

"No distinction on account of nationality, race, or caste, is recognized by God. He is the Maker of all mankind. All men are of one family by creation, and all are one through redemption. Christ came to demolish every wall of partition, to throw open every compartment of the temple, that every soul may have free access to God. His love is so broad, so deep, so full, that it penetrates everywhere. It lifts out of Satan's circle the poor souls who have been deluded by his deceptions. It places them within reach of the throne of God, the throne encircled by the rainbow of promise.

"In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free. All are brought nigh by His precious blood. Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:13.

"Whatever the difference in religious belief, a call from suffering humanity must be heard and answered. Where bitterness of feeling exists because of difference in religion, much good may be done by personal service. Loving ministry will break down prejudice, and win souls to God." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 386.

4. What broad implications are contained in this great truth? What does it mean to be one's brother's keeper in the first place?

COLOSSIANS 3:14 *And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.*

GALATIANS 5:14 *For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

"He who has the love of God shed abroad in his heart, will reflect the purity and love which exist in Jehovah, and which Christ represented in our world. He who has the love of God in his heart has no enmity against the law of God, but renders willing obedience to all His commandments, and this constitutes Christianity.

He who has supreme love to God will reveal love to his fellow men, who belong to God both by creation and redemption. Love is the fulfilling of the law; and it is the duty of every child of God to render obedience to His commandments....” —*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 51.

LOVE AND THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

5. If our hearts are truly full of love for our brethren, what will be the first evidence?

PHILIPPIANS 1:14, 17 *And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear....¹⁷ But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.*

“God is calling for men who are willing to leave their farms, their business, if need be their families, to become missionaries for Him. And the call will be answered. In the past there have been men who, stirred by the love of Christ and the needs of the lost, have left the comforts of home and the society of friends, even that of wife and children, to go into foreign lands, among idolaters and savages, to proclaim the message of mercy. Many in the attempt have lost their lives, but others have been raised up to carry on the work. Thus step by step the cause of Christ has progressed, and the seed sown in sorrow has yielded a bountiful harvest. The knowledge of God has been widely extended and the banner of the cross planted in heathen lands....

“Paul’s heart burned with a love for sinners, and he put all his energies into the work of soul winning. There never lived a more self-denying, persevering worker. The blessings he received he prized as so many advantages to be used in blessing others. He lost no opportunity of speaking of the Saviour or of helping those in trouble. From place to place he went, preaching the gospel of Christ and establishing churches. Wherever he could find a hearing, he sought to counteract wrong, and to turn the feet of men and women into the path of righteousness.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 370, 367.

6. When we see our neighbor truly as a brother, what will we be willing to do?

TITUS 3:8 *This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.*

GALATIANS 6:10 *As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*

1 JOHN 3:17 *But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?*

“We are commanded to ‘do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.’ Galatians 6:10. In our benevolent work special help should be given to those who, through the presentation of the truth, are convicted and converted. We must have a care for those who have the moral courage to accept the truth, who lose their situations in consequence, and are refused work by which to support their families. Provision should be made to aid the worthy poor and to furnish employment for those who love God and keep His commandments.

They should not be left without help, to feel that they are forced to work on the Sabbath or starve.... It is of this class especially that the Lord speaks when He says: 'Bring the poor that are cast out to thy house.' Isaiah 58:7." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 85.

7. May we neglect or delay carrying out this holy principle? What is promised to all who love their brothers?

JAMES 2:15, 16 *If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, ¹⁶And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?*

MATTHEW 25:41, 45 *Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.... ⁴⁵Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.*

ACTS 20:35 *I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.*

"Any neglect on the part of those who claim to be followers of Christ, a failure to relieve the necessities of a brother or a sister who is bearing the yoke of poverty and oppression, is registered in the books of heaven as shown to Christ in the person of His saints. What a reckoning the Lord will have with many, very many, who present the words of Christ to others but fail to manifest tender sympathy and regard for a brother in the faith who is less fortunate and successful than themselves...." —*Welfare Ministry*, p. 210.

"It is in a life of service only that true happiness is found. He who lives a useless, selfish life is miserable. He is dissatisfied with himself and with everyone else." —*In Heavenly Places*, p. 229.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

1 Corinthians 10:24

Matthew 25:42-44

Isaiah 58:10-12; 20:35

"Happiness that is sought from selfish motives, outside of the path of duty, is ill balanced, fitful, and transitory; it passes away, and the soul is filled with loneliness and sorrow; but there is joy and satisfaction in the service of God." —*Steps to Christ*, pp. 124, 125 (1892); *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 644.

"But remember that happiness will not be found in shutting yourselves up to yourselves.... Seize upon every opportunity for contributing to the happiness of those around you. Remember that true joy can be found only in unselfish service." —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 362.

WINNING SOULS

I met a Christian merchant who was visited by a broker who sold items from a catalog. One day the merchant said to himself, I have dealt with this broker for nine or ten years now, and we have met almost every day. He has brought me his merchandise, and I have paid for it; but I have never tried to do something good for him.

This is not correct. Providence has placed him in my way, and I must at least ask if he loves Jesus.

Now, the next time the broker came, this good brother did not feel and believe it appropriate to start a religious conversation. The broker never returned. His son delivered the products. “What happened?” asked the merchant.

“Daddy died,” the boy replied.

That merchant, a close friend of mine, told me a little later: “I could never forgive myself. That day I could not stay at work. I felt responsible for the blood of that man. I had no thought of that before. How I can get rid of the guilt when I remember that my foolish shyness shut my mouth?”

Dear friends, we are responsible for our brothers, for their lives, for their future, for their salvation. Do not bring terrible remorse on yourself but speak and help them, give them the message; and it will be a blessing also for you. —Adapted from C.H. Spurgeon, quoted in A. Lerín, *500 Ilustraciones*, No. 485.

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Sabbath, April 23, 2016

Looking for His Brothers

“Jacob’s sons were shepherds, and fed their flocks where they could find the best pastures. In traveling from place to place with their cattle, they often wandered quite a distance from their father’s house, so that they did not see their father for several months at a time. In his anxiety for them, he sent Joseph to see if they were all well. With the true interest of a brother, Joseph searched for his brethren, where his father supposed he would find them, but they were not there. A certain man found him wandering in the field in search of his brethren, and directed him to Dothan. This was a long journey for Joseph. But he cheerfully performed it, because he loved his brethren, and also wished to relieve the anxiety of his father.” —*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, pp. 139, 140.

DIFFICULTIES AMONG BROTHERS

1. What was Joseph’s responsibility in his parents’ home? What is related about him and the behavior of his brothers?

GENESIS 37:2 *These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father’s wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.*

“... Joseph, whose rare personal beauty seemed but to reflect an inward beauty of mind and heart. Pure, active, and joyous, the lad gave evidence also of moral earnestness and firmness. He listened to his father’s instructions, and loved to obey God. The qualities that afterward distinguished him in Egypt—gentleness, fidelity, and truthfulness—were already manifest in his daily life. His mother being

dead, his affections clung the more closely to the father, and Jacob's heart was bound up in this child of his old age." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 209.

2. What is known about the brothers' relationship with Joseph? Can we say that the latter was to blame for this situation?

GENESIS 37:3, 4 *Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours. ⁴And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.*

"But even this affection was to become a cause of trouble and sorrow. Jacob unwisely manifested his preference for Joseph, and this excited the jealousy of his other sons. As Joseph witnessed the evil conduct of his brothers, he was greatly troubled; he ventured gently to remonstrate with them, but only aroused still further their hatred and resentment. He could not endure to see them sinning against God, and he laid the matter before his father, hoping that his authority might lead them to reform." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 209.

DIVINE DREAMS AND THEIR MEANING

3. Did Joseph's brothers have a good understanding of the dream that he told them? What feelings did they have toward him? How did the situation become even worse after the second dream?

GENESIS 37:5-11 *And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more. ⁶And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: ⁷For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf. ⁸And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words. ⁹And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me. ¹⁰And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth? ¹¹And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying.*

ACTS 7:9, FIRST PART *And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt:...*

"Their malice was still further increased as the boy one day told them of a dream that he had had....

"Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us?" exclaimed his brothers in envious anger.

"Soon he had another dream, of similar import, which he also related: 'Behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.' This dream was interpreted as readily as the first. The father, who was present, spoke reprovingly—'What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?' Notwithstanding the apparent severity of his words, Jacob believed that the Lord was revealing the future to Joseph." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 209, 210.

A LONG SEARCH FOR HIS BROTHERS

- 4. Although he had to travel alone for a very long distance, was Joseph willing to obey his father's instructions to go and see how his brothers were doing? Knowing his brothers' feelings, did he object to carrying out his father's desire?**

GENESIS 37:13, 14 *And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here am I. ¹⁴And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.*

"With a joyful heart, Joseph parted from his father, neither the aged man nor the youth dreaming of what would happen before they should meet again. When, after his long and solitary journey, Joseph arrived at Shechem, his brothers and their flocks were not to be found." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 210.

- 5. After walking at least fifty miles from the valley of Hebron to Shechem, did he find his brothers where he expected? As he was tired and wandering in the fields without result, what did a man ask him? What was his affectionate answer?**

GENESIS 37:15, 16 *And a certain man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field: and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou? ¹⁶And he said, I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks.*

"Upon inquiring for them, he was directed to Dothan. He had already traveled more than fifty miles, and now an additional distance of fifteen lay before him, but he hastened on, forgetting his weariness in the thought of relieving the anxiety of his father, and meeting the brothers, whom, despite their unkindness, he still loved." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 210.

- 6. Was he willing to go even further to find them in Dothan, or did he abandon the search? After such a long walk and his great joy at finding them, how was he received by his brothers?**

GENESIS 37:17, 18 *And the man said, They are departed hence; for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan. ¹⁸And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him.*

"His brothers saw him approaching; but no thought of the long journey he had made to meet them, of his weariness and hunger, of his claims upon their hospitality and brotherly love, softened the bitterness of their hatred. The sight of the coat, the token of their father's love, filled them with frenzy. 'Behold, this dreamer cometh,' they cried in mockery. Envy and revenge, long secretly cherished, now controlled them." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 210, 211.

AN EXAMPLE WORTHY OF IMITATION

7. Similarly, who took a very dangerous journey to look for His brothers, knowing full well how He would be received? If we appreciate the character and searching love of Joseph and Jesus, what should we do in like manner?

LUKE 19:10; 15:4-7 *For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost....^{15:4}What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?⁵And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.⁶And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.⁷I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.*

“Joseph illustrates Christ. Jesus came to His own, but His own received Him not. He was rejected and despised, because His acts were righteous, and His consistent, self-denying life was a continual rebuke upon those who professed piety, but whose lives were corrupt. Joseph’s integrity and virtue were fiercely assailed, and she who would lead him astray could not prevail, therefore her hatred was strong against the virtue and integrity which she could not corrupt, and she testified falsely against him. The innocent suffered because of his righteousness. He was cast into prison because of his virtue. Joseph was sold to his enemies by his own brethren for a small sum of money. The Son of God was sold to His bitterest enemies by one of His own disciples.” —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1096.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Ezekiel 34:11, 12

Isaiah 40:11

Jeremiah 23:3

Spiritual Gifts, vol. 3, pp. 138, 139

“But Joseph was faithful to God, and his fidelity was a constant testimony to the true faith. It was to quench this light that Satan worked through the envy of Joseph’s brothers to cause him to be sold as a slave in a heathen land. God overruled events, however, so that the knowledge of Himself should be given to the people of Egypt.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 332.

DID I DO MY BEST?

One morning, word came that a steamer was in distress on the lake. Students from the Bible college hurried down to the shore. There they saw the “Lady Elgin” not only in distress, but breaking to pieces under the power of the storm. Men and women were in danger of being lost. Among the rescue crew were two brothers from Iowa. One of them stripped off all his extra clothing, swam to the ship and brought one passenger to the shore. He went again and brought another, and then another, and another until there were eight or nine people standing on the shore of Lake Michigan whom he had rescued. He was severely affected by the cold.

As he stood there trembling in front of a log fire that had been kindled, he looked out over the lake and saw another man in peril. He said, "I must go again."

The people gathered around him, saying, "It does not mean rescue for him for you to go; it means loss of life to you." But he broke through the crowd and plunged once more into the icy waters and brought a tenth, an eleventh, and a twelfth to shore. With serious risk to himself and a sincere interest for others' lives, this was repeated until 17 people were rescued from death.

Later, as he stood exhausted in his room, he was still asking himself: Did I do my best? I am afraid I did not! He was thinking about those who were lost. Do we feel the same interest for others? Are we like Jesus and this young man—looking for our brother, longing for his salvation? Let us become conscious of the help that people need and that we are called to give. —Adapted from G.B. Thompson, *Soul Winning*, pp. 7-9.

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***Please read the Missionary Report from
The Good Samaritan Department on page 88***

5

Sabbath, April 30, 2016

Two Noble Widows

"The family tie is the closest, the most tender and sacred, of any on earth. It was designed to be a blessing to mankind. And it is a blessing wherever the marriage covenant is entered into intelligently, in the fear of God, and with due consideration for its responsibilities." —*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 356, 357.

BEHIND THE LIFE STORY

1. What emergency caused Elimelech to move his family to Moab? Ten years later, having lost her husband and sons in death, what did his widow, Naomi, decide to do when she heard that the Lord had again given good harvests to His people?

RUTH 1:1, 2, 6 Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehemjudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. ²And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehemjudah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there.... ⁶Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread.

"The people of God will not be free from suffering.... While they endure privation and suffer for want of food, they will not be left to perish. That God who cared for Elijah will not pass by one of His self-sacrificing children. He who numbers the hairs of their head will care for them, and in time of famine they shall be satisfied.

While the wicked are dying from hunger and pestilence, angels will shield the righteous and supply their wants. To him that 'walketh righteously' is the promise: 'Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.' Isaiah 33:15, 16. 'When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.' Chapter 41:17." —*Reflecting Christ*, p. 372.

2. After she began the homeward journey with her daughters-in-law, what counsel did Naomi give them? Describe the emotional farewell.

RUTH 1:8, 9 *And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother's house: the Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. ⁹The Lord grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept.*

"I saw that it is in the providence of God that widows and orphans, the blind, the deaf, the lame, and persons afflicted in a variety of ways, have been placed in close Christian relationship to His church; it is to prove His people and develop their true character. Angels of God are watching to see how we treat these persons who need our sympathy, love, and disinterested benevolence. This is God's test of our character. If we have the true religion of the Bible, we shall feel that a debt of love, kindness, and interest is due to Christ in behalf of His brethren; and we can do no less than to show our gratitude for His immeasurable love to us while we were sinners unworthy of His grace, by having a deep interest and unselfish love for those who are our brethren and who are less fortunate than ourselves." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 511.

DIFFERENT DECISIONS

3. Were the two young widows willing to go back to their families? How did Naomi try to convince them to change their minds about accompanying her? Who accepted her suggestion?

RUTH 1:10-14, FIRST PART *And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people. ¹¹And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? ¹²Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, if I should have an husband also to night, and should also bear sons; ¹³Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me. ¹⁴And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law;...*

"Every member of the family should realize that a responsibility rests upon him individually to do his part in adding to the comfort, order, and regularity of the family. One should not work against another. All should unitedly engage in the good work of encouraging one another; they should exercise gentleness, forbearance, and patience; speak in low, calm tones, shunning confusion; and each doing his utmost to lighten the burdens of the mother....

"The family firm is a sacred, social society, in which each member is to act a part, each helping the other. The work of the household is to move smoothly, like the different parts of well-regulated machinery." —*The Adventist Home*, p. 179.

4. In contrast to Orpah, what was Ruth's answer and firm decision? Do you know of another daughter-in-law with such great love and affection for her mother-in-law?

RUTH 1:14, LAST PART-16, FIRST PART ... *But Ruth clave unto her.* ¹⁵*And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law.* ¹⁶*And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge:...*

"In ancient times, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses with his meekness and wisdom, and Joshua with his varied capabilities, were all enlisted in God's service. The music of Miriam, the courage and piety of Deborah, the filial affection of Ruth, the obedience and faithfulness of Samuel, the stern fidelity of Elijah, the softening, subduing influence of Elisha—all were needed. So now all upon whom God's blessing has been bestowed are to respond by actual service; every gift is to be employed for the advancement of His kingdom and the glory of His name." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 301.

FAITH AND DECISION

5. Was Ruth's decision based only on kindness and love for her mother-in-law, or was it much more? What shows that she had experienced a conversion through faith in the true God? What city did the two widows reach together?

RUTH 1:16-18, 22 *And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:* ¹⁷*Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.* ¹⁸*When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her....* ²²*So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter in law, with her, which returned out of the country of Moab: and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest.*

"All who, like Rahab the Canaanite, and Ruth the Moabitess, turned from idolatry to the worship of the true God, were to unite themselves with His chosen people. As the numbers of Israel increased, they were to enlarge their borders, until their kingdom should embrace the world." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 290.

"The redeemed will meet and recognize those whose attention they have directed to the uplifted Saviour. What blessed converse they have with these souls! 'I was a sinner,' it will be said, 'without God and without hope in the world, and you came to me and drew my attention to the precious Saviour as my only hope.' ... Others will say, 'I was a heathen in heathen lands. You left your friends and comfortable home and came to teach me how to find Jesus and believe in Him as the only true God. I demolished my idols and worshiped God, and now I see Him face to face. I am saved, eternally saved, ever to behold Him whom I love....' " —*My Life Today*, p. 353.

- 6. What hard life did Ruth find in Bethlehem? What did she do to obtain food for herself and her mother-in-law? In the meantime, what become known among Naomi's relatives?**

RUTH 2:2, 3, 11, 12 *And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. ³And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech.... ¹¹And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. ¹²The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.*

"A good character is a capital of more value than gold or silver. It is unaffected by panics or failures, and in that day when earthly possessions shall be swept away, it will bring rich returns. Integrity, firmness, and perseverance are qualities that all should seek earnestly to cultivate; for they clothe the possessor with a power which is irresistible—a power which makes him strong to do good, strong to resist evil, strong to bear adversity." —*Child Guidance*, p. 161.

"The spirit of unselfish labor for others gives depth, stability, and Christlike loveliness to the character and brings peace and happiness to its possessor. The aspirations are elevated. There is no room for sloth or selfishness. Those who exercise the Christian graces will grow. They will have spiritual sinew and muscle, and will be strong to work for God. They will have clear spiritual perceptions, a steady, increasing faith, and prevailing power in prayer." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 607.

- 7. What wonderful plan did the Lord have for this faithful young woman? Who were some of her noble descendants? Would you like to have the same kindness and faith as Ruth?**

RUTH 4:11-13, 17 *And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, We are witnesses. The Lord make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Bethlehem: ¹²And let thy house be like the house of Pharez, whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which the Lord shall give thee of this young woman. ¹³So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bare a son.... ¹⁷And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David.*

MATTHEW 1:5, 6, FIRST PART *And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; ⁶And Jesse begat David the king;...*

"By faith we are to appropriate the promises of God, and to provide ourselves with the abundant blessings which have been secured for us through Christ Jesus. Hope has been set before us, even the hope of eternal life. Nothing short of this blessing for us will satisfy our Redeemer; but it is our part to lay hold upon this hope by faith in Him who has promised. We may expect to suffer; for it is those

who are partakers with Him in His sufferings, who shall be partakers with Him in His glory. He has purchased forgiveness and immortality for the sinful, perishing souls of men; but it is our part to receive these gifts by faith. Believing in Him, we have this hope as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast.” —*Review and Herald*, June 9, 1896.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Proverbs 12:4; 17:17; 18:24

“Those who accept Christ as their personal Saviour are not left as orphans, to bear the trials of life alone. He receives them as members of the heavenly family; He bids them call His Father their Father. They are His ‘little ones,’ dear to the heart of God, bound to Him by the most tender and abiding ties. He has toward them an exceeding tenderness, as far surpassing what our father or mother has felt toward us in our helplessness as the divine is above the human.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 327.

FOR REFLECTION

- *After having lost their husbands, did Naomi or Ruth show any trace of bitterness?*
- *What foundational choice did Ruth make in choosing to go with her mother-in-law?*
- *Where do you see the hand of God in these two women’s lives?*
- *Did the Lord supply Ruth’s need?*
- *In Canaan did the Lord provide only her daily food?*
- *What made Ruth such a noble person?*
- *Do you wish to have the same wonderful connection with the church as Ruth had with her mother-in-law?*
- *On what does that depend?*

WHEN CAN WE SAY THAT WE LOVE OTHERS?

How easily we love—from a distance! We consider the heroes of faith and all our acquaintances such wonderful people. The Lord should shut us up in Noah’s ark with our relatives and acquaintances; a few days would be quite sufficient. Then we would know not just the Sabbath morning faces of our friends but also their less favorable sides, which they always try to hide as much as we do. Only then, if we still “love” them, will we really use this word correctly.

Both things are fatal—to surround oneself with a false halo, or to look at others through rose-colored glasses. Someone has said: “When, in people to whom we look up too much, we see things that contribute to our disillusionment with them, that is God’s mercy, because we should not look to people but solely to Jesus.”

Ruth and Naomi lived together for not just a few days but for years (Ruth 1:4); with the Lord’s help, they passed this test. How many mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law have achieved such wonderful harmony? How many brothers and sisters in the church love each other so much? Looking to Jesus, we may be completely transformed and be able to develop love, even under difficult circumstances, as was the case with them. —Adapted from Paul Dietenbeck, quoted in H. Schäfer, *In Bilder reden* (Speaking in Pictures), p. 256.

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MISSIONARY REPORT

from The Good Samaritan Department

To be read on April 30, 2016

*The Special Sabbath School Offering will be gathered
on Sabbath, May 7, 2016*

Dear brothers and sisters in the whole world,
Greetings with Isaiah 58:6-8: "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? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward." Isaiah 58:6-8.

It is now more than twenty years that the Good Samaritan Department has been working tirelessly to relieve the suffering of those who face particularly difficult situations—children, orphans, widows, and the elderly.

Disparity between rich and poor is a sad reality in every nation of this planet. As strange as it may seem, where one finds the poorest people is also where the richest are found. This is often the result of exploitation of the underprivileged classes by those in power.

Summarizing the situation that characterizes the world all through the centuries, Jesus said, "For ye have the poor always with you; but Me ye have not always." Matthew 26:11. The fulfillment of Jesus' words is a tangible reality. Today, even in "economically advanced" countries, there are poor people who are not able to satisfy all their needs.

Over the past ten years, the General Conference has invested a lot of effort to enter new countries with the eternal gospel. More than thirty countries have been reached with the heavenly message of hope. Most of the people in these countries live with incomes that are under the poverty line, with the consequence that the number of requests for help from the Good Samaritan Department is increasing every day.

In the news, we hear of huge waves of migrants coming from poor countries to richer ones with a dream that often vanishes like a soap bubble. Considering the poverty these people represent, we can be overwhelmed by a sense of helplessness; however, the Spirit of prophecy encourages us: "As we see the necessities of the poor, the ignorant, the afflicted, how often our hearts sink. We question, 'What avail our feeble strength and slender resources to supply this terrible necessity? Shall we not wait for someone of greater ability to direct the work, or for some organization to undertake it?' Christ

says, 'Give ye them to eat.' Use the means, the time, the ability, you have. Bring your barley loaves to Jesus.

"Though your resources may not be sufficient to feed thousands, they may suffice to feed one. In the hand of Christ they may feed many. Like the disciples, give what you have. Christ will multiply the gift. He will reward honest, simple reliance upon Him. That which seemed but a meager supply will prove to be a rich feast.

" 'He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth with blessings *shall reap also with blessings....*' – *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 49, 50 (italics added).

Surely we cannot eliminate poverty from our planet, but we can relieve the suffering of some with this multiplying effect. With five loaves and two fish, thousands of people were nourished, thanks to Christ's blessing. Today the same miracle can happen again. Let us put the little bread that we can at the disposal of those in need, and tomorrow we will realize how many received nourishment from our small humanitarian deed.

Many times God's word teaches us that small everyday deeds can bring great blessings; remember the widow of Zarephath and the poor widow's two mites, to mention a few examples of generosity blessed by our heavenly Father. In every church, no matter how small it may be, we always find a weak brother who needs the help of a stronger brother and those who will deny themselves to help their neighbor.

Self-denial is the key word. What am I willing to give up for my Lord? If I follow my selfish heart, I will not be able to give up anything; if I concentrate on my own real or supposed needs, I will continue to look for new ways to acquire things every day—that something extra that will gratify me.

Our Lord is our great example, including of self-denial. "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But *made Himself of no reputation*, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Philippians 2:6-8 (italics added).

The Son of God gave up heaven and His very life to give to all of us the possibility of redemption. What are we willing to give up to offer something to our neighbors? The offering pleasing to God is that which proceeds from denying ourselves. The monetary value is irrelevant to our heavenly Father; what is most important is the heartfelt motive of the gesture. We are called to give to others not only that which is ours, but also that which we actually need.

Every one of us has his or her own list of priorities to satisfy. If we compare them, we will see differences that make us think and that will even give us the strength to give up something we may cling to.

I need new clothes, and the sales are on! Am I able to deny myself of that garment to offer it to someone who has a greater need than I? At this

moment, this is what we are asking of you—a deed of self-denial to help a brother, a friend, a stranger who, from thousands of miles away, is pleading for your help.

Recently several countries were struck by natural disasters, and many of our brothers and sisters lost everything but their lives. Offerings were collected and sent, but there are still needs, so, in the interest of those who were affected as well as many others who are suffering and needy, we feel moved to appeal to you to join us in helping them. On the occasion of this special offering for the Good Samaritan Department, let us show our strength and courage through a deed of self-denial!

“Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth:...” “He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will He pay him again.” Psalm 41:1, 2; Proverbs 19:17.

In the name of the Department, from the Good Samaritan team, and from all who have been given help, we thank you in anticipation of your offering and your self-denying deed!

Your brother and fellow servant in the Lord,

—Stefano La Corte

General Conference Good Samaritan Department Leader

Special Sabbath School Offering for
THE GOOD SAMARITAN DEPARTMENT

May the Lord of mercy and all bounties bless all who give and all who receive!

6

Sabbath, May 7, 2016

True Friendship

“Jonathan, by birth heir to the throne, yet knowing himself set aside by the divine decree; to his rival the most tender and faithful of friends, shielding David’s life at the peril of his own; steadfast at his father’s side through the dark days of his declining power, and at his side falling at the last—the name of Jonathan is treasured in heaven, and it stands on earth a witness to the existence and the power of unselfish love.”
—*Education*, p. 157.

DAVID AND JONATHAN’S FRIENDSHIP

- 1. After David’s victory over Goliath and his conversation with King Saul, what relationship was formed between Prince Jonathan and David? How far did their friendship extend?**

1 SAMUEL 18:1, 3 *And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul....³ Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.*

“After the slaying of Goliath, Saul kept David with him, and would not permit him to return to his father’s house. And it came to pass that ‘the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.’ Jonathan and David made a covenant to be united as brethren, and the king’s son ‘stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.’ David was entrusted with important responsibilities, yet he preserved his modesty, and won the affection of the people as well as the royal household.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 649.

- 2. As King Saul changed completely and became so jealous and suspicious of David that he tried many times to kill him, what was Jonathan’s opinion of David?**

1 SAMUEL 19:1, 2, FIRST PART *And Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David.² But Jonathan Saul’s son delighted much in David:...*

“Saul, however, did not long remain friendly to David.... The demon of jealousy entered the heart of the king. He was angry because David was exalted above himself in the song of the women of Israel. In place of subduing these envious feelings,

he displayed the weakness of his character, and exclaimed. 'They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom?'

"One great defect in the character of Saul was his love of approbation. This trait had had a controlling influence over his actions and thoughts; everything was marked by his desire for praise and self-exaltation. His standard of right and wrong was the low standard of popular applause. No man is safe who lives that he may please men, and does not seek first for the approbation of God. It was the ambition of Saul to be first in the estimation of men; and when this song of praise was sung, a settled conviction entered the mind of the king that David would obtain the hearts of the people and reign in his stead." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 650.

INFORMING AND PROTECTING A FRIEND

3. What confidential information did Jonathan provide to protect the life of his friend? Knowing the risk of mortal danger, would we protect our brethren like this? How can one see God's providence in such complex circumstances?

1 SAMUEL 19:2 *But Jonathan Saul's son delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: now therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself until the morning, and abide in a secret place, and hide thyself.*

"It was the providence of God that had connected David with Saul. David's position at court would give him a knowledge of affairs, in preparation for his future greatness. It would enable him to gain the confidence of the nation. The vicissitudes and hardships which befell him, through the enmity of Saul, would lead him to feel his dependence upon God, and to put his whole trust in Him. And the friendship of Jonathan for David was also of God's providence, to preserve the life of the future ruler of Israel. In all these things God was working out His gracious purposes, both for David and for the people of Israel." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 649.

4. In conversation with his father, how did Jonathan openly defend David, presenting an objective and positive picture? Who in heaven performs a similar work of intercession for every guilty sinner?

1 SAMUEL 19:4, 5 *And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works have been to theeward very good: ⁵For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the Lord wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest it, and didst rejoice: wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?*

"Jonathan revealed the king's intention to David and bade him conceal himself while he would plead with his father to spare the life of the deliverer of Israel. He presented before the king what David had done to preserve the honor and even the life of the nation, and what terrible guilt would rest upon the murderer of the one whom God had used to scatter their enemies. The conscience of the king was touched, and his heart was softened. 'And Saul sware, As the Lord liveth, he shall not be slain.' David was brought to Saul, and he ministered in his presence, as he had done in the past." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 652.

DEFENSE AGAINST UNJUST ACCUSATION

- 5. But as it became more and more dangerous for David every day, what earnest appeal did he make to his friend, Jonathan? What solemn pact did they make?**

1 SAMUEL 20:1, 13-17, 23 *And David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and came and said before Jonathan, What have I done? what is mine iniquity? and what is my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life?...¹³The Lord do so and much more to Jonathan: but if it please my father to do thee evil, then I will shew it thee, and send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace: and the Lord be with thee, as he hath been with my father. ¹⁴And thou shalt not only while yet I live shew me the kindness of the Lord, that I die not: ¹⁵But also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no, not when the Lord hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth. ¹⁶So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, Let the Lord even require it at the hand of David's enemies. ¹⁷And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul.... ²³And as touching the matter which thou and I have spoken of, behold, the Lord be between thee and me for ever.*

“His heart was wounded within him, and he longed to see his friend Jonathan once more. Conscious of his innocence, he sought the king’s son and made a most touching appeal. ‘What have I done?’ he asked, ‘what is mine iniquity? and what is my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life?’ Jonathan believed that his father had changed his purpose and no longer intended to take the life of David. And Jonathan said unto him, ‘God forbid; thou shalt not die: behold, my father will do nothing either great or small, but that he will show it me: and why should my father hide this thing from me? It is not so.’ After the remarkable exhibition of the power of God, Jonathan could not believe that his father would still harm David, since this would be manifest rebellion against God. But David was not convinced. With intense earnestness he declared to Jonathan, ‘As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death.’ ” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 654.

- 6. What further noble defense did Jonathan make in favor of David? Have we done something similar when a brother or sister was unfairly accused? In a heart-rending farewell, how did these two close friends entrust their lives and their children to God forever?**

1 SAMUEL 20:31, 32, 41, 42 *For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die. ³²And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said unto him, Wherefore shall he be slain? what hath he done?... ⁴¹And as soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of a place toward the south, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times: and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded. ⁴²And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying, The Lord be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever. And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city.*

“Jonathan again made intercession for his friend, pleading, ‘Wherefore shall he be slain? what hath he done?’ This appeal to the king only made him more

satanic in his fury, and the spear which he had intended for David he now hurled at his own son.

"The prince was grieved and indignant, and leaving the royal presence, he was no more a guest at the feast. His soul was bowed down with sorrow as he repaired at the appointed time to the spot where David was to learn the king's intentions toward him. Each fell upon the other's neck, and they wept bitterly. The dark passion of the king cast its shadow upon the life of the young men, and their grief was too intense for expression. Jonathan's last words fell upon the ear of David as they separated to pursue their different paths, 'Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying, The Lord be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed forever.' " —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 655.

FRIENDSHIP OF TRUE BROTHERS IN CHRIST

7. As what did David consider Jonathan? What relationship should exist among brothers in Christ? In this sense, how can Jesus' followers be recognized?

2 SAMUEL 1:26 *I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.*

PROVERBS 18:24 *A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.*

JOHN 15:15 *Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.*

"The friendship of Jonathan for David was ... of God's providence, to preserve the life of the future ruler of Israel." —*My Life Today*, p. 210.

"You have the Pattern, Christ Jesus; walk in His footsteps, and you will be qualified to fill any and every position that you may be called upon to occupy. You will be 'rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.' You are not to feel that you are a bondslave, but a son of God; that you are highly favored in that you have been regarded of so great value that God has made you His by paying an infinite ransom for your freedom. Jesus says, 'I call you not servants;... but I have called you friends.' When you appreciate His wondrous love, love and gratitude will be in your heart as a wellspring of joy." —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 303, 304.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

1 Samuel 23:16-18

2 Samuel 1:26; 9:1

Proverbs 17:17

FOR REFLECTION

- *How would you define the relationship between David and Jonathan?*
- *How can their example be a blessing in your experience?*
- *What are the qualities of a true friend?*

- **What other example of an ideal relationship is reported in the Bible?**
- **Who wants to be our best Friend?**

THE HUT IN FLAMES

The only man to survive a shipwreck landed on the beach of a small, uninhabited island. He earnestly pleaded with the Lord to help him; but as he stared at the horizon day after day, it remained empty. Finally he decided to build a log cabin for protection from the rain and then placed all his possessions in it. One day, after wandering around the island in search of food, he returned to the hut and found it engulfed in flames, with smoke rising to heaven. The worst thing was that he had lost everything. He was astonished, sad, and angry. "God, how could You do this to me?" he lamented.

However, the next day he awoke to the sound of a ship approaching the island. The crew had come to rescue him. "How did you know I was here?" the man asked them.

"We saw your smoke signal," they replied.

It is easy to be discouraged when things go wrong, but God works in our lives despite the pain and suffering. David lost the esteem and love of Saul and nearly lost his life several times. But the Lord had a solution and gave him the friendship and love of Jonathan, a deep, sincere love that remains a wonderful example to this day. The next time you face a misunderstanding or conflict and your hut catches on fire, it may be a sign that the grace of God is coming to your help. —Adapted from the web page *Giorno per giorno col Signore* (Day by day with the Lord).

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7

Sabbath, May 14, 2016

Brotherly Love, Part 1

"Christ had bidden the first disciples love one another as He had loved them....

"It is not the opposition of the world that most endangers the church of Christ. It is the evil cherished in the hearts of believers that works their most grievous disaster and most surely retards the progress of God's cause. There is no surer way of weakening spirituality than by cherishing envy, suspicion, faultfinding, and evil surmising. On the other hand, the strongest witness that God has sent His Son into the world is the existence of harmony and union among men of varied dispositions who form His church...." —*Conflict and Courage*, p. 357.

DIVINE LOVE AND BROTHERLY LOVE

1. What is God's greatest attribute that draws people to Him?

1 JOHN 4:8, SECOND PART, 16 ... God is love.... ¹⁶*And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.*

“ ‘God is love’ is written upon every opening bud, upon every spire of springing grass. The lovely birds making the air vocal with their happy songs, the delicately tinted flowers in their perfection perfuming the air, the lofty trees of the forest with their rich foliage of living green—all testify to the tender, fatherly care of our God and to His desire to make His children happy.” —*Steps to Christ*, p. 10.

“The first lesson that children are to be taught is that God is their Father. This lesson should be given them in their earliest years. Parents are to realize that they are responsible before God for making their children acquainted with their heavenly Father.... That God is love is to be taught by every lesson.” —*Child Guidance*, p. 487.

2. Toward whom has He especially manifested His great love?

1 JOHN 4:9, 10 *In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. ¹⁰Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

ROMANS 5:8 *But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

“In the love of God has been opened the most marvelous vein of precious truth, and the treasures of the grace of Christ are laid open before the church and the world. ‘For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son....’ John 3:16. What love is this—what marvelous, unfathomable love—that would lead Christ to die for us while we were yet sinners! What a loss it is to the soul who understands the strong claims of the law, and who yet fails to understand the grace of Christ which doth much more abound! It is true that the law of God reveals the love of God when it is preached as the truth in Jesus; for the gift of Christ to this guilty world must be largely dwelt upon in every discourse.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 384.

3. Therefore, if we love God, whom else will we love? Are we conscious that true brotherly love depends on our love for the Lord?

1 JOHN 4:7, 21 *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.... ²¹And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.*

“After the descent of the Holy Spirit, the disciples went forth to proclaim a risen Saviour, their one desire the salvation of souls. They rejoiced in the sweetness of the communion with saints. They were tender, thoughtful, self-denying, willing to make any sacrifice for the truth’s sake. In their daily association with one another they revealed the love that Christ had commanded them to reveal. By unselfish words and deeds they strove to kindle this love in other hearts.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 241.

BROTHERLY LOVE AND CREDIBILITY

4. According to Jesus’ words, what is the test of our credibility? What new commandment did He give?

JOHN 13:35, 34 *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.... ³⁴A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*

"The believers were ever to cherish the love that filled the hearts of the apostles after the descent of the Holy Spirit. They were to go forward in willing obedience to the new commandment: 'As I have loved you, that ye also love one another.' John 13:34. So closely were they to be united to Christ that they would be enabled to fulfill His requirements. The power of a Saviour who could justify them by His righteousness was to be magnified....

"The world is looking with gratification at the disunion amongst Christians. Infidelity is well pleased. God calls for a change among His people. Union with Christ and with one another is our only safety in these last days. Let us not make it possible for Satan to point to our church members, saying: 'Behold how these people, standing under the banner of Christ, hate one another. We have nothing to fear from them while they spend more strength fighting one another than in warfare with my forces.'" –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, pp. 241, 240.

BROTHERLY LOVE AND BEHAVIOR

5. Instead of engaging in futile, disparaging conversation, what are we commanded to do when we meet with our brothers so we may strengthen them?

1 THESSALONIANS 5:11 *Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.*

EPHESIANS 4:29 *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.*

"Through the apostle Paul, Christ bids us, 'Let your speech be always with grace.' 'Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.' Colossians 4:6; Ephesians 4:29. In the light of these scriptures, the words of Christ upon the mount are seen to condemn jesting, trifling, and unchaste conversation. They require that our words should be not only truthful, but pure.

"Those who have learned of Christ will 'have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.' Ephesians 5:11. In speech, as in life, they will be simple, straightforward, and true; for they are preparing for the fellowship of those holy ones in whose mouth 'was found no guile.' Revelation 14:5." –*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 68, 69.

6. What will we always do for our brother, especially in case of sickness?

COLOSSIANS 1:9 *For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.*

2 THESSALONIANS 1:11 *Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power.*

JAMES 5:16, SECOND PART ... *Pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*

"These words were clearly and forcibly spoken: 'Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. Press together; press together, and love as brethren. Pray together.' The Lord has paid the price of His own blood for the salvation of the world. He suffered every indignity that men could devise and Satan could invent, in order to carry out the plan of salvation." –*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 527.

“There is another work that should receive attention on the preparation day. On this day all differences between brethren, whether in the family or in the church, should be put away. Let all bitterness and wrath and malice be expelled from the soul. In a humble spirit, ‘confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another.’” —*The Faith I Live By*, p. 34.

7. If we are truly connected with Christ, what will we be ready to do in every emergency?

GALATIANS 6:2; 5:13, LAST PART *Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ....* ^{5:13}*But by love serve one another.*

ROMANS 15:1 *We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.*

“By the terms of our stewardship we are placed under obligation, not only to God, but to man. To the infinite love of the Redeemer every human being is indebted for the gifts of life. Food and raiment and shelter, body and mind and soul—all are the purchase of His blood. And by the obligation of gratitude and service thus imposed, Christ has bound us to our fellow men. He bids us, ‘By love serve one another.’ Galatians 5:13. ‘Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.’ Matthew 25:40.

“‘I am debtor, Paul declares, ‘both to the Greeks, and to the barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.’ Romans 1:14. So also are we. By all that has blessed our life above others, we are placed under obligation to every human being whom we might benefit.” —*Education*, p. 139.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

1 Corinthians 13:1-8, 13

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, pp. 168, 169

Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, p. 505

THE FIRST CHRISTIANS AND BROTHERLY LOVE

Brotherly love has always been the special feature of Jesus' disciples. How could the great debate with paganism and the hostility and severe persecution be faced without this cohesion, without the strong bond of love? Not through the learning of its best thinkers but by the love of the simplest members the church achieved victory. In a book of defense, the old apologist Mark Minucius Felix had two friends arguing about Christianity, one of them being an idolater. In the interview, one of them comments: “The Christians love each other even before they are acquainted.”

Another testimony about Christian brotherly love was given by the heathen scoffer Lucian of Samosata. Although, in his view, Christians were “fanatics and blind believers”—and he speaks of them with derision—he has to recognize that “Their Lawgiver has convinced them to love each other, and so they act according to His teaching.” In reality, Christ's love wears the same clothing everywhere, and as brotherly love it is spreading all over the earth.

This is a wonderful testimony that was given many years ago. What can be said today? Can outsiders see us in the same way as the heathen saw the early Christians? Let us remember that the testimonies of our lives are the best that we can give. —Adapted from H. Schäfer, *Mach ein Fenster dran* (Close a Window), pp. 232, 233.

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Brotherly Love, Part 2

“It is the greatest and most fatal deception to suppose that a man can have faith unto life eternal, without possessing Christlike love for his brethren. He who loves God and his neighbor is filled with light and love. God is in him and all around him. Christians love those around them as precious souls for whom Christ has died. There is no such thing as a loveless Christian; for ‘God is love,’ and ‘hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.’...” —(MS 133, 1899) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1141.

BROTHERLY LOVE AND LIGHT

1. What is stated in God’s word about those who truly love one another?

1 JOHN 4:7; 3:10 *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God....^{3:10}In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.*

“True sanctification unites believers to Christ and to one another in the bonds of tender sympathy. This union causes to flow continually into the heart rich currents of Christlike love, which flows forth again in love for one another.

“The qualities which it is essential for all to possess are those which marked the completeness of Christ’s character—His love, His patience, His unselfishness, and His goodness. These attributes are gained by doing kindly actions with a kindly heart....

“ ‘This is My commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.’ This is the fruit that is to be given back to God.” —(MS 133, 1899) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1141.

2. If we dislike our fellow man, what condition are we still in? Having such feelings, what hope do we have of eternal life?

1 JOHN 2:9; 3:15 *He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now....^{3:15}Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.*

“These natural brothers must be fully reconciled to each other before they can lift the reproach from the cause of God that their disunion has caused. ‘In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.’ ‘He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.’ Those who labor for God should be clean vessels, sanctified to the Master’s use. ‘Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord.’ ‘If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from

Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.' " —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, pp. 59, 60.

3. When we love our brother, what can be said about our walk? Is there any danger of walking in darkness and stumbling?

1 JOHN 2:10 *He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.*

"The Lord is waiting to bestow rich blessing upon us if we will only comply with the conditions. We cannot glorify Him while we cherish doubt. We must believe that He will do just what He has said He would. Remember that we have a living Saviour. If you do not feel lighthearted and joyous, do not dishonor God by talking of your feelings. Talk of the promises, talk of Jesus' willingness to bless; and before you are aware of it, the cloud will lift, light will come into the soul, and you will find peace and rest in Jesus. Cherish love. 'Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another.' Romans 12:10. Form a habit of speaking words of cheerful hope and courage, words of love and appreciation, that will bind hearts together. 'If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.' 1 John 1:7." —*Gospel Workers*, pp. 437, 438 (1892).

IN WORD AND ACTION

4. Is it helpful to just say we love someone, without really showing it by our actions?

1 JOHN 3:18 *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.*

1 PETER 1:22 *Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.*

ROMANS 12:9 *Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.*

"Unbelievers are watching to see if the faith of professed Christians is exerting a sanctifying influence upon their lives; and they are quick to discern the defects in character, the inconsistencies in action.... Christians are all members of one family, all children of the same heavenly Father, with the same blessed hope of immortality. Very close and tender should be the tie that binds them together.... 'Let us not love in word,' the apostle writes, 'but in deed and in truth.' 1 John 3:18." —*Conflict and Courage*, p. 357.

LOVE IS ACTIVE

5. What shows that we love the Lord and are in communion with Him?

JOHN 14:15 *If ye love me, keep my commandments.*

1 JOHN 5:3 *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.*

"There are conditions to the fulfillment of God's promises, and prayer can never take the place of duty. 'If ye love Me,' Christ says, 'keep My commandments.'

‘He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him.’ John 14:15, 21. Those who bring their petitions to God, claiming His promise while they do not comply with the conditions, insult Jehovah. They bring the name of Christ as their authority for the fulfillment of the promise, but they do not those things that would show faith in Christ and love for Him.

“Many are forfeiting the condition of acceptance with the Father. We need to examine closely the deed of trust wherewith we approach God. If we are disobedient, we bring to the Lord a note to be cashed when we have not fulfilled the conditions that would make it payable to us. We present to God His promises, and ask Him to fulfill them, when by so doing He would dishonor His own name.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 143.

6. What is divine love willing to do in us whenever help is requested?

ROMANS 15:2 *Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.*

PHILIPPIANS 2:4 *Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*

1 TIMOTHY 6:17-19 *Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; ¹⁸That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; ¹⁹Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.*

“The apostle Paul shows the only true use for riches, and bids Timothy charge the rich to do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; for in so doing they are laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come—referring to the close of time—that they may lay hold on eternal life. The teachings of Paul harmonize perfectly with the words of Christ: ‘Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.’ Godliness with contentment is great gain. Here is the true secret of happiness, and real prosperity of soul and body.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 542.

7. How will those who are full of God’s love respond to slander?

ROMANS 12:21 *Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

LUKE 6:27 *But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you.*

“Do not retaliate. So far as you can do so, remove all cause for misapprehension. Avoid the appearance of evil. Do all that lies in your power, without the sacrifice of principle, to conciliate others. ‘If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.’ Matthew 5:23, 24.

“If impatient words are spoken to you, never reply in the same spirit. Remember that ‘a soft answer turneth away wrath.’ Proverbs 15:1. And there is wonderful power in silence. Words spoken in reply to one who is angry sometimes serve only to exasperate. But anger met with silence, in a tender, forbearing spirit, quickly dies away.

“Under a storm of stinging, faultfinding words, keep the mind stayed upon the word of God. Let mind and heart be stored with God’s promises. If you are ill-treat-

ed or wrongfully accused, instead of returning an angry answer, repeat to yourself the precious promises:..." —*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 485, 486.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

John 14:21, 23

Ecclesiastes 10:12

LOVE TRANSFORMS

If something is cold, you have to warm it up! "But if one is cold himself...?"

Have you ever heard of something needing to be warmed up when it was already hot? Perhaps you were pleased to receive an electric blanket; but if you had been warm, would you have needed it? However, since it was warm and you were cold, it provided you with heat.

One can only heat something cold by radiating heat.

How can a person be sanctified? God is love; and when one is changed by the power of His grace, God's love will be transmitted to him or her, and the person will radiate an image of God. Think about the symbol of warmth—sunshine. If you want to make someone enjoy the warmth, you must first be warm yourself. A block of ice cannot resemble the sun until it melts and the water gets hot and evaporates! So, if you wish someone to become warm because you are radiating heat, you may help him to become loving by loving him and practically manifesting your love! —Adapted from A.A. Combes, *Gott spricht* (God speaks), pp. 30, 31.

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Sabbath, May 28, 2016

Brotherly Love, Part 3

"One of the strongest evidences of true conversion is love to God and man. Those who accept Jesus as their Redeemer have a deep, sincere love for others of like precious faith. Thus it was with the believers at Thessalonica. 'As touching brotherly love,' the apostle wrote, 'ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more....' " —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 262, 263.

THE SOLE SOURCE OF LOVE

1. What is the source of love? Who planted the seeds of love in man?

1 JOHN 4:10 *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

2 CORINTHIANS 5:21 *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

"In the contemplation of Christ we linger on the shore of a love that is measureless. We endeavor to tell of this love, and language fails us. We consider His life on earth, His sacrifice for us, His work in heaven as our advocate, and the mansions He is preparing for those who love Him, and we can only exclaim, O the height and depth of the love of Christ! 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.' Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.' 1 John 4:10; 3:1.

"In every true disciple this love, like sacred fire, burns on the altar of the heart. It was on the earth that the love of God was revealed through Christ. It is on the earth that His children are to reflect this love through blameless lives. Thus sinners will be led to the cross to behold the Lamb of God." —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 333, 334.

2. Therefore, when is one able to love others? Who has to live and reign in him before love can be produced?

1 JOHN 4:12; 2:5 *No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us....^{2:5} But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.*

"The attributes which God prizes most are charity and purity. These attributes should be cherished by every Christian. 'Everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.' 'If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us.' 'We shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.' " —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 85.

"There is among us a very limited amount of real, unselfish love. The Lord says: 'Everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.' 'If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us.' 1 John 4:7, 8, 12." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 137.

DEALING WITH OFFENSES AND WEAKNESS

3. In case of offense or mistreatment, how does divine love respond?

ROMANS 12:17 *Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.*

1 THESSALONIANS 5:15 *See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.*

"It hurts you when one for whom you have done much becomes your enemy, having been brought under an influence opposed to you. But do you not do almost the same thing to Jesus when you turn away from Him? He has been your best Friend. He has done everything He could to win your love. He has invited your confidence. He has asked you to come to Him with all your burdens and all your griefs, and has pledged His word to give you rest and peace if you will wear His yoke and bear His burdens. He declares that His yoke is easy and His burden is light. Show that you believe this. Take God at His word. You never could have stood where you now stand, bearing the responsibilities that you have borne, unless Jesus had given you special help. Acknowledge this. Praise God for the help that He has been to you, and trust Him still." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 129.

4. Facing shortcomings in others, what attitude will we have if God's love is in us?

LUKE 6:36 *Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.*

JAMES 3:17 *But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.*

"God is always giving; and upon whom are His gifts bestowed? Upon those who are faultless in character? 'He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.' Matthew 5:45. Notwithstanding the sinfulness of humanity, notwithstanding that we so often grieve the heart of Christ and prove ourselves most undeserving, yet when we ask His forgiveness, He does not turn us away. His love is freely extended to us, and He bids us: Love one another as I have loved you. John 13:34." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 284.

OTHER INDICATIONS OF GOD'S LOVE IN US

5. What should be done when someone practices sin and clings to an improper attitude? What will a genuine brother in Christ do, and what will he not do, in such a situation?

PROVERBS 17:18 *A man void of understanding striketh hands, and becometh surety in the presence of his friend.*

GALATIANS 6:1 *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*

1 THESSALONIANS 5:14 *Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.*

"If one of these little ones shall be overcome, and commit a wrong against you, then it is your work to seek his restoration. Do not wait for him to make the first effort for reconciliation. 'How think ye?' said Jesus; 'if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.' ...

"Do not put him to shame by exposing his fault to others, nor bring dishonor upon Christ by making public the sin or error of one who bears His name. Often the truth must be plainly spoken to the erring; he must be led to see his error, that he may reform. But you are not to judge or to condemn. Make no attempt at self-justification. Let all your effort be for his recovery. In treating the wounds of the soul, there is need of the most delicate touch, the finest sensibility. Only the love that flows from the Suffering One of Calvary can avail here." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 440.

6. What instruction is given so we can keep from causing a fellow brother to stumble in the faith?

ROMANS 14:13 *Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.*

1 CORINTHIANS 10:32 *Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*

"He bids us, in dealing with the tempted and the erring, consider 'thyself, lest thou also be tempted.' Galatians 6:1. With a sense of our own infirmities, we shall have compassion for the infirmities of others.

"'Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?' 'One is your Master;... and all ye are brethren.' 'Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother?' 'Let us not therefore judge one another:... but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.' 1 Corinthians 4:7; Matthew 23:8; Romans 14:10, 13.

"It is always humiliating to have one's errors pointed out. None should make the experience more bitter by needless censure. No one was ever reclaimed by reproach; but many have thus been repelled and have been led to steel their hearts against conviction. A tender spirit, a gentle, winning deportment, may save the erring and hide a multitude of sins." —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 166.

7. What should characterize our actions and speech in our daily intercourse with others?

ECCLIESIASTES 10:12 *The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself.*

COLOSSIANS 4:6 *Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.*

1 PETER 3:15 *But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.*

"The chief requisite of language is that it be pure and kind and true—"the outward expression of an inward grace.'... The best school for this language study is the home.

"Kind words are as dew and gentle showers to the soul. The Scripture says of Christ that grace was poured into His lips, that He might 'know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.' And the Lord bids us, 'Let your speech be always with grace,' 'that it may minister grace unto the hearers.'" —*The Adventist Home*, p. 435.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Colossians 3:12

Proverbs 6:1, 2

Hebrews 3:12, 13

HEARING AND SHARING THE MESSAGE

A huge truck crashed into the back of a small vehicle, causing it to plunge 75 feet down into a ravine. The owner of the vehicle was a paralyzed woman who operated the car with special controls. The woman, Linda Myers, tried to call for help on her car

radio. For hours, no one paid any attention to her calls for help. Finally, after fourteen hours, she cried: “Lord, let somebody come and help me!” At that moment, a truck driver heard and answered her call and called the police by radio. This led to immediate intervention, and the woman was rescued. Linda said: “When you lack human communication, the Lord is still ready to hear your cry.”

This woman and the man in the Bible who was attacked on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho are not the only ones who fall into serious difficulties. There are millions who are trapped in sin and desperation; they are calling urgently for emergency help, and we can give them the message of love and hope that the Lord has entrusted to us. Will we do differently from that helpful truck driver, or will we go quickly to help by giving the message that can save a life? —Adapted from the Christian calendar *Più che vincitori in Cristo* (More than conquerors in Christ), January 5, 2011.

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Sabbath, June 4, 2016

Friends, Fire, and Faith

“Jesus knows the circumstances of every soul....

“He does not desire us to be overcome and perish. He who curbed the lions in their den, and walked with His faithful witnesses amid the fiery flames, is just as ready to work in our behalf to subdue every evil in our nature. Today He is standing at the altar of mercy, presenting before God the prayers of those who desire His help. He turns no weeping, contrite one away.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 89, 90.

OPENLY CONFESSING THEIR FAITH

- 1. Although we are not told about prior examples of religious intolerance in the Babylonian Empire, what law was enacted at the time of the Jewish captivity? What did the representatives of every nation, language, and religion in the empire do when the music began?**

DANIEL 3:4-7 *Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, ⁵That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up: ⁶And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. ⁷Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of musick, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.*

“Forming this great image, Nebuchadnezzar commanded that it should receive universal homage from all, both great and small, high and low, rich and poor.” —(MS 24, 1891) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1169.

“History will be repeated. False religion will be exalted.... Force is the last resort of every false religion. At first it tries attraction, as the king of Babylon tried

the power of music and outward show. If these attractions, invented by men inspired by Satan, failed to make men worship the image, the hungry flames of the furnace were ready to consume them. So it will be now.... We need the same spirit that was manifested by God's servants in the conflict with paganism." —(*Signs of the Times*, May 6, 1897) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 976.

"The laws and traditions of men are exalted above the law of God, and those who are true to God's commandments suffer reproach and persecution." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 170.

2. Who had the courage and power to resist the idolatrous command and worship? Did this situation cause these young men to waver in their faith? How did they firmly and decisively confess their conviction and faith in the true God?

DANIEL 3:12, 16-18 *There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up....* ¹⁶*Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.* ¹⁷*If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.* ¹⁸*But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.*

"But God decreed otherwise. Not all had bowed the knee to the idolatrous symbol of human power. In the midst of the worshipping multitude there were three men who were firmly resolved not thus to dishonor the God of heaven. Their God was King of kings and Lord of lords; they would bow to none other....

"As the three Hebrews stood before the king, he was convinced that they possessed something the other wise men of his kingdom did not have. They had been faithful in the performance of every duty. He would give them another trial. If only they would signify their willingness to unite with the multitude in worshipping the image, all would be well with them;..." —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 506, 507.

FREE AND WALKING IN THE FIRE

3. Is there any indication that they complained or expressed grief to God at having to face such a terrible test? Did they resist being bound and thrown into the furnace? How can we explain such steadfastness, regardless of the consequences?

DANIEL 3:19-21 *Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated.* ²⁰*And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace.* ²¹*Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.*

PSALMS 9:10; 37:28 *The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble....* ^{37:28}*For the Lord loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.*

"We have marked illustrations of the sustaining power of firm, religious principle.... The gaping lions' den could not keep Daniel from his daily prayers, nor could the fiery furnace induce Shadrach and his companions to fall down before the idol which Nebuchadnezzar set up. Young men who have firm principles will eschew pleasure, defy pain, and brave even the lions' den and the heated fiery furnace rather than be found untrue to God. Mark the character of Joseph. Virtue was severely tested, but its triumph was complete. At every point the noble youth endured the test. The same lofty, unbending principle appeared at every trial. The Lord was with him, and His word was law.

"Such firmness and untarnished principle shines brightest in contrast with the feebleness and inefficiency of the youth of this age. With but few exceptions, they are vacillating, varying with every change of circumstance and surroundings, one thing today and another tomorrow." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 43.

4. What effect did the raging heat of the fire have on the young men and their clothing? What was the effect of their faith and commitment? What astonished the king?

DANIEL 3:23-25, FIRST PART *And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. ²⁴Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. ²⁵He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt;...*

"Thus it has been in the past history of God's people. For refusing to worship the great golden image which Nebuchadnezzar had set up, the three Hebrews were cast into the fiery furnace. But God preserved His servants in the midst of the flames, and the attempt to enforce idolatry resulted in bringing the knowledge of the true God before the assembled princes and great men of the vast kingdom of Babylon." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 453.

ONLY THE FETTERS CONSUMED

5. What alone was consumed by the fire, setting the young men free? Considering the spiritual fetters of sin, what hope can we have of being completely set free from them? With whom should we constantly be in communion?

DANIEL 3:20, 21, 25 *And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. ²¹Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.... ²⁵He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.*

JOHN 8:36 *If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*

"The Hebrew captives filling positions of trust in Babylon had in life and character represented before him the truth. When asked for a reason of their faith, they had given it without hesitation. Plainly and simply they had presented the principles of righteousness, thus teaching those around them of the God whom

they worshiped. They had told of Christ, the Redeemer to come; and in the form of the fourth in the midst of the fire the king recognized the Son of God.

"And now, his own greatness and dignity forgotten, Nebuchadnezzar descended from his throne and, going to the mouth of the furnace, cried out, 'Ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither.'

"Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came forth before the vast multitude, showing themselves unhurt. The presence of their Saviour had guarded them from harm, and only their fetters had been burned." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 509.

WITH GOD'S SON

- 6. Do you think that the fourth "Brother" in the fire was with them only in that critical circumstance, or that His constant presence with them was the secret of their wonderful unity and success? How may we be similarly united as brothers and make such experiences together?**

DANIEL 3:25, LAST PART ... *And the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.*

PSALMS 37:5; 32:10, SECOND PART *Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass....* ^{32:10}*He that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.*

"What a lesson is here given to the fainthearted, the vacillating, the cowardly in the cause of God! What encouragement to those who will not be turned aside from duty by threats or peril! These faithful, steadfast characters exemplify sanctification, while they have no thought of claiming the high honor. The amount of good which may be accomplished by comparatively obscure but devoted Christians cannot be estimated until the life records shall be made known, when the judgment shall sit and the books be opened.

"Christ identifies His interest with this class; He is not ashamed to call them brethren. There should be hundreds where there is now one among us, so closely allied to God, their lives in such close conformity to His will, that they would be bright and shining lights, sanctified wholly, in soul, body, and spirit." —*The Sanctified Life*, pp. 40, 41.

- 7. What praise to God did the king express after seeing that not even a hair of these faithful men had been singed? Centuries later, who else chose to obey God's command and were greatly blessed? What are we privileged to do so that people may be influenced to praise the Lord in heaven?**

DANIEL 3:26-28 *Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire. ²⁷And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them. ²⁸Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.*

ACTS 5:27-29 *And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them, ²⁸Saying, Did not we straitly command you that*

ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. ²⁹*Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.*

MATTHEW 5:16 *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

“The three Hebrews declared to the whole nation of Babylon their faith in Him whom they worshiped. They relied on God. In the hour of their trial they remembered the promise, ‘When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.’ Isaiah 43:2. And in a marvelous manner their faith in the living Word had been honored in the sight of all. The tidings of their wonderful deliverance were carried to many countries by the representatives of the different nations that had been invited by Nebuchadnezzar to the dedication. Through the faithfulness of His children, God was glorified in all the earth.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 511.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Deuteronomy 8:16

Romans 5:3

1 Peter 1:7; 4:12, 13

FOR REFLECTION

- *If we are not truly united with God, what will happen in our very first test?*
- *While thermometers may measure temperature, what events measure the level of our faith?*
- *What lesson of steadfastness and harmony may we learn from the three Hebrews' amazing experience?*
- *Are you determined to serve the Lord of heaven and none else?*
- *As their testimony moved the king to come to God, how does our witness influence others?*

VALUE OF A LOVING WORD

Russian author Leo Tolstoy was walking down a street when a beggar stopped him to ask for alms. Tolstoy answered, “I’m sorry, brother, but I have no money on me, or I would gladly give it to you.”

The beggar’s face lit up, and he said, “That’s OK, sir. You have given me more than I asked, for you called me ‘brother.’ ”

Recognizing another person as a brother is an enormous first step in carrying out the love contained in the gospel; actually treating him as a brother is the second. May the Lord help us to do both, because in this way we bless not only a person but the Lord Himself! —Adapted from S. Vila, *Enciclopedia de anecdotes*, p. 347.

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How Pleasant It Is ...

“The cause of division and discord in families and in the church is separation from Christ. To come near to Christ is to come near to one another. The secret of true unity in the church and in the family is not diplomacy, not management, not a superhuman effort to overcome difficulties—though there will be much of this to do—but union with Christ.” —*The Adventist Home*, p. 179.

A GOOD AND PLEASANT THING

1. In the Psalms, how is the happiness of living together in harmony expressed? What things symbolize the fragrance and reviving grace of harmony?

PSALM 133:1-3 *Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! ²It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; ³As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.*

“Among the mountains of Judah, David sought refuge from the pursuit of Saul. He made good his escape to the cave of Adullam, a place that, with a small force, could be held against a large army. ‘And when his brethren and all his father’s house heard it, they went down thither to him.’ The family of David could not feel secure, knowing that at any time the unreasonable suspicions of Saul might be directed against them on account of their relation to David. They had now learned—what was coming to be generally known in Israel—that God had chosen David as the future ruler of His people; and they believed that they would be safer with him, even though he was a fugitive in a lonely cave, than they could be while exposed to the insane madness of a jealous king.

“In the cave of Adullam the family were united in sympathy and affection. The son of Jesse could make melody with voice and harp as he sang, ‘Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!’ Psalm 133:1. He had tasted the bitterness of distrust on the part of his own brothers; and the harmony that had taken the place of discord brought joy to the exile’s heart. It was here that David composed the fifty-seventh psalm.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 657, 658.

2. What blessings are part of the mutual trust of united brethren?

ECCLESIASTES 4:9-12 *Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. ¹⁰For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. ¹¹Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? ¹²And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.*

ISAIAH 41:6 *They helped every one his neighbour; and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage.*

"It would be helpful for the youth, and for parents and teachers as well, to study the lesson of cooperation as taught in the Scriptures. Among its many illustrations notice the building of the tabernacle—that object lesson of character building—in which the whole people united, 'everyone whose heart stirred him up, and everyone whom his spirit made willing.' Exodus 35:21. Read how the wall of Jerusalem was rebuilt by the returned captives, in the midst of poverty, difficulty, and danger, the great task successfully accomplished because 'the people had a mind to work.' Nehemiah 4:6. Consider the part acted by the disciples in the Saviour's miracle for the feeding of the multitude. The food multiplied in the hands of Christ, but the disciples received the loaves and gave to the waiting throng.

" 'We are members one of another.' As everyone therefore 'hath received a (R.V.) gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.' Ephesians 4:25; I Peter 4:10....

" 'They helped everyone his neighbor; and everyone said to his brother, Be of good courage.' Isaiah 41:6."—*Education*, p. 286.

DIVERSITY IS A SPECIAL BLESSING

3. What did the apostle Paul stress concerning unity among brethren? Why is the diversity of character, personality, and way of thinking not an insurmountable obstacle to the unity in Christ's spiritual kingdom?

1 CORINTHIANS 1:10, 11 *Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. ¹¹For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.*

EPHESIANS 4:3-6 *Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; ⁵One Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

"How was it with the apostle Paul? The news he received through the household of Chloe concerning the condition of the church at Corinth was what caused him to write his first epistle to that church. Private letters had come to him stating the facts as they existed, and in his answer he laid down general principles which if heeded would correct the existing evils. With great tenderness and wisdom he exhorts them to all speak the same things, that there be no divisions among them....

"He was set for the defense of the church. He was to watch for souls as one that must render account to God, and should he not take notice of the reports concerning their state of anarchy and division? Most assuredly; and the reproof he sent them was written just as much under the inspiration of the Spirit of God as were any of his epistles. But when these reproofs came, some would not be corrected. They took the position that God had not spoken to them through Paul, that he had merely given them his opinion as a man, and they regarded their own judgment as good as that of Paul.

"So it is with many among our people who have drifted away from the old landmarks and who have followed their own understanding."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 684, 685.

4. Why was it impossible to solve the problem of doctrinal controversy that arose in Galatia? In contrast, why was it possible for the same controversy to be resolved peaceably in Jerusalem, where there were even more members?

ACTS 15:1, 2, 25-28 *And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. ²When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.... ²⁵It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, ²⁶Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁷We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. ²⁸For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things.*

"In the church at Antioch the consideration of the question of circumcision resulted in much discussion and contention. Finally, the members of the church, fearing that a division among them would be the outcome of continued discussion, decided to send Paul and Barnabas, with some responsible men from the church, to Jerusalem to lay the matter before the apostles and elders....

"The various points involved in the settlement of the main question at issue seemed to present before the council insurmountable difficulties. But the Holy Spirit had, in reality, already settled this question, upon the decision of which seemed to depend the prosperity, if not the very existence, of the Christian church....

"The Holy Spirit saw good not to impose the ceremonial law on the Gentile converts, and the mind of the apostles regarding this matter was as the mind of the Spirit of God. James presided at the council, and his final decision was, 'Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God.' " —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 190, 192, 194.

THE BASIS OF HARMONY

5. How important is the matter of unity and harmony among brethren? With the cross just ahead of Him, what was Jesus' fervent prayer for His disciples? For whom else did He pray?

JOHN 17:11, 21, 20 *And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.... ²¹That 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.... ²⁰Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.*

"It should be understood that perfect unity among the laborers is necessary to the successful accomplishment of the work of God. In order to preserve peace, all must seek wisdom from the Great Teacher. Let all be careful how they introduce ambitious propositions that will create dissension.

"We are to be subject one to another. No man, in himself, is a complete whole. Through submission of the mind and will to the Holy Spirit we are ever to be learners of the Great Teacher.

"Study the second chapter of Acts. In the early church the Spirit of God wrought mightily through those who were harmoniously united. On the Day of Pentecost they were all with one accord in one place.

"We are to demonstrate to the world that men of every nationality are one in Christ Jesus. Then let us remove every barrier and come into unity in the service of the Master." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 196.

- 6. To what does the Bible compare a brother who has been offended? Whose love alone is able to break down the barriers between people? What is necessary to overcome difficulties that arise because of the usual differences, defects, and weaknesses that all human beings have?**

PROVERBS 18:19 *A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle.*

EPHESIANS 2:14 *For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us.*

1 CORINTHIANS 13:7 *Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.*

"In the days of Christ, selfishness and pride and prejudice had built strong and high the wall of partition between the appointed guardians of the sacred oracles and every other nation on the globe. But the Saviour had come to change all this. The words which the people were hearing from His lips were unlike anything to which they had ever listened from priest or rabbi. Christ tears away the wall of partition, the self-love, the dividing prejudice of nationality, and teaches a love for all the human family. He lifts men from the narrow circle that their selfishness prescribes; He abolishes all territorial lines and artificial distinctions of society. He makes no difference between neighbors and strangers, friends and enemies. He teaches us to look upon every needy soul as our neighbor and the world as our field." —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 42.

- 7. What is recorded about the wonderful, harmonious spirit that existed in the apostolic church? How can that be the same for the church today?**

ACTS 2:42-47 *And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. ⁴³And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. ⁴⁴And all that believed were together, and had all things common; ⁴⁵And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. ⁴⁶And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, ⁴⁷Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*

MATTHEW 18:19, 20 *Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. ²⁰For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*

"After the descent of the Holy Spirit the disciples went forth to proclaim a risen Saviour, their one desire the salvation of souls. They rejoiced in the sweetness of the communion with saints. They were tender, thoughtful, self-denying, willing

to make any sacrifice for the truth's sake. In their daily association with one another they revealed the love that Christ had commanded them to reveal. By unselfish words and deeds they strove to kindle this love in other hearts.

"The believers were ever to cherish the love that filled the hearts of the apostles after the descent of the Holy Spirit. They were to go forward in willing obedience to the new commandment: 'As I have loved you, that ye also love one another.' John 13:34. So closely were they to be united to Christ that they would be enabled to fulfill His requirements. The power of a Saviour who could justify them by His righteousness was to be magnified." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 241.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Philippians 1:27

Colossians 3:15

Romans 15:6, 7

THE WALL

In a rough and rocky desert, there lived two hermits. They each found a cave with a wide opening which faced the entrance to his counterpart's cave. After years of prayer and deep mortification, one of the two hermits believed he had become perfect. The other man was equally pious, cheerful, and forgiving. He took time to talk with the rare pilgrims who came to the place and comforted and housed those who were lost and who had left civilization behind.

All my time is devoted to meditation and prayer, thought the first hermit. He disapproved of the frequent but tiny deficiencies of the other man. Therefore, to make the latter understand what, according to his view, was far from holiness, he decided to place a stone at the mouth of his cave every time his friend committed a misdeed. What was the result? After a few months, the entrance to his cave was completely barred by a wall of gray, stifling stones, and the poor hermit was immured within.

Was that poor hermit the only one who ever built a wall to separate himself from his friend and thus enclose himself in a kind of prison? Offenses, misunderstandings, and unresolved problems may lead us to do the same—to build a wall of retaliation, avoidance, distance, and silence. Thus we enclose ourselves in a prison of our own making. How important it is that we not permit separating, enclosing walls to be built around our hearts! —Adapted from, B. Ferrero, *A volte basta un raggio di sole* (Sometimes just a ray of sunshine), p. 24.

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If Your Brother Sins

"The Lord desires His followers to exercise great care in dealing with one another. They are to lift up, to restore, to heal. But there is to be in the church no neglect of proper discipline....

"God's love for the fallen race is a peculiar manifestation of love--a love born of mercy, for human beings are all undeserving. Mercy implies imperfection of the object toward which it is shown. It is because of sin that mercy was brought into active exercise." --*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 264.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

- 1. May we think that we rarely make mistakes or exhibit faulty behavior? What is our very first Christian duty when we become conscious of our shortcomings?**

JAMES 3:2 *For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.*

PROVERBS 20:9 *Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?*

MATTHEW 5:23, 24 *Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; ²⁴Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*

"There is a wonderful power in silence. When impatient words are spoken to you, do not retaliate. Words spoken in reply to one who is angry usually act as a whip, lashing the temper into greater fury. But anger met by silence quickly dies away. Let the Christian bridle his tongue, firmly resolving not to speak harsh, impatient words. With the tongue bridled, he may be victorious in every trial of patience through which he is called to pass.

"In his own strength man cannot rule his spirit. But through Christ he may gain self-control. In His strength he may bring his thoughts and words into subjection to the will of God. The religion of Christ brings the emotions under the control of reason and disciplines the tongue. Under its influence the hasty temper is subdued, and the heart is filled with patience and gentleness." --*Messages to Young People*, pp. 135, 136.

- 2. Should we seek reconciliation only when we are the offender, or also when we are offended? What have you experienced in this area? What should be our solution to problems among brethren?**

LUKE 17:3 *Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.*

MATTHEW 18:15 *Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.*

"But sin is not to be lightly regarded. The Lord has commanded us not to suffer wrong upon our brother. He says, 'If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him.' Luke 17:3. Sin is to be called by its right name, and is to be plainly laid out before the wrongdoer." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 248.

"You both need a gentler touch. Your words are to soothe, not to harass. Let your hearts be filled with love for souls. With a deep, tender interest, work for those around you. If you see one making a mistake, go to him in the way Christ has pointed out in His word, and see if you cannot talk the matter over with Christlike tenderness. Pray with him, and believe that the Saviour will show you the way out of the difficulty." —*Evangelism*, p. 637.

SPEAK TO THE RIGHT PERSON

- 3. If we speak to a brother about something improper that he has done and he is unwilling to listen, is it correct to just "write off" the offender and regard him as a stranger? How would we feel if the Lord were to do that to us?**

REVELATION 3:20 *Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*

MATTHEW 23:37 *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!*

"The True Witness says, 'Behold, I stand at the door, and knock.' Revelation 3:20. Every warning, reproof, and entreaty in the word of God or through His messengers is a knock at the door of the heart. It is the voice of Jesus asking for entrance. With every knock unheeded, the disposition to open becomes weaker. The impressions of the Holy Spirit if disregarded today, will not be as strong tomorrow. The heart becomes less impressible, and lapses into a perilous unconsciousness of the shortness of life, and of the great eternity beyond." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 489, 490.

"In Jerusalem, Jesus beheld a symbol of the world that had rejected and despised His grace. He was weeping, O stubborn heart, for you! Even when Jesus' tears were shed upon the mount, Jerusalem might yet have repented, and escaped her doom. For a little space the Gift of heaven still waited her acceptance. So, O heart, to you Christ is still speaking in accents of love: 'Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.' 'Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.' Revelation 3:20; 2 Corinthians 6:2." —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 151.

- 4. What should we think of one who does not speak with his offending brother about a difficulty while telling others about the offense? What will fall on us if we act in this way?**

LEVITICUS 19:17 *Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.*

PSALM 141:5 *Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities.*

1 TIMOTHY 5:20 *Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.*

“Christ’s instruction as to the treatment of the erring repeats in more specific form the teaching given to Israel through Moses: ‘Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in anywise rebuke thy neighbor, that thou bear not sin for him.’ Leviticus 19:17, margin. That is, if one neglects the duty Christ has enjoined, of trying to restore those who are in error and sin, he becomes a partaker in the sin. For evils that we might have checked, we are just as responsible as if we were guilty of the acts ourselves.

“But it is to the wrongdoer himself that we are to present the wrong. We are not to make it a matter of comment and criticism among ourselves; nor even after it is told to the church, are we at liberty to repeat it to others.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 441.

PRAYER AND MERCY

5. What can happen if we permit bitterness instead of love to take root in our hearts? Who can be affected by this?

DEUTERONOMY 29:18, LAST PART ... *Lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood.*

HEBREWS 12:14, 15 *Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: ¹⁵Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.*

“Transgression placed the whole world in jeopardy, under the death sentence. But in heaven there was heard a voice saying, ‘I have found a ransom.’” —(Letter 22, 1900) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1076.

“A knowledge of the faults of Christians will be only a cause of stumbling to the unbelieving world; and by dwelling upon these things, we ourselves can receive only harm; for it is by beholding that we become changed.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 441.

6. How do we consider our debt to the Lord and men—as enormous (ten thousand talents), or as small (only a hundred cents)? Is our attitude similar to that of the king in Jesus’ parable or to that of the unmerciful servant?

MATTHEW 18:26-30 *The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. ²⁷Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. ²⁸But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. ²⁹And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. ³⁰And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.*

“How many are today manifesting the same spirit. When the debtor pleaded with his lord for mercy, he had no true sense of the greatness of his debt. He did not realize his helplessness.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 245.

“We were all debtors to divine justice, but we had nothing with which to pay the debt. Then the Son of God, who pitied us, paid the price of our redemption. He

became poor that through His poverty we might be rich. By deeds of liberality toward His poor we may prove the sincerity of our gratitude for the mercy extended to us. 'Let us do good unto all men,' the apostle Paul enjoins, 'especially unto them who are of the household of faith.' Galatians 6:10.... 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.' Mark 14:7; Matthew 7:12." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 652.

7. Therefore, what should we do every time we kneel and ask for forgiveness from God? How are we instructed by Jesus to forgive our brother?

MARK 11:25 *And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.*

COLOSSIANS 3:13 *Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.*

MATTHEW 18:35 *So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.*

"When one who professes to serve God wrongs or injures a brother, he misrepresents the character of God to that brother, and the wrong must be confessed, he must acknowledge it to be sin, in order to be in harmony with God. Our brother may have done us a greater wrong than we have done him, but this does not lessen our responsibility. If when we come before God we remember that another has aught against us, we are to leave our gift of prayer, of thanksgiving, of freewill offering, and go to the brother with whom we are at variance, and in humility confess our own sin and ask to be forgiven." —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 58, 59.

"We have a divine audience to which to present our requests. Then let nothing prevent us from offering our petitions in the name of Jesus, believing with unwavering faith that God hears us, and that He will answer us. Let us carry our difficulties to God, humbling ourselves before Him. There is a great work to be done; and while it is our privilege to counsel together, we must be very sure, in every matter, to counsel with God, for He will never mislead us. We are not to make flesh our arm. If we do, depending chiefly upon human help, human guidance, unbelief will steal in, and our faith will die." —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 487.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Proverbs 25:12; 9:8

Ephesians 4:32

Luke 6:38

THE TOWER OF REPENTANCE

Near Hoddam Castle, Dumfriesshire, Scotland, was a tower called "The Tower of Repentance." It is told that an Englishman, as he was walking near the castle one day, saw a shepherd boy lying on the lawn near the tower reading the Bible.

"What are you reading, lad?" asked the passerby.

"The Bible, sir," replied the boy.

"The Bible. You must be wiser than the parish priest. Can you tell me the way to heaven?"

Not the least disturbed by the man's mocking tone, the shepherd said, "Yes, sir, I can; you must take the path to the tower."

The man realized that the boy had learned well the lesson of his book; after uttering an insult, he left the boy and walked on in silence.

Dear friend, have you been to "the tower of repentance"? If not, please realize that you must enter it.

If we have offended someone, it is obvious that it is our duty to meet the offended brother and seek forgiveness and reconciliation. If the brother is the offender, according to Jesus' teaching, we are still instructed to go, help him recognize his mistake, and take the first step toward reconciliation. In every case, whoever is the offender, we have to enter the tower of repentance, love, and forgiveness. May the Lord help us continually to make this experience. —Adapted from *N.T. Anecdotal* as quoted in A. Lerín, *500 Ilustraciones*, No. 14.

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***Please read the Missionary Report
from Bangalore, India, on page 125***

13

Sabbath, June 25, 2016

You Did It unto Me

"Christ identified Himself with the necessities of His people. Their needs and their sufferings were His. He says: 'I was anhungered, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in: naked, and ye clothed Me: I was sick, and ye visited Me: I was in prison, and ye came unto Me.' God's servants should have hearts of tender affection and sincere love for the followers of Christ. They should manifest that deep interest that Christ brings to view in the care of the shepherd for the lost sheep; they should follow the example given by Christ and exercise the same compassion and gentleness, and the same tender, pitying love that He has exercised toward us." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, pp. 186, 187.

MINISTRY TO OURSELVES

1. What parable did Jesus present to illustrate the attitude of a rich man? Of whom was he thinking, and for whom was he working? What was his plan for all his goods?

LUKE 12:16-19 *And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: ¹⁷And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? ¹⁸And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. ¹⁹And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.*

"God has opened ways in which covetousness can be overcome—by performing benevolent deeds. By your life you are saying that you esteem the treasures of the world more highly than immortal riches. You are saying: 'Farewell, heaven; farewell, immortal life; I have chosen this world.' You are bartering away the pearl of great price for present gain. While thus admonished of God, while in His providence He has, as it were, already placed your feet in the dark river, will you, dare you, cultivate your money-loving propensities?... Our Saviour frequently and earnestly rebuked the sin of covetousness." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 545.

2. But what happened to the rich man and his goods? How should we apply this parable today to our own lives and circumstances?

LUKE 12:20, 21 *But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? ²¹So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.*

MATTHEW 25:41-45 *Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: ⁴²For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: ⁴³I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. ⁴⁴Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? ⁴⁵Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.*

"Men will compass land and sea for earthly gain, and endure privation and suffering to obtain their object, yet will turn away from heaven's attractions, and not regard eternal riches. Men who are in comparative poverty are usually the ones who do the most to sustain the cause of God. They are generous with their little. They have strengthened their generous impulses by continual liberalities. When their expenditures pressed close upon the income, their passion for earthly riches had no room or chance to strengthen. But many, when they begin to gather earthly riches, commence to calculate how long it will be before they can be in possession of a certain sum. In their anxiety to amass wealth for themselves, they fail to become rich toward God.

"It should be your object, in whatever vocation you may be found, to do your work in a manner that shall glorify God. All that you gain, you should look upon as capital to be invested in the bank of heaven. It should be your joy to devote means, and time, and ability to win souls for Christ, to send the light to those who sit in darkness." —*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 275.

CHRIST'S MINISTRY

3. Who stands in contrast to such people? What did Jesus say about His mission and Himself?

MATTHEW 20:28 *Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*

LUKE 22:27 *For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.*

“The apostle Paul exhorted his Philippian brethren: ‘Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.’ Is the servant greater than his master? Christ has given us His life as a pattern, and we dishonor Him when we become jealous of every slight, and are ready to resent every injury, supposed or real. It is not an evidence of a noble mind to be prepared to defend self, to preserve our own dignity.... There is strength to be obtained of God. He can help. He can give grace and heavenly wisdom. If you ask in faith, you will receive; but you must watch unto prayer. Watch, pray, work, should be your watchword.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 426, 427.

4. What service, normally performed by servants and non-Jewish slaves, did Jesus perform for His disciples?

JOHN 13:4, 5 *He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. ⁵After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.*

PHILIPPIANS 2:7 *But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.*

“The ordinance of feet washing most forcibly illustrates the necessity of true humility. While the disciples were contending for the highest place, in the promised kingdom, Christ girded Himself, and performed the office of a servant by washing the feet of those who called Him Lord....

“Having washed the disciples’ feet, He [Jesus] said, ‘I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.’... Christ was here instituting a religious service. By the act of our Lord this humiliating ceremony was made a consecrated ordinance. It was to be observed by the disciples, that they might ever keep in mind His lessons of humility and service.” —*The Faith I Live By*, p. 298.

CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

5. Making reference to service for others, what instruction was given by the apostle Paul? Considering the needs of different people, as what did Paul consider himself?

GALATIANS 5:13, LAST PART ... *But by love serve one another.*

EPHESIANS 6:7 *With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.*

ROMANS 1:14 *I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.*

“Is it the disposition generally among servants to do as much as possible? Is it not rather the prevalent fashion to slide through the work as quickly, as easily, as possible, and obtain the wages at as little cost to themselves as they can? The object is not to be as thorough as possible but to get the remuneration. Those who profess to be the servants of Christ should not forget the injunction of the apostle Paul, ‘Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.’ ” —*Messages to Young People*, pp. 229, 230.

6. Therefore, what spirit should we have as we are called to serve our brethren? In whose name should this be done?

COLOSSIANS 3:17 *And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*

1 CORINTHIANS 10:31 *Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*

“With a loving spirit we may perform life’s humblest duties ‘as to the Lord.’ Colossians 3:23. If the love of God is in the heart, it will be manifested in the life. The sweet savor of Christ will surround us, and our influence will elevate and bless.

“You are not to wait for great occasions or to expect extraordinary abilities before you go to work for God. You need not have a thought of what the world will think of you. If your daily life is a testimony to the purity and sincerity of your faith, and others are convinced that you desire to benefit them, your efforts will not be wholly lost.” —*Steps to Christ*, pp. 82, 83.

OUR MINISTRY FOR CHRIST

7. With whom has Jesus completely identified Himself? Therefore, when we perform some service for those who are needy, for whom are we doing it? What great promise is given to all who work for others in this spirit?

MATTHEW 25:34-40 *Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ³⁵For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: ³⁶Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. ³⁷Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? ³⁸When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? ³⁹Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? ⁴⁰And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*

“By the terms of our stewardship we are placed under obligation, not only to God, but to man. To the infinite love of the Redeemer every human being is indebted for the gifts of life. Food and raiment and shelter, body and mind and soul—all are the purchase of His blood. And by the obligation of gratitude and service thus imposed, Christ has bound us to our fellow men. He bids us, ‘By love serve one another.’ Galatians 5:13. ‘Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.’ Matthew 25:40.” —*Education*, p. 139.

FOR REFLECTION

- ***What do those who will be rejected by God believe concerning themselves and their actions? But whom have they really served?***
- ***Whom have those who will be welcomed into the eternal kingdom thought they were ministering to?***
- ***With what spirit have they done this?***
- ***Do we believe that in serving others we are being a blessing to Christ?***

- *As we work, are we doing it as if we were working for Christ?*
- *Are we speaking as we would speak with Him?*
- *Are we acting as we would act for Him?*
- *Are we doing everything as if we were doing it for Him?*

LOVE MEANS HELPING OTHERS

A kindergarten teacher was trying to explain to the little children in her class what love is. She was having difficulty with this, so she asked them what love is. A little six-year-old girl got out of her chair, went to the teacher, hugged her, kissed her, and said: "This is love."

Then the teacher said, "Okay, but love is something more. What is this something?" After thinking for a while, the same little girl got up and began to tidy up the chairs that were out of place. She cleaned the chalkboard, picked up the papers on the floor, arranged the books that were scattered around on a table, and then, with an air of satisfaction, told the teacher: "Love is more than words; it is helping others."

It is true. Love is more than words. This is exactly what we have studied in the lessons for this quarter. This is what the little girl demonstrated. Let us remember that love means helping others and consider what the apostle John wrote: "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." 1 John 3:18. —Adapted from *Expositor Bíblico*, quoted by A. Lerín, in *500 Ilustraciones*, illustration No. 7.

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MISSIONARY REPORT from Bangalore, India

To be read on Sabbath, June 25, 2016

*The Special Sabbath School Offering will be gathered
on Sabbath, July 2, 2016*

"The churches of Asia salute you." 1 Corinthians 16:19.

A well-known city in India, Bangalore, officially known as Bengaluru, is the capital of the southern Indian state of Karnataka. With a population of over 10 million, it is the third largest city in India and 27th largest city in the world, located in southern India on the Deccan Plateau at over 900 meters (3,000 feet) above sea level—the highest of all of India's largest cities. Bangalore is known for its pleasant year-round climate.

The city is also one of the most ethnically diverse in the country, with over 62% of the city's population made up of migrants from other parts of India. Historically a multicultural city, Bangalore has experienced a dramatic social and cultural change with the liberalization and expansion of the information technology (IT) industry and the outsourcing of many, many such jobs from developed countries to India. IT companies in Bangalore employ over 35% of India's entire pool of 1 million IT professionals.

The state of Karnataka is also well known for its violence against Christians. In 2008, an extreme Hindu group began anti-Christian activities in this state, including the bombing of Protestant churches. This violent act has been repeated again and again in this state. It is very difficult for Christians to conduct public evangelistic activities. The majority Hindu population is violently opposed to the conversion of Hindus to Christianity. In fact, Bangalore is well known for its huge statues of Hindu gods.

The work of the International Missionary Society, S.D.A. Church, Reform Movement, began in 1982 with the establishment of one local church. At the beginning, there were more than forty members, but there was a decline in the membership because of the difficulties associated with meeting in private homes. Nevertheless the faithful church members continued to work in Bangalore, and at present there are thirteen members and ten regular Sabbath school attendees.

Since India has a very strong caste system, it is difficult to convince an unconverted individual to attend a home church. However, the volunteer workers who carry on the work in this region gather different groups together every Sabbath, even though they cannot accommodate many people in the central place where they meet due to the limitation of space. They have tried many times to rent larger places for worship, but the Hindu landlords are not willing to rent their buildings for Christian religious activities.

For a very long time, this church in India has requested help in acquiring a church building. As a major city in India, Bangalore's property prices are very high. But there is great potential for God's work here, because most of the members are employed and there are possibilities to reach many professionals in this region. The young people of the Bangalore church are very active in helping to advance God's work among the youth in other parts of India. Since they all have jobs, they are a great help to the Indian Field. When it's time for the communion service, the members all travel to Tirupattur, in the southern state of Tamilnadu, where the headquarters are located.

Your generous gifts for the Bangalore church building next Sabbath will give them the opportunity to acquire a place of worship for the faithful brethren and visitors. Greetings and blessings from heaven to all with 2 Corinthians 8:12: "... It is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not."

*—Douglas Francis
Asian Division Leader*

