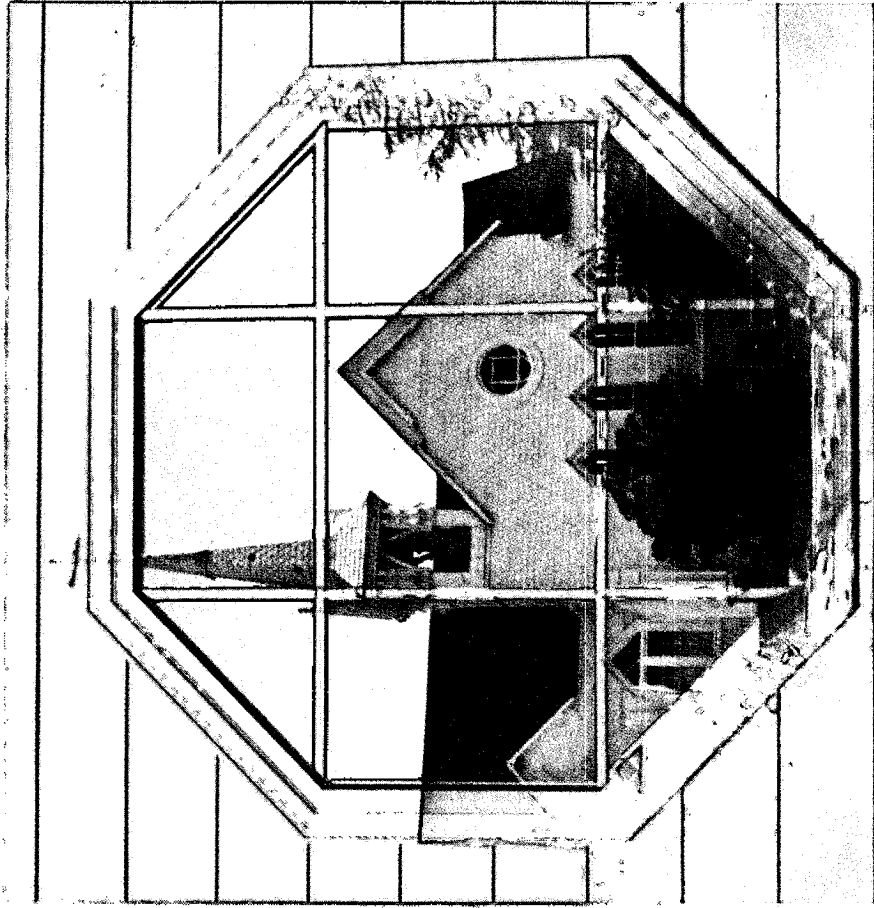


DAYBREAK SERIES

JULY-SEPTEMBER, 1977

Adult Sabbath School Lessons

GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE



Are you giving everything but yourself?

Good investments make good sense. Nicodemus knew that. But still he searched for something more. "Be born again" Jesus had said. The sight of Jesus on the cross finalized the new birth in Nicodemus' life. And in the years which followed, he gave his entire wealth to establish the young church. And considered it his best investment ever.

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To the Sabbath School Members
around the World

Dear Members and Friends:

It is a special privilege to belong to the great Sabbath School family and thus to have a part in world-wide mission work. Through the systematic study of the Scriptures, as well as by our mission offerings, the Sabbath School has been the source of great blessing to us. I would not miss this opportunity to express my heartfelt appreciation to all our Sabbath School members and friends for their faithfulness and willing sacrifice. The following three projects in the Euro-Africa Division will benefit from the Thirteenth Sabbath Overflow this quarter:

1. Nanga-Eboko Seminary: Dormitory and Homes

The future of our work in the countries of French-speaking Africa depends on the proper training of national workers. Construction has started at this institution in Cameroun. A dormitory for single and married theological and teacher-training students, and dwellings for the teachers must be built.

2. Collonges Seminary: Library

The Seminary at Collonges, France, occupies a vital place in the training of French-speaking workers for both Europe and Africa. A new library is their most pressing need, for the present facilities are totally inadequate.

3. Marienhöhe Seminary: Chapel

The growth of the college church at Marienhöhe, Germany, has demanded the use of the gymnasium for holding Sabbath services. A church building is their urgent need.

To make these projects a reality, we are inviting our Sabbath Schools around the world to bring the Lord a special offering on this Thirteenth Sabbath. Knowing of the willingness of your sacrifice in the past, I am convinced that you will gladly share in the development and progress of the work which has been entrusted to us.

In the spirit of Christian fellowship, I send you my sincere thanks in anticipation.

Your brother, in Christ,

E. Ludescher, President
Euro-Africa Division

The explosion of excited noontime chatter and the enticing aromas of pizza, fresh corn, and other goodies spread through the building like a tidal wave. The stampede toward the cafeteria had started as soon as the bell rang

W
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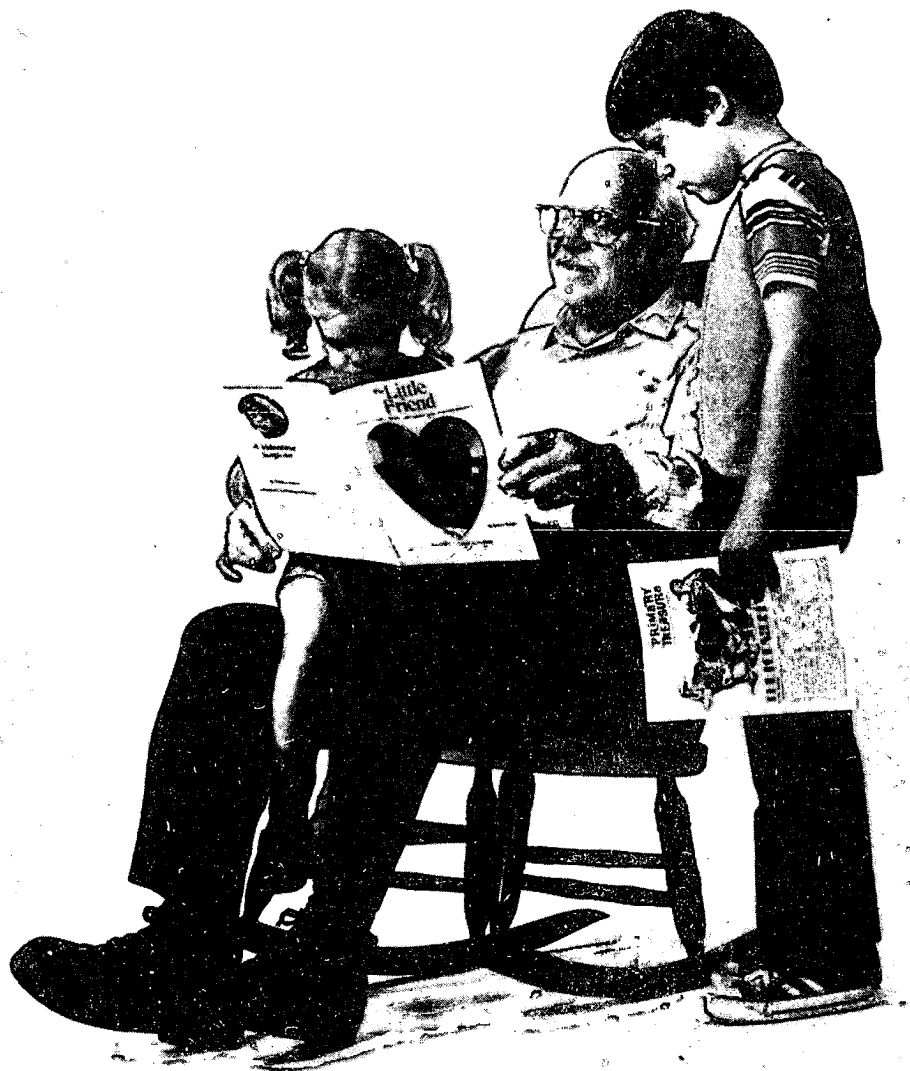
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GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE

Introduction

During the last one hundred years the Seventh-day Adventist Church has grown from a small group of 7000 believers to a worldwide movement of 3,000,000 people. In 1877 it was a rather isolated communion in North America. Now it is an international church, planted in over 90 percent of all the countries of the world. The church began poor and without organization. This denomination today operates thousands of institutions. It is respected for having one of the finest missionary structures and most effective organizations in the world. Yet these very developments, especially of recent years, pose a number of problems which challenge us to consider the question: What does it mean to be the church of God today?

The quest for national and cultural identity in many areas threatens the unity of our church formation. This raises the question: What is the biblical basis and form of church unity? In a few areas the Seventh-day Adventist Church has become the largest single Protestant denomination, which gives it considerable prestige and social power. In some countries Seventh-day Adventists do not identify themselves as a church. They speak of themselves as a communion or a fellowship of Seventh-day Adventists. To these believers the very word "church" stands for social control, clerical power, falsehood, oppression, Babylon, and anti-Christ. A new look at the biblical meaning of "church" may help to settle this issue.

Another series of questions arises concerning the church's relationship to the state, and to the world in general. Recent changes in the church's attitude toward accepting government funds for the operation of its medical and educational institutions demand clarification of the essence and nature of the church. The deepening conflicts between the church's institutions on one hand, and powerful confederacies, labor unions, and government agencies on the other, only deepen that need.

A number of internal tensions and developments likewise emphasize the need for a systematic study on the biblical view of the church. Traditional patterns of authority and control have been challenged; questions are raised concerning the role of women in the church and their ordination to the ministry; lay movements are urging new forms of lay participation in the administration of the church, etc.

Finally, the radically changed missionary situation demands that we take an honest look at ourselves and determine our priorities according to the biblical concepts. Two billion people have never heard with clarity the gospel of Jesus Christ. In many of the existing Christian churches secularization moves ahead along with other changes. In these conditions the question must be asked: What does it mean to belong to God's chosen people today?

Seventh-day Adventists see themselves as a group called to the service of preaching the final message to the world. To be a chosen people in this sense does not mean that only they will be redeemed, or that all Seventh-day Adventists will be saved. They recognize the existence of the church invisible made up of all people who have a true faith in Jesus, regardless of their church communion.

"There is great necessity for a reformation among the people of God. The present state of the church leads to the inquiry: Is this a correct representation of Him who gave His life for us?"—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 474.

May this quarter's study on the biblical view of the church help to lay the foundations for such a reformation.

A Covenant People

"I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee" (Gen. 17:7).

The church begins with Israel. Its essence, nature, and purpose are rooted in God's dealings with His chosen people in the Old Testament. Jesus, the Head of the church, was the Promised One of Israel, their Hope



In Christ all men and women are united as God's children, united by love for one another and for the world around them.

and their Deliverer. As it is impossible to understand fully the person and work of Christ aside from the Old Testament, so it is impossible to get a full understanding of His church without the Old Testament testimony concerning God's dealings with Israel. Of course, the converse is true also. The full meaning of Israel's selection can be understood only in the light of the person of Jesus Christ and the founding of the New Testament church. We have to look both ways, therefore. The Old and New Testaments need each other, and they complement each other. But we must start in the Old Testament.

Our point of departure must be Genesis 1 through 11. These chapters are a key to the understanding of God's dealings with Israel and the nations, of the life and work of Jesus Christ, and of the true nature and goal of His church. In short, these chapters tell us that God created us human beings in His own image and likeness. Dependent upon our Creator for life and breath and all else (Acts 17:25), we humans were yet crowned with honor and glory (Ps. 8:4, 5). The first man and the first woman, each complementing the other, were given power to rule the earth and to have dominion over all that is in it.

Sin made its entrance into the world; the relationship between man and God was broken. As a result, the relationship between humans became distorted also. The true humanity was lost. Daily we experience in our lives the misery resulting from that first sin. And daily we repeat that sin in our lives when we fail to honor God in all our life, when we do not love our fellow humans as ourselves, and when we pollute or destroy our natural environment. But, though sin separated human beings from God and from one another, God in His mercy went after them. He comforted them with His promise of a Redeemer, and He gave them certain rules to live by so that the effects of sin in their lives would be minimized, until the day of their full deliverance. Then the

principles of God's government would be vindicated and His kingdom restored. To that end God, in His mercy, called certain persons with whom He made a covenant and to whom He extended special blessings. That covenant, however, was not just to benefit one individual, or a small group of individuals. No, the blessings of God's covenant were intended for His whole creation in all generations (Gen. 12:2), and for all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people. "For God has no favourites" (Rom. 2:11, NEB). He is a universal God and does not want that any of his creatures will be lost. (See 2 Peter 3:9; 1 Tim. 2:4, 6.) Only in this framework can the story of God's chosen people be understood.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **By Faith Alone** (Gen. 14:6)
2. **Grace and Obedience** (Ex. 20:2, 3)
3. **A Renewed Fellowship** (Joshua 24:24-26)
4. **Israel and the Nations** (Ps. 67:1, 2, 7)
5. **Apostasy** (Hosea 8:14; 9:1)
6. **The Hope of Israel** (Jer. 31:32, 33)

**Part 1
BY FAITH
ALONE**

“He [Abram] believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness” (Gen. 15:6).

The history of God’s chosen people begins with Abraham. God called him away from his surroundings, blessed him, and made a covenant with him. (See Genesis 12 through 17.)

What promises did God make in His covenant with Abraham? Gen. 12:2, 3; 15:18.

At least four characteristics of the covenant relationship between God and Abraham stand out clearly: (1) It was God who chose Abraham; it was not Abraham who first chose God. (2) The covenant is a promise of God’s blessing and eternal protection. (3) The covenant relates not only to the present, but to the future as well. (4) The covenant includes not only Abraham and his immediate family; it includes also his descendants after him, generation after generation.

What was Abraham’s role in the covenant relationship? Gen. 15:6; 17:9, 10.

Though the covenant has its origin with God, it is clearly a two-way relationship. In return for His grace, God invites us to put our trust in Him and to obey His word.

What are some ways in which Abraham is an example to every believer today? Heb. 11:8-10; James 2:21-24.

The starting point of man’s salvation is God’s call to come away from his surroundings. By accepting that call—that is, by putting our faith in God and obeying His word—we become participants in God’s covenant promises.

THINK IT THROUGH

How can all nations on earth share in the blessings of the covenant that God made with Abraham?

It was by way of Abraham that God entered into the world of all nations. His election, and that of all who put their trust in God, is not primarily a privilege, but a responsibility. Election as one of the chosen people of God is an election for service. When the service is withheld, the election loses its meaning.

“The people of God are His representatives upon the earth, and He intends that they shall be lights in the moral darkness of this world. Scattered all over the country, in the towns, cities, and villages, they are God’s witnesses, the channels through which He will communicate to an unbelieving world the knowledge of His will and the wonders of His grace.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 134.

FURTHER STUDY

Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 125-127, 137, 138.

Part 2
GRACE AND
OBEDIENCE

"I am the Lord thy God which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Ex. 20:2, 3).

During the 400 years from Abraham to Moses God kept His covenant relationship with His people. It was because of the covenant relationship that God delivered His people from oppression and made them an independent nation under Himself.

What is the relationship between the Decalogue and God's covenant with Israel at Sinai? Ex. 19:4, 5; 20:1, 2.

Obedience is a response to the God who redeemed us. The commandments were given by the Deliverer of Israel to allow His people to participate in the covenant He had made with them. The law is an *instrument* of God's covenant with His people, a covenant of grace. The commandments remind the people constantly of their God who redeemed them. They challenge God's chosen people to put their whole trust only in Him and to remain within the covenant relationship with their Redeemer.

What particular function has the Sabbath in God's covenant with His people? Ex. 31:13, 16, 17.

Among the visible signs of the special relationship between God and His chosen people, the Sabbath is truly unique. Unlike such signs as land or circumcision, the Sabbath has no parallel outside of Israel. Its rhythm of six plus one is not rooted in a natural cycle, such as the day, the month, or the year. The Sabbath is the perpetual seal of the special relationship between God and His people. When we break that seal, we break the covenant.

THINK IT THROUGH

How does God's election of Israel reflect God's love for all humanity?

"The opinion is held by many that God placed a separating wall between the Hebrews and the outside world; that His care and love, withdrawn to a great extent from the rest of mankind, were centered upon Israel. But God did not design that His people should build up a wall of partition between themselves and their fellow men. The heart of Infinite Love was reaching out toward all the inhabitants of the earth. Though they had rejected Him, He was constantly seeking to reveal Himself to them and make them partakers of His love and grace. His blessing was granted to the chosen people, that they might bless others."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 368.

FURTHER STUDY

Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 363-373.

Part 3
A RENEWED
FELLOWSHIP

“The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey. So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God” (Joshua 24: 24-26).

Joshua called the twelve tribes of Israel to assemble in Shechem. Upon their solemn declaration to serve the Lord and to obey His will, the people were brought into a covenant fellowship with one another. It was on this day that God’s people formally entered a renewed fellowship. The wandering tribes were now settled in the Promised Land. Their covenantal relationship with God became the basis of a new covenantal fellowship with each other. Israel was established in its homeland.

God’s presence was manifested in a central place of worship where all the people regularly assembled. The ark of the covenant was the sign of the presence of God among His people, and the tabernacle, later the temple, served as the central sanctuary. The unity and fellowship among the tribes was thus manifested in regular assemblies at a central place of worship.

For what purpose did God’s chosen people assemble? Ex. 23:14-17.

The men from the twelve tribes of Israel met three times a year for the great festivals in the central sanctuary. In the Passover, the mighty acts of God in the past became an immediate, present reality. At the Feasts of Weeks and of Tabernacles the assembled people of God were assured of the God-given foundations of their present life. The laws of these feasts ceased at the cross.

THINK IT THROUGH

How could this fellowship of the believers and the presence of the Lord become more manifest in our assemblies?

“At these yearly assemblies the hearts of old and young would be encouraged in the service of God, while the association of the people from the different quarters of the land would strengthen the ties that bound them to God and to one another. Well would it be for the people of God at the present time to have a Feast of Tabernacles—a joyous commemoration of the blessings of God to them. As the children of Israel celebrated the deliverance that God had wrought for their fathers, and His miraculous preservation of them during their journeyings from Egypt, so should we gratefully call to mind the various ways He has devised for bringing us out from the world, and from the darkness of error, into the precious light of His grace and truth.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 540, 541.

FURTHER STUDY

Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 537-542.

**Part 4
ISRAEL AND
THE NATIONS**

“God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; Selah. That thy way may be known upon earth, and thy saving health among all nations.”

“God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear him” (Ps. 67:1, 2, 7).

What was David’s prayer request for the nations (the heathen)? Ps. 86:9.

The writers of Genesis, Psalms, and the prophetic books testify that God is the author of all that lives. He created all the nations. He set their boundaries, and He is deeply concerned for the salvation of all people.

How were the chosen people to relate to the heathen? Isa. 43:10; Zech. 8:23.

The covenant God made with Abraham embraced *all nations* (Gen. 12:2, 3), in the same way as *all creatures* were included in God’s covenant with Noah (Gen. 9:8-15). God sent Joseph into Egypt to preserve life in all the countries of the famine (Gen. 45:5-8). God sent Moses as a light into the world, as an instrument of God to teach all nations. God’s act of electing Israel and endowing them with special favors and privileges did not imply a rejection of the heathen. Rather, God called a special people into existence to serve as His priests to the whole world, as channels of His grace to all people. The nation of Israel was elected to be a light unto the nations, calling all to repentance and to worship the Creator as the only true God.

How did Israel acquit itself of its priestly role among the nations? Isa. 5:3-7; Hosea 10:1.

“Israel did not fulfill God’s purpose. . . .

“ . . . The blessings they had received brought no blessing to the world. All their advantages were appropriated for their own glorification. They robbed God of the service He required of them, and they robbed their fellow men of religious guidance and a holy example.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 290-292.

“The Jewish people cherished the idea that they were the favorites of heaven, and that they were always to be exalted as the church of God.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 294.

THINK IT THROUGH

Does the church of God today perhaps stand in the same danger of losing sight of their true calling? How could it be avoided? (See Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11.)

FURTHER STUDY

Prophets and Kings, pp. 367-371.

Part 5
APOSTASY

“Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples; and Judah hath multiplied fenced cities.” “Thou hast gone a whoring from thy God, thou hast loved a reward” (Hosea 8:14; 9:1).

Through a series of mighty acts the Lord chose and called Israel to be His people. But His chosen people, called and elected and brought into a covenant relationship with Him, was from the beginning, and then throughout its history, inclined to be unfaithful to its calling and to break the covenant.

What was the general nature of the apostasy of Israel and Judah? 2 Kings 18:11, 12; 2 Chron. 36:14-16.

God had done everything possible for His people. Yet there was never a time of perfect obedience to the Lord. Israel first apostatized at the conclusion of the covenant, when they worshiped the golden calf. Aaron called a feast to the Lord at the worship of this image. Their great sin was that they mixed the religion of man with the revelation from God. And that is the tragic story of God's people throughout the Old Testament. They wanted to be God's chosen people *and* to be “like the other nations.” They wished to enjoy the special blessings as God's church and enjoy at the same time the pleasures and advantages the world had to offer. The real apostasy was not that the chosen people no longer professed belief in the Lord, but that they did not put their trust in Him alone.

How did God react to His people's apostasy? Jer. 3: 12-15; Hosea 3:1.

Instead of leaving Israel to its own whims and wishes, and punishing His people for having rejected Him, God shows Himself a forgiving father, a loving husband, compassionate, longsuffering, and merciful. He left nothing undone to call His people back. (See Isa. 5:4.) He sent them His prophets, even summoning other nations to bring Israel to its senses, through oppression, and exile. But neither compassion nor constraint, neither forgiveness nor force, had any lasting influence. The people passed the word around, “Neither shall evil come upon us; neither shall we see sword nor famine” (Jer. 5:12). It was only when God's judgment came that the people recognized: “The Lord is righteous; for I have rebelled against his commandment” (Lam. 1:18).

THINK IT THROUGH

What parallels exist between Israel's apostasy and that of God's church in these last days?

FURTHER STUDY

Prophets and Kings, pp. 296-300.

Part 6
THE HOPE
OF ISRAEL

"Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts" (Jer. 31:32, 33).

Judah's predicament, called for deliverance. Without the promise of renewal, restoration, and redemption, life would have been unbearable. Without hope, life is misery.

According to Ezekiel, in what way could Judah expect deliverance to come? Eze. 36:22-31.

The prophets promised three forms of deliverance. (1) A *remnant* shall remain. Through them the purposes of God will be carried out. (2) A *new covenant* will be made, marking the beginning of a new era. (3) A *Messiah* will come. Through His death expiation will be made for people's sins. He will establish an eternal kingdom of peace and righteousness.

What is the difference between the old covenant and the new? Jer. 31:31-34; Eze. 36:26, 27; Ex. 19:7, 8; 32:15, 16.

In essence, the principles and objectives of the two covenants are the same. For the new people of God, as for the old, the basis of the covenant is the unchanging will of God to be the Lord of His people. He calls and elects and blesses and makes us His own. The only thing that is changed is the way in which the people choose to make the laws of God their own. Although the will of God was written on tables of stone, God has designed that His law shall also be written upon the hearts of men. The new covenant will penetrate to the very center of man's existence.

THINK IT THROUGH

What is the relationship between God's promise of the new covenant and the coming of the Messiah?

"Through the grace of Christ we shall live in obedience to the law of God written upon our hearts. Having the Spirit of Christ, we shall walk even as He walked. . . .

" . . . God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that *the righteousness of the law* might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.' Romans 8:3, 4."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 372, 373.

FURTHER STUDY

Prophets and Kings, pp. 681-702.

The Messiah Has Come

"He [Andrew] first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ."

"Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph" (John 1:41, 45).

The Deliverer has come! God's promises have been fulfilled—promises of the remnant, of the new covenant, and of the Messiah (see lesson 1, part 6), who would establish a new kingdom. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:4, 5). That Person was Jesus, the son of Mary of Nazareth. On several occasions Jesus testified of Himself that He was the Messiah, the Son of God. At the beginning of His ministry Jesus went to the synagogue in Nazareth, where He had been brought up, and read from Isaiah 61:1, 2 which reads: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me;

because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." After Jesus had given back the scroll to the attendant, He sat down.

All eyes were fixed on Him. Then Jesus said: "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:21).

Jesus revealed Himself to both Jews and Gentiles as the Messiah. The Samaritan woman at Jacob's well said to Jesus, "I know that Messias cometh." Jesus replied, "I that speak unto thee am he" (John 4:25, 26). And Jesus' whole life and ministry proved it: He opened the eyes of the blind and made the lame walk; He forgave men their sins and lived a life of perfect obedience to God. In Him, the kingdom had come indeed. (See Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; etc.) Jesus was the one fully obedient man in God's eternal covenant with humanity.

The Jews had come to believe that salvation could be achieved by obedience to the law and that the true Israel consisted of all those who keep the commandments of God. Jesus re-introduced God's revelation to man from the beginning: *Sinners are saved by grace*. The true Israel consists of all those who put their trust in Him, the Merciful, the Compassionate. This message liberated the poor, the publican, and the prostitute. It restored hope in the sinful and the sick. Jesus took their burdens and gave them peace. (See Matt. 11:28.) He thereby broke the wall of separation between the have's and the have-not's, between the high and the low, between the Jew and the Gentile. In Christ there is no East or West, no slave or master, no male or female

(Gal. 3:28). Those who put their trust in Him are one, as Christ and the Father are one. Built on Jesus Christ and His message of liberation, the church then is a gathering of sick and sinful people, called saints, whom God has called in His Son to a new communion with God and into a new fellowship with one another. Whoever claims to belong to the people of God will ever show these hallmarks of freedom and equality, obedience and love.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. Jesus, the Son of God (Gal. 4:4, 5)
2. Jesus, the Lamb of God (John 1:29)
3. Jesus, the Son of Man (Luke 19:10; Mark 10:45)
4. Jesus Is Lord (1Cor. 8:6)
5. Jesus, Our Mediator (1Tim. 2:5, 8)
6. Jesus, Our Judge (John 5:22)



When God came to become one with His people in Christ, He demonstrated a love that transcends all human expression.

Part 1
JESUS, THE
SON OF GOD

“When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Gal. 4:4, 5).

Jesus once raised the question: Who do the people say the Son of man is? Throughout His earthly life the identification of Jesus ranged from Peter’s immediate response “you are the Christ, the son of the Living God” to “He is possessed; he is raving. Why listen to Him?” (See Matt. 16:13, 14; John 10:19-21, NEB). We moderns are still confronted by the same question, and our answer determines the whole meaning—or lack of meaning—of our life and existence. The only valid answer, confirmed in Scripture, is: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16).

**On what basis did Peter say, “Jesus is the Son of God”?
Matt. 16:17; 11:27.**

Any individual who is confronted with Jesus recognizes in Him a unique and very exceptional person. Even His enemies had to admit that He was different—in authority, in power, in character, in holiness. Jesus was God. He forgave men their sins, which led critics to the reaction, “Who can forgive sins but God only?” (Mark 2:7).

The belief that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God, is the very foundation upon which the church is built. God became a man and lived among the people of Palestine some 2,000 years ago. Whoever denies this in words, acts, or thought shuts himself out of the community of the new Israel. The belief that Jesus is the Son of God is not just a doctrine. It is a confession of faith.

What were the consequences of the Jewish people’s rejection of Jesus as the Son of God? Matt. 21:42-44.

“Little did the Jews realize the terrible responsibility involved in rejecting Christ. . . . By their rejection of the Saviour, they were making themselves responsible for the blood of all the righteous men slain from Abel to Christ. They were about to fill to overflowing their cup of iniquity. And soon it was to be poured upon their heads in retributive justice. Of this, Jesus warned them.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 618, 619.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 410-414.

Part 2 "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, **JESUS, THE Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world"** (John 1:29).

The title Lamb of God points back to the sacrifices in the Old Testament. It was especially appropriate as a title for Jesus because of His suffering and sacrifice for sin.

What was the purpose of the sacrificial slaying of animals in the Old Testament? Lev. 1:4; 4:27-29.

After their first sin, Adam and Eve stitched fig leaves together to cover themselves. Afraid to meet their Maker, they hid themselves when they heard His voice. God had to punish them. But during probation punishment is never the last word. The Bible says that God Himself made "coats of skins" for Adam and his wife and clothed them (Gen. 3:21). In the death of the animals to provide clothing is the foundation of all sacrifices.

What is the purpose of Christ's atoning sacrifice? Eph. 1:7; 2:11-18.

In meditating upon Christ's sacrifice, please think further of the following message: "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18).

What is one result of the covenant [testament] Christ has established through His blood? Matt. 26:27-29. To whom does God offer this new covenant? John 1:29.

The covenant is offered to all people, in all times. All are invited; "For the love of Christ leaves us no choice, when once we have reached the conclusion that one man died for all and therefore all mankind has died" (2 Cor. 5:14, NEB). "He has enlisted us in this service of reconciliation" (verse 18, NEB).

THINK IT THROUGH

What has been my habitual response toward the sacrifice of Christ for me? What could it be?

"The atoning sacrifice seen through faith brings peace and comfort and hope to the trembling soul weighed down beneath the sense of guilt. The law of God is the detector of sin, and as the sinner is drawn to the dying Christ, he sees the grievous character of sin, and repents and lays hold on the remedy, the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world."—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, Sept. 2, 1890. (Quoted in *Questions on Doctrine*, p. 670.)

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 752, 753.

Part 3
JESUS, THE
SON OF MAN

“The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost” (Luke 19:10).

“The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

Jesus, though verily God, was at the same time truly man. The Bible testifies that He “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” (Phil. 2:7, 8). This is a great mystery, but it is the heart of the gospel, the basis of man’s salvation (1 John 4:2, 3).

In which way was the man Jesus different from us? 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 John 3:5.

Jesus was “made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people” (Heb. 2:17). But though He subjected Himself to all the humbling conditions of man’s fallen nature after thousands of years of sin, Jesus was without sin. It was not because of His divinity that Jesus lived a sinless life. He used no powers that are not available to any person who by faith is renewed after the image of God. He has given us an example. “As Jesus was in human nature, so God means His followers to be.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 289.

The incarnation is significant for God’s election of the new Israel. In a beautiful passage (Philippians 2:5-11) on the incarnation of Christ Paul says: “Let your bearing towards one another arise out of your life in Christ Jesus” (NEB). The KJV gives for “bearing,” “mind.” The Scriptures urge us to become as Jesus was in human flesh, always giving glory to God our Father, and loving our neighbor as ourselves.

THINK IT THROUGH

What will be the hallmark of the church whose members are following the pattern of Christ? What is there in my life that hinders me from becoming as He once was in human flesh? (See Eph. 5:1, 2.)

“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. This witness it is the privilege of the followers of Christ to bear.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 549.

FURTHER STUDY

^a *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 23, 24.

Part 4
JESUS
IS LORD

"To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him" (1 Cor. 8:6).

The Bible testifies that after Jesus had died for us, and was buried, God the Father called Him to life again. (See Acts 2:31, 32.) He appeared to His friends and His disciples, whom He commissioned to continue His work on earth, and then ascended into heaven, where He "sat on the right hand of God" (Mark 16:19). (See also Luke 22:69.) Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, saw Jesus there (Acts 7:55, 56).

What is the meaning of Christ's being at the right hand of God? 1 Peter 3:22.

The saying, seated "on the right hand of God," refers to the full power and glory of Jesus after His resurrection and ascension. Jesus is Lord. (See Acts 2:36.) His Lordship is first of all recognized by the members of His church. All authority in heaven and on earth is given to Him. *Therefore*—that is, on the basis of that authority—Jesus bade His disciples to go into all the world and make disciples out of all nations (Matt. 28:18-20). All gifts, powers, and the protection of the church are based on the lordship of Christ. Because Jesus is Lord, life on earth has meaning. We need not be tossed about by winds of evil and waves of temptation. Jesus is Lord. Through His power we are more than conquerors (Rom. 8:31-39). Our times are in His hands. So is the life of the whole church, of which He is the Head (Col. 1:18).

All history also is in His hand; all powers and dominions are under His control. Eph. 1:18-23. He is the King of kings. His kingship is different from that of the rulers of the earth. Christ rules through love and persuasion, through grace and giving, rather than through force. But His lordship is real. It is the ground of our hope. One day all people, righteous and wicked, will confess: "Jesus Christ is Lord" (Phil. 2:11).

What is the basis of the lordship of Christ? Phil. 2:5-11.

The word "wherefore" in Philippians 2:9 clearly indicates that it is because of Christ's incarnation, humiliation, and sacrifice at the cross that God has exalted Him as Lord of all and has given Him all power in heaven and on earth. In Acts 2:34-36 we read that the crucified One was exalted as Lord.

THINK IT THROUGH

How can the followers of Christ participate in His lordship? (See John 13:13-17.)

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 666-671.

**Part 5
JESUS, OUR
MEDIATOR**

There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time" (1 Tim. 2:5, 6).

When Christ entered into heaven to be crowned Lord of lords, He entered also into the heavenly sanctuary to serve. He is described as the "great high priest" (Heb. 4:14), appearing before God for us. (Heb. 9:24). Stephen saw his Lord standing there as the Son of man (Acts 7:56). Christ is serving in the presence of His Father as a man, our representative.

Of what is Christ a mediator and with what results? Heb. 8:6, 10-12. See also Gal. 3:19, 20.

A "mediator" is a person whose task it is to reconcile two parties. He is a peacemaker. In His mediation, Christ is not influencing the Father to change His mind. The Bible makes it very clear that it was God Himself who gave this Mediator. The Father and the Son are one. Christ did not wrest our salvation and peace from an avenging God, but He fulfilled and realized God's promise made to Abraham (Heb. 6:13-20). God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself (2 Cor. 5:19). What Jesus' work as Mediator implies, then, is: (1) He makes His work of reconciliation, achieved at the cross, *become a reality* in people (peace); (2) Christ is making an *application* of His sacrifice for the benefit of all who come to Him (forgiveness of sins); (3) Christ is *sanctifying* His people. He is working out His perfect life in us. (See 1 Cor. 15:57; Gal. 2:20.)

What has made Jesus a mediator? Heb. 10:10-12.

By what means is Christ accomplishing His work of reconciliation and peacemaking on earth? John 15:26, 27; 17:18, 20.

The texts clearly indicate that Christ has chosen to accomplish His work on earth through and in His followers under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Christ has sent us out so that through our words and actions people may be persuaded to accept Him as their Saviour and Lord.

THINK IT THROUGH

In what ways can I become an ambassador of reconciliation?

"Since His ascension Christ has carried forward His work on earth by chosen ambassadors, through whom He speaks to the children of men and ministers to their needs. The great Head of the church superintends His work through the instrumentality of men ordained by God to act as His representatives." —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 360..

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 38-40.

Part 6
JESUS,
OUR JUDGE

"The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (John 5:22).

The judgment has a number of phases, but Jesus is always the Judge. There is the judgment that takes place when people reject Jesus; then the investigative judgment; next the judgment in the 1000 years; and last, the executive judgment when the wicked die for eternity.

What is one way Jesus brought judgment on the world? John 5:22-24.

In the New Testament the word "judgment" is often a translation of *krisis*, which means a process of sifting, of separating the righteous from the evildoers. The judgment by Christ is a process which people bring about themselves. By rejecting the light, they choose darkness; by not accepting the salvation offered in Christ's blood, they opt for condemnation, together with all evil and sin.

Because the rejecters of Jesus are already judged, their names do not come up in the investigative judgment. It is the wheat and tares within the church that are separated in the investigative phase.

When will the final judgment of the world take place? Dan. 7:9, 10; 8:13, 14.

The final judgment began with Jesus' entrance into the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary in 1844. The Bible also speaks of a certain day in history when Christ's work of judging, of separating the wheat from the tares, will become a visible reality, and final. (See Matt. 13:40-43.) History will reach its final climax when our Lord ceases His mediatorial work in heaven and returns to this earth to pronounce the last judgment. Some will enter into the kingdom of God, there to live forever. During the 1,000 years a review will be made of all the cases of the lost. At the close of the 1,000 years all of the lost will stand in judgment before Christ and when sentenced will admit to the justice of their sentence. Then the name of God will be vindicated and the wicked destroyed. The kingdom of God will be restored. Death and devil will be no more.

THINK IT THROUGH

What is the role of the church in Christ's present work of judgment? Could it, by its life and work, hasten the day of restoration?

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 479, 480, 490, 491.

The True Israel

"Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: . . . but the children of the promise are counted for the seed" (Rom. 9:7, 8).

new era began. And yet the New Testament church is a *continuation* of God's Old Testament people. "That which God purposed to do for the world through Israel, the chosen nation, He will finally accomplish

With the coming of the Messiah a



God's true people care, and that caring manifests itself in loving action through a worldwide ministry.

through His church on earth today."— *Prophets and Kings*, p. 713. The one cannot be understood without the other. In fact, the two need each other. ~~The church owes its existence to Israel; and Israel, in turn, will find salvation through the church (Rom. 11:11-26). The two are not identical, even though they are based on the same promises, the same covenant, the same divine election. They are not the same, but the two form one unit. The name Israel is applied also to the Christian church in the New Testament. Israel is the name for God's people as a whole (Gal. 6:15, 16).~~

There are some basic differences between Israel of the Old Testament and Israel of the New. Something new has come, and the new replaces much of the old. ~~The New Testament speaks of a more superior ministry, of better promises, a better covenant (Heb. 8:6). In light of the new ministry and the new covenant, the old ones do not continue; they disappear (Heb. 8:13).~~

In the Old Testament period redemption is foretold; the re-creation of man in the image of God is promised. The restoration of the kingdom of God was an event of the future. ~~Through the life and death of Jesus Christ, these prophecies have been fulfilled; the promises have been realized. "The kingdom has come," is the message of the New Testament. In the Old Testament "salvation was the theme which the prophets pondered and explored. . . . They tried to find out what was the time, and what the circumstances, to which the Spirit of Christ in them pointed, foretelling the sufferings in store for Christ and the splendours to follow; and it was disclosed to them that the matter they treated of was not for their time but for yours" (1 Peter 1:10-12, NEB). In Christ we can say, "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God" (Rev. 12:10). Our sins have been forgiven; the atonement was completed at the cross. God's kingdom has begun.~~

~~This has far-reaching consequences~~

for the nature of the church and its mission in the New Testament. Israel expected that the nations would come to them for a knowledge of salvation. ~~But Christ called the church to go out into the whole world and proclaim this good news. This is the very reason for the existence of the church.~~

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. ~~Jesus and the Jews (John 1:11)~~
2. ~~The Church and Israel (Gal. 3:29)~~
3. ~~Jesus and the Gentiles (John 3:16)~~
4. ~~The Church and the World (Matt. 28:19)~~
5. ~~Jesus and His Apostles (Mark 3:14)~~
6. ~~The Church Apostolic (Eph. 2:20)~~

**Part 1
JESUS AND
THE JEWS**

"He came to his own home, and his own people received him not" (John 1:11, RSV).

Jesus stated that He had come only for the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt. 15:24). When Jesus commissioned His disciples, He instructed them: "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 10:5, 6).

Jesus came to His own people, the ones who had received the promise of His coming. It was in fulfillment of God's promise made to Abraham that Christ came to bring salvation and the restoration of Israel. They were the people with whom God had made His covenant. Other persons were not excluded from the benefits of Christ's work, but their needs could be met only when His mission to Israel had been completed.

What was the nature of the Messiah's mission to Israel? Dan. 9:24. (See also Matt. 1:21; John 17:4, 5.)

In a word: to reveal the Father, to offer salvation to Israel, and to establish the kingdom of God.

How did the Jews react to God's compassionate love in the person of Jesus Christ? Acts 3:13-15.

The Jews' rejection of Christ is in line with Israel's attitude toward the covenant of God throughout Old Testament times. (See 2 Chron. 36:15, 16; Hosea 6:4-7.) The cross, the demonstration of God's love, is at the same time a demonstration of man's hostile reaction toward God's love and grace. The cross that could have brought Israel peace, restoration and happiness forever now became their downfall and their ruin.

THINK IT THROUGH

What does the cross of Jesus Christ mean to me?

"To Paul the cross was the one object of supreme interest. Ever since he had been arrested in his career of persecution against the followers of the crucified Nazarene he had never ceased to glory in the cross. At that time there had been given him a revelation of the infinite love of God, as revealed in the death of Christ; and a marvelous transformation had been wrought in his life, bringing all his plans and purposes into harmony with heaven. From that hour he had been a new man in Christ. He knew by personal experience that when a sinner once beholds the love of the Father, as seen in the sacrifice of His Son, and yields to the divine influence, a change of heart takes place, and henceforth Christ is all and in all."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 245.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 745-749.

**Part 2
THE CHURCH
AND ISRAEL**

"If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29).

What is the meaning of the expression "Abraham's seed" in this text and in others such as Isaiah 41:8 and John 8:33?

The expression "seed of Abraham" has clearly three distinct meanings. *First*, is used for the natural descendants of Abraham through the line of Isaac and Jacob (Rom. 9:7-9). Its *second* use is for Jesus Christ Himself (Gal. 3:16). The true posterity of Abraham is ultimately embodied in Jesus Christ. He is its summation and Head, for the promise was received through Him. The *third* meaning is all who are in Christ, who keep the faith and obey His commandments. This includes Jew and Gentile, Greek and barbarian, African and American, Asian and European. All who are united to Christ, baptized in union with Him, are Abraham's seed and so heirs by promise.

To belong to Abraham's seed, then, really means to be united with Jesus Christ. Whoever believes in Him is thereby heir to the promises given to Abraham. The church, whose head is Jesus Christ, is thus the true Israel.

What is the relationship between the church and Israel? Rom. 11:14-18.

In Christ the Gentiles have been made partakers of God's promises to Israel (Eph. 3:6). We have become "fellow-heirs." The church is not the only heir. God is still longing for the esteem of Israel. It is through the church that God is fulfilling His promise of salvation to all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people. It is through the church, also, that God purposes to call Israel to repentance and salvation (Rom. 11:11, 12, 25-31). Though the church has indeed gone out to the Gentiles and won many of them to Christ, it has, through the ages, neglected the Jews. The purpose of God was that the church, through humility and obedience, should make Israel envious of its salvation. The church should never forget that it is but a wild branch "grafted in among them." We share the same root, but we should not make ourselves "superior to the branches. If you do so, remember that it is not you who sustain the root: the root sustains you" (Rom. 11:17, 18, NEB).

THINK IT THROUGH

What is the church's message to Israel? How could Seventh-day Adventist mission to the Jews best be accomplished?

FURTHER STUDY

Prophets and Kings, pp. 709-715.

**Part 3
JESUS AND
THE GENTILES**

“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

In accordance with the Old Testament, Jesus clearly asserted the fundamental distinction between Israel and the nations of the world in regard to God's redemptive purpose. It was Israel's privilege as the vessel of the promises to receive the first offer of salvation (Matt. 22:3). Yet, from the very beginning of His ministry, Jesus purposed to bring salvation to all nations.

What biblical evidence is there that Jesus ministered not only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but to the Gentiles as well? Matt. 8:5-13; Mark 7:24-30; John 4:5-7.

Matthew described the beginning of Jesus' ministry to the Gentiles, which he saw as a fulfillment of prophecy (Matt. 4:12-17). He mentions “the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, toward the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned” (RSV). (See also Isa. 9:1, 2.) And the report says, “His fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people . . . ; and he healed them. And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan” (Matt. 4:24, 25). Christ ministered to both Jew and Gentile.

In what way did Jesus confirm that His ministry was for the Gentiles as well as for the Jews even before the Jews rejected Him? Mark 11:15-19.

The court which Jesus cleansed was “the court of the Gentiles.” It was the only part of the sanctuary to which non-Jews had access. It was separated from the inner courts by the “middle wall of partition” (Eph. 2:14). The only part of the house of God which Gentiles were legally permitted to use to worship God was closed to them by the trade and commerce of the Jews. Quoting Isaiah 56:7, Jesus asserted: “Mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.” Though Jesus rebuked the materialism and secularism of God's people when He cleansed the outer court, He also made room in God's house for the Gentiles to come and worship Him in peace and quietness.

THINK IT THROUGH

In which ways is the spirit which built up the partition wall between Jew and Gentile still active?

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 402, 403.

Part 4
 THE CHURCH
 AND THE
 WORLD

"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" (Matt. 28:19, 20).

The church exists by mission as fire exists by burning. Mission is the life of the church, the very reason for its existence.

When did Jesus send His disciples into all the world? Mark 16:9, 14-20.

The story of Jesus' ministry does not end with His resurrection, but with His commission to go to all the world. These two events are intimately related. By Christ's resurrection the name of God was vindicated, and the "accuser of the brethren" forever cast out of heaven. The time of salvation had come. This had to be proclaimed. It could not have been told in the same way before Christ's death and resurrection.

What is the content of the great commission Christ gave to His church? Matt. 28:18-20.

1. *All power*, all authority (RSV), has been given to Christ. He is Lord of lords and King of kings. The whole world has therefore been wrested from the grip of other powers, whatever their nature, form or strength. (See Eph. 1:20-23.)

2. *All nations* are to be the recipients of the good news that Christ is Lord. This can be achieved only when the followers of Christ do not isolate themselves from the world or cluster together in colonies, but when they go, spread, travel, visit. The making of disciples of all nations can happen only when the church remains a movement.

3. *I am with you always*. After the proclamation of the authority of Christ and the commandment, the *promise* follows of Christ's eternal presence everywhere, in all things and all ways, until the end of time.

THINK IT THROUGH

Given the power of Christ and the promise of His presence, why has His commission not yet been fulfilled?

"The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. From the beginning it has been God's plan that through His church shall be reflected to the world His fullness and His sufficiency."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 9.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 822-828.

**Part 5
JESUS AND
HIS APOSTLES**

“He ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach” (Mark 3:14).

The origin of the people of God in the New Testament, as in Israel, lies with God's calling. He took the initiative. The formation of the church was not an idea that occurred to the disciples only after the resurrection. It was Jesus' intention from the very first days of His ministry.

What was the nature of the call the disciples received? Matt. 9:9; Luke 5:11; 9:23; John 1:43.

The group that Jesus gathered round Himself was meant to have a decisive influence on the life of the society around it. The Twelve were called to follow Jesus. That has remained the hallmark of all the members of His church: They are called to be Christians, followers of Jesus Christ. There is no greater call, no higher status.

What was the basis of the twelve men's apostleship? Matt. 10:1, 2.

At least two basic requirements for apostleship can be distinguished. The first is *discipleship*. The text says that Jesus called His *disciples* and then refers to them as *apostles*. Apostleship must always be preceded by discipleship. The second is *authorization* by Christ. “And he . . . gave them authority (RSV). Jesus would say of them later, “They have kept thy word. . . . I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; . . . they have believed that thou didst send me” (John 17:6-8).

For what purpose did Jesus appoint His twelve apostles? Mark 3:14.

“These men He purposed to train and educate as the leaders of His church. They in turn were to educate others and send them out with the gospel message. . . .

“It was at the ordination of the Twelve that the first step was taken in the organization of the church that after Christ's departure was to carry on His work on the earth. . . .

“. . . By these feeble agencies, through His word and Spirit, He designs to place salvation within the reach of all.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 17, 18.

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I ready to become an apostle of Jesus Christ? If not, what qualification is lacking?

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 17-20.

**Part 6
THE CHURCH
APOSTOLIC**

"[Ye] are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" (Eph. 2:20).

After the death of the twelve apostles, the early church soon became divided over the question of the "apostolic succession." The issue is still debated today.

In light of the apostles' ordination and commission, what really makes the church apostolic?

There are at least five essential elements to consider: (1) Does it have the faith of Jesus? (2) Does it obey all that Christ has commanded? (3) Is it following Jesus Christ in discipleship? (4) Is it authorized by Christ? (5) Is it carrying out the great apostolic commission? The church that bears these distinctive marks of the apostles can rightly claim to be apostolic. The most decisive factor is not the external or direct historical line, but the spiritual. The thought is clarified by a paraphrase of Jesus' words in John 8:39 concerning Abraham's children: "If ye were the successors of the apostles, ye would do the works of the apostles."

What is, in this light, the meaning of Matthew 16:18?

Throughout the history of the church the "rock" has been variously interpreted as Peter, the confession of Peter, Jesus Christ Himself, or all of the twelve apostles together. Jesus called His disciple Peter (Greek: *Petros*), which means "a stone." He then added, "Upon this rock [Greek: *petra*] I will build my church." Notice the change: from *Petros* to *petra*, a play on words that can best be explained by noting their meaning. *Petra* means a massive rock, suitable for the foundation of a large building. *Petros*, however, generally means a small stone, such as might be used in a rock wall. Peter himself speaks of Christ as the Rock. (See Acts 4:11, 12; 1 Peter 2:4-8.) Paul likewise tells us that the Rock is Christ (1 Cor. 10:4). Finally, the Scriptures teach that Jesus Christ is the foundation of the church. (See 1 Cor. 3:11.) The entire structure rests on Him.

THINK IT THROUGH

Why is each believer called a living stone of the church?

"The Christian who faithfully presents the word of life, leading men and women into the way of holiness and peace, is bringing to the foundation material that will endure, and in the kingdom of God he will be honored as a wise builder."— *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 599.

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 595-598.

The Body of Christ

“Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular” (1 Cor. 12:27).

The concept of the church as the body of Christ is found only in the New Testament and especially in the writings of the apostle Paul, in his epistles to the Romans, the Corinthians, the Ephesians, and the Colossians. Some have concluded that Paul introduced a new term into the language of Christianity, if not a distinctly new concept, into the theology of the early church. But that is not quite true. Jesus Himself already had likened His body to the temple of God (John 2:18-20). But, as the next two verses indicate, it was not until after the resurrection that the disciples understood what Jesus had meant (verses 21, 22). Moreover, as long as Christ was with His disciples, a concept of the church as His body could not develop. Not until Jesus had been glorified could there develop a

concept that the church was the imitation and reflection of the physical presence of Jesus Christ in the world. The Holy Spirit guided the disciples into this truth, since they could understand this only after their Master had ascended into heaven. (See also John 12:16; 20:9.) But, although the term “body of Christ” for the church is not original with Paul, he certainly gave the words a series of meanings, many-sided, deep and complex, each of which describes a particular aspect of the church.

Throughout the history of the church heated discussions have raged over the correct interpretation of the term “body of Christ” in reference to the church. And the debate has not ended yet. Some Christian groups would rather not use the term at all. They see in it a close association with authoritarianism, ecclesiastical power structures, institutionalized religion, and religious totalitarianism. Others, because of its misuse in the past, even refuse to give it careful study. But the image of the church as the body of Christ is so powerfully presented in the writings of the apostle Paul that no Christian can afford not to steep himself in its manifold meanings, even though misunderstandings may arise, and arise again. One of such misunderstandings today is the notion that the church is literally the body of Christ and therefore a continuation of His physical presence, an extension of the incarnation. This concept is found especially—but not exclusively—in Roman Catholic thought. The “body of Christ” is not Christ Himself! Neither is the church His natural body. Christ did not come to incorporate us into His body according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. The church is indeed characterized by the presence of Christ through the Spirit,

but it may not be identified with Him. Though divine in origin and orientation, the church bears also the marks of sin. It is a holy institution, yet fallible and weak. Its members are called saints, but they are yet sinners. This is a mystery which finds its solution only in the grace of our Lord. Only in God's grace will we be able to understand how a body which, by sin, constantly denies its own nature is yet accepted by God and used as a channel of His grace.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **The Head of the Body** (Eph. 1:22, 23)
2. **By His Spirit** (1 Cor. 12:13)
3. **United With Christ** (Rom. 12:5)
4. **Members of One Another** (Rom. 12:4, 5)
5. **Unity in Diversity** (1 Cor. 12:14)
6. **Growing Together in Christ** (Eph. 4:16)



God's children are a maturing fellowship, individuals whose uniqueness brings a rich tapestry of shared experience.

Part 1
THE HEAD
OF THE BODY

“[He] hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body” (Eph. 1:22, 23).

What does it mean to say that Christ is Head of the church? Col. 1:16-18; 2:6-10.

To say “head,” according to these texts, is to say: He is the source of the church, its very origin. He is the One in whom and through whom and for whom the church is created—God who in Christ took the initiative. He has called us and redeemed us; He has bought us and brought us together in Him and with one another. He also cares for His body, and feeds it and makes it grow. Christ is the source of its existence.

From comparisons with other scriptures, two more meanings of the headship of Christ emerge. One is that Christ is the supreme Leader of the church. To belong to the body of Jesus Christ really means to follow Him, to obey His commandments, and to keep His faith. All other powers in our lives have ceased to exist. If the church is the body of Christ, then it cannot be captive to any other force or seek support from any other power.

Another meaning is that the members of the body are *His people*. (See 1 Peter 2:9; Titus 2:14.) Christ, the Head, means: The church is His very own.

What are the consequences of recognizing Christ as the Head of the church? Col. 1:18-22.

Do we dare to say: As the Head is, so is His body? The consequence of having Christ as the Head means that the whole life of the church must be consistent with, and a reflection of, the life of Jesus Christ. By bearing the name of its Head and Founder the church must, indeed, reflect the mind, love, and will of Him who has chosen us.

THINK IT THROUGH

What does the name “Christian” mean to me?

“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”

“These are the words of our Substitute and Surety. He who is the divine Head of the church, the mightiest of conquerors, would point His followers to His life, His toils, His self-denials, His struggles and sufferings . . . that they might be encouraged to press on toward the mark for the prize and reward of the overcomer. Victory is assured through faith and obedience.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 966.

FURTHER STUDY

Gospel Workers, pp. 13-17.

**Part 2
BY HIS
SPIRIT**

“By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body . . . ; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13).

From the Gospels we know that Christ, the Head of the body, came in the power of the Spirit, that He witnessed to the presence of the Spirit, and was sustained in temptation and agony by the Spirit. His body, the church, likewise could not exist without the Spirit. In fact, it was not until the Spirit was poured out that the church could begin to function. (See Acts 2.) It is through the Spirit that Christ reigns supreme in His church and makes the church His instrument to finish the work that He Himself began. Without the Spirit, the body is a corpse. “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Rom. 8:9). Without the Spirit, there is no church!

What is the role of the Spirit in the church? John 16:7-15; Acts 1:8; 1 Cor. 12:1-13.

The church exists by the Holy Spirit. He guides the church into all truth and welds the individual believers into a genuine fellowship. (See 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:3-6.) The Spirit energizes and vitalizes the church (Rom. 8:9-11) and seals our salvation (Eph. 1:13, 14). The ministry in the church is performed through the gifts of the Spirit. (See 1 Corinthians 12.) All witnessing and proclamation are done in the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8; 1 Cor. 2:4). He also sends out missionaries and directs them (Acts 13:2, 4).

Are there ways in which the church may actually encourage the infilling of the Spirit? Acts 5:32. (See also Acts 2:1.)

The Holy Spirit cannot be manipulated or in any way controlled; but His people can certainly prepare the way for His power to be manifest through them.

THINK IT THROUGH

Is my church ready for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit?

“The lapse of time has wrought no change in Christ’s parting promise to send the Holy Spirit as His representative. It is not because of any restriction on the part of God that the riches of His grace do not flow earthward to men. If the fulfillment of the promise is not seen as it might be, it is because the promise is not appreciated as it should be. If all were willing, all would be filled with the Spirit.”— *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 50.

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 47-51.

**Part 3
UNITED
WITH CHRIST**

"So all of us, united with Christ, form one body, serving individually as limbs and organs to one another" (Rom. 12:5, NEB).

Most communities we know are based on ties of blood relationship, residence, common ideals, interests, or goals. The body of Christ is a group of people that find their unity in the members' communion with the living Person, Jesus Christ. The church is the body of this Person, consisting of all those who through the baptism of the Spirit are united with Christ.

How are believers united with Christ? 1 Cor. 12:12, 13.

What is the nature of the relationship between Christ and each of His followers? John 15:4-7, 10, 16.

"A union with Christ by living faith is enduring; every other union must perish. Christ first chose us, paying an infinite price for our redemption; and the true believer chooses Christ as first and last and best in everything. But this union costs us something. It is a union of utter dependence, to be entered into by a proud being. All who form this union must feel their need of the atoning blood of Christ. They must have a change of heart. They must submit their own will to the will of God. . . .

"Believers become one in Christ, but one branch cannot be sustained by another. The nourishment must be obtained through the vital connection with the vine. We must feel our utter dependence on Christ. We must live by faith on the Son of God. That is the meaning of the injunction: 'Abide in Me.' The life we live in the flesh is not to the will of men, not to please our Lord's enemies, but to serve and honor Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. A mere assent to this union, while the affections are not detached from the world, its pleasures and its dissipations, only emboldens the heart in disobedience."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 231, 232.

THINK IT THROUGH

How does a union with Christ manifest itself?

"The life of the vine will be manifest in fragrant fruit on the branches. 'He that abideth in Me,' said Jesus, 'and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing.' When we live by faith on the Son of God, the fruits of the Spirit will be seen in our life; not one will be missing."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 676.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 674-678.

**Part 4
MEMBERS OF
ONE ANOTHER**

“Just as in a single human body there are many limbs and organs, all with different functions, so all of us, united with Christ, form one body, serving individually as limbs and organs to one another” (Rom. 12:4, 5, NEB).

Called into a fellowship with Jesus Christ, we are at the same time called to become members of one another.

What does the apostle Paul say about the relationship of the members of the body of Christ to each other? 1 Cor. 12:24-27; Eph. 4:25.

The church is the body of Christ. As the operation of the human body demands the cooperation and interdependence of all its limbs and organs, so the body of Christ demands mutuality. The church is not just a number of individual believers, each of whom in his own way is related to Christ. No! By using the image of the body, the Scripture emphasizes that the church is a corporate personality, one unit, one indivisible whole, in which each member participates in the life of the other. If one member suffers, all suffer. If one member has reasons for rejoicing, the others share in his joy. There are no separated individuals in the church which is the body of Christ. Individualism is the very opposite of the biblical concept of the church as one body.

In what ways does the unity of the church become manifest? 1 Cor. 10:16, 17; Heb. 10:24, 25; 1 John 4:10, 11; John 17:20-23.

In meeting together for worshipping the one Lord, the Head of the body; in breaking bread together, thereby sharing in the one body of Christ; in reciprocal love and respect for one another, the unity of the one body becomes manifest, to the believers and the unbelievers alike. There is no room for inequality in the church, or discrimination of any kind. “Baptized into union with him, you have all put on Christ as a garment. There is no such thing as Jew and Greek, slave and freeman, male and female; for you are all one person in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:27, 28, NEB).

THINK IT THROUGH

How can I contribute to the unity of my church?

“As a people, we lose much by lack of sympathy and sociability with one another. He who talks of independence and shuts himself up to himself is not filling the position that God designed he should. We are children of God, mutually dependent upon one another for happiness.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 71.

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 317-319.

Part 5
UNITY IN
DIVERSITY

“The body is not one member, but many” (1 Cor. 12:14).

Equally significant with the teaching that all members of the body are a unity is the fact that the body is composed of diverse members. As the physical body is not composed of one single organ only, but of many, and all of these members are different, in function, in strength, in honor (1 Cor. 12:17-24), so we should accept and encourage a similar rich variation among the members of the body of Christ, recognizing that all of these are necessary to the one body.

At the present day the church is established in a large variety of cultures and in many different economic, social, and political conditions. Thus church uniformity is impossible. We must promote unity, not uniformity. This unity manifests itself in the internal unity of one faith and one hope. It is not manifested in the same ways of doing things, but in having the same goals for which the church has been called into existence. (See 1 Cor. 12:5, 6.)

At what point does diversity become disruptive to the unity of the one body?

The body of Christ is one. (See 1 Cor. 12:12.) As soon as a member or a group of members—from local church to groups of local churches—makes claims over and against the whole body, the diversity clearly disrupts the unity of the body. At that point the diversity changes its quality: It becomes a sinful division. In the same way as unity should not cancel out diversity, so diversity should not overrule the unity of the church. The variety of forms and thought, of service and work, does not exist for its own good, but for the upbuilding of the one body. (See Eph. 4:12.) Through this one goal, individuals are related to the local community, and local communities to the one church, the body of Christ.

THINK IT THROUGH

How can the diversity in my church best relate to the unity of the whole body of Christ?

“If God’s professed people would receive the light as it shines upon them from His word, they would reach that unity for which Christ prayed, that which the apostle describes, ‘the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.’ ”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 379.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 296, 297; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 518-520.

**Part 6
GROWING
TOGETHER
IN CHRIST**

“Bonded and knit together by every constituent joint, the whole frame grows through the due activity of each part, and builds itself up in love” (Eph. 4:16, NEB).

The illustration of the body suggests a living organism, pulsing with life, vitality, creativity, and warmth. It is always growing. If it does not, it is dead.

What makes the body of Christ grow? Acts 2:47; Col. 2:19.

The church grows in two ways: The first is by increasing the number of members in the church, an increased influence of the church on its environment, and a building up of its structures, departments, and organizations. The second is spiritual growth: an increase in Christian stature and maturity, in holiness and perfection, in knowledge and understanding of truth. It means growing up in Christ, in the faith, and in missionary spirit and involvement. This growth comes from Christ, the Head of the church, who uses each member as a channel to nourish and feed the whole body.

What responsibility rests on the church, the body of Christ? 2 Cor. 5:14 through 6:2.

Evangelism in the New Testament church was the natural function of a living organism, the body as a whole. It was the outcome of a new life. Evangelism was the purpose for which the church existed. Mission is not a specialized or part-time activity of a few. It includes all the members in the church and everything the church does. Mission and evangelism, given by the Head of the church, nourish the fellowship of the believers. All too little attention has been given to this nourishing which results in the spiritual growth of the whole fellowship.

THINK IT THROUGH

How can I contribute to the growth of the body as a whole?

“When Jesus ascended to heaven, He committed His work on earth to those who had received the light of the gospel. They were to carry the work forward to completion. He has provided no other agency for the promulgation of His truth. ‘Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.’ ‘And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.’ This solemn commission reaches us in this age. God leaves with His church the responsibility of receiving or rejecting it.”—*Christian Service*, p. 23.

FURTHER STUDY

Steps to Christ, “The Work and the Life,” pp. 79-81.

Becoming a Member

"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13).

How does a person become a member of the body of Christ? To some this question sounds as if the

church were some kind of religious club. Not so, even though at times it may appear that way. Becoming a member is first becoming united with Jesus Christ. It is through Him that a person then becomes *added* to the



Uniting with God's family through baptism begins a whole new life, filled with opportunities, challenges, and responsibilities.

church. (See Acts 2:47.) This fact cannot be emphasized enough! The church and Jesus Christ are united but are not identical: It is through the church that we first hear about Jesus and become acquainted with Him and His word. Through the church a person becomes aware of the great act of salvation wrought in Jesus Christ, and of the peace, freedom, joy, and love that are the result when a person is united with Christ. But joining the church means nothing unless a person has first been united with Him who is the Head of the church. It is by putting on the garment of Jesus Christ that a person becomes a member of His body. The act by which that happens is baptism. (See Gal. 3:27.)

The question: How does a person become a member of the church? then really should be: *How does a person become united with Jesus Christ?* The answer has two parts. The first is that God has in Christ reconciled us to Himself (2 Cor. 5:19). Union with Christ has its foundation in an act of God Himself. He loves us. He therefore gave us a covenant whereby we became united with Him as His own people. And "this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, . . . saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer. 31:33, 34). The covenant God promised through the prophet Jeremiah has been established by the blood of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 11:25). We become united with Him because He has forgiven our sins and carried our guilt. Like the people of God in the Old Testament, the church, really, is a covenant people. And we become members of that body because God in His love has drawn us into that covenant relationship with Him.

The New Testament clearly teaches us that nobody will be drawn into that relationship with God against his will. It is possible for man to reject God's grace. This leads to the second part of the answer to the question: How does a person become united with Christ? We must respond positively to God's grace and accept in faith what Christ has done for us. The rite of baptism, which in New Testament times marks the believer's entrance into the communion with the people of God, symbolizes the faith and experience of the believer. It is by faith that we become sons and daughters of God (John 1:12). That faith, born by the Spirit of God, brings us into union with Christ, through baptism (Gal. 3:26-28).

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. Faith (Mark 16:16)
2. Repentance (Acts 2:38)
3. Confession (Rom. 10:9, 10)
4. Baptism (Acts 22:16)
5. Burial and Resurrection (Gal. 3:27)
6. Rebirth (Titus 3:5)

Part 1 "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he
FAITH that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16).

What is the relationship described in the book of Acts between baptism and believing (faith)? Acts 16:30-33.

Faith and baptism are inseparably joined in the New Testament. Faith is a prerequisite of baptism. All people have been called into the covenant relationship with God. Only those who acknowledge for themselves the work that Christ has done for them, and in them, accept it and permit the Spirit to permeate their whole life and thought, are to enter the church through baptism. The effectiveness of baptism does not depend on the ritual itself, but on the faith of the one who is baptized. Faith is the means of receiving the salvation offered in the gospel. And this not as a work of man, but is the free gift of God. Faith itself is created in the heart by the Holy Spirit. It is this faith that also creates in human beings the desire to be baptized.

What is the nature of faith that leads to salvation? Luke 8:47, 48; Matt. 8:5-10.

Saving faith means much more than the acceptance of beliefs, although it includes belief of biblical teachings. It is a relationship of trust in which the person gives his whole self to Jesus Christ. That relationship expresses itself in many ways. In words and acts we acknowledge that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Lord of our life. We praise Him and worship Him, and we express our gratitude for His continuing ministry in heaven in our behalf. It is the basis also of our joyful expectation of His soon return. The closer that relationship, the greater also our love and our obedience, our total surrender and our humility. It is that faith that leads a person to say, "I am dead, yet I live. But it is not I; Christ lives in me." (See Gal. 2:20.)

Since faith is so important in God's salvation, how does a person come to faith? Rom. 10:11-17.

God has called the church into existence as an instrument by which people may come to faith, and increase and express it. The church affects the faith of people in three main ways: (1) the proclamation and the teaching of the word of God; (2) service and charity; and (3) fellowship. None of these, however, can work independently of the others.

THINK IT THROUGH

How are the beliefs of the church related to faith in Jesus Christ?

FURTHER STUDY

Steps to Christ, "Faith and Acceptance," pp. 50-53.

**Part 2
REPENTANCE**

“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38).

The person who is confronted with Jesus Christ and enters into a relationship with Him will see himself as he really is—a sinner. By faith he sees the love of God and experiences His goodness. He becomes aware of God’s holiness and longsuffering. A genuine sorrow is aroused in him, and he longs for forgiveness and a new beginning. This is what the Bible calls repentance.

What is the relationship between repentance and baptism? Mark 1:4, 5; Acts 2:38.

It is by faith and repentance that the washing away of our sins is effected. This is symbolized by baptism.

What leads a person to repentance? Rom. 2:4.

It is the law of God that convinces us of sin. But it is the goodness of the Lord, the experience of His rich mercy, that leads the sinner to repentance.

“There are many who fail to understand the true nature of repentance. Multitudes sorrow that they have sinned and even make an outward reformation because they fear that their wrongdoing will bring suffering upon themselves. But this is not repentance in the Bible sense. They lament the suffering rather than the sin.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 23.

How is repentance related to the forgiveness of sins? Acts 5:31.

“It is true that repentance does precede the forgiveness of sins; for it is only the broken and contrite heart that will feel the need of a Saviour. But must the sinner wait till he has repented before he can come to Jesus? Is repentance to be made an obstacle between the sinner and the Saviour?

“The Bible does not teach that the sinner must repent before he can heed the invitation of Christ, ‘Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.’ Matthew 11:28. It is the virtue that goes forth from Christ, that leads to genuine repentance.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 26.

THINK IT THROUGH

What is the meaning of repentance to a child born and raised in a Christian home?

FURTHER STUDY

Steps to Christ, “Repentance,” pp. 23-29.

**Part 3
CONFESSION**

"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:9, 10).

Faith and repentance result in confession of Jesus by words and actions. Jesus said, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32).

There is evidence that baptism in the New Testament church was preceded by confession. This took two forms. People were asked to tell what they believed. Such a profession of faith was at the same time considered an evidence that the candidate for baptism was indeed led by the Spirit of God. At the same time candidates for baptism confessed their sins before God. If they had wronged any person, they confessed to him also.

What is the source of a person's confession? 1 Cor. 12:3; Matt. 16:17.

Nobody can truly say, "Jesus is Lord," except he is prompted by the Holy Spirit. Similarly, nobody has the humility to say to his neighbor, "I am sorry," unless the Spirit of Christ moves him.

How important is confession of sin in a Christian's life? Prov. 28:13; 1 John 1:9.

"Those who have not humbled their souls before God in acknowledging their guilt, have not yet fulfilled the first condition of acceptance. If we have not experienced that repentance which is not to be repented of, and have not with true humiliation of soul and brokenness of spirit confessed our sins, abhorring our iniquity, we have never truly sought for the forgiveness of sin."—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 37, 38.

In what way does the church today continue the New Testament practice of confession before baptism?

The *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* states: "The church has a right to know concerning the faith and attitude of every individual applying for church membership. It is proper for a public examination of all candidates to be held prior to their baptism, preferably in the presence of the church."—Pages 52 (1971 edition), 53, 54 (1976 edition).

THINK IT THROUGH

How important is the confession of faith and of repentance in my life today?

FURTHER STUDY

Steps to Christ, "Confession," pp. 37-41.

Part 4 **"Why tarriest thou? arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).**
BAPTISM

Faith in Jesus as Lord and Redeemer, repentance, and confession find their visible expression in baptism. Through this rite a person testifies to his union with Christ and is united with His church.

What were the characteristics of the baptism administered by John the Baptist? Mark 1:4-8.

Three aspects stand out clearly: It was a baptism in token of repentance, the remission of sins, and in preparation for the coming of the Lord. Since Christian baptism is rooted in the baptism of John, these three aspects remain important also for baptism today, although other significant characteristics have been added.

Little is known with certainty about the origin of the baptism of John. The Jews knew of ritual washings, but these were of a different nature. The same is also true of the ritual washings of the sect at Qumran. Baptism was practiced as a means of receiving proselytes to Judaism. But in that rite the proselytes washed themselves, whereas in the baptism of the New Testament people are being washed, a significant difference indeed! Through baptism John was gathering a community that was waiting for the coming of the Messiah. Baptism of water would then be given an additional meaning through the baptism by fire and the Spirit. (See Luke 3:16.)

Why did Jesus desire to be baptized? Matt. 3:13-17.

At first John refused to baptize Jesus. After all, Jesus was the "mightier one" who would baptize with the Holy Spirit. John saw in Him the coming Messiah, and he could not reconcile with his own conception of the Messiah the idea that the Messiah should be baptized with a "baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." Jesus knew no sin (2 Cor. 5:21). John must have understood, however, when a voice from heaven said: "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased" (Luke 3:22). These words were in fulfillment of Psalm 18:20-24 and Isaiah 42 which speak of the coming of the Messiah. At His baptism Jesus accepted His role as the Messiah, indicating, however, that His work would be accomplished through suffering and death. (See Luke 12:50.) With this role God was well pleased, and God confirmed it by sending on Jesus the fullness of His Spirit to accomplish His difficult mission. (See Luke 4:1.)

THINK IT THROUGH **What is the meaning of Jesus' baptism for me?**

FURTHER STUDY *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 109-113.

**Part 5
BURIAL AND
RESURRECTION**

"As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27).

Baptism means doing away with one way of life and putting on another.

What meanings of baptism are stressed in Romans 6: 3-5?

It is significant that on the two occasions when Jesus spoke of His death He referred to it as a baptism. "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!" (Luke 12:50; see also Mark 10:38, 39.) The word translated here as "accomplished" is from the same Greek root as the word "finished" in John 19:30, where Jesus says: "It is finished." Jesus, our Redeemer, has accomplished His work through death. And all who are baptized in union with Him, need not die anymore! Our baptism is our burial. This has a double meaning: (1) The death of Jesus stands instead of our own eternal death (Rom. 6:23); and (2) the death of the nature we had before we knew Jesus Christ. But our baptism is at the same time our resurrection, again in a double meaning: (1) In union with Christ we have eternal life (John 11:21-27), and (2) we live a new life that shows the fruits of the Spirit of Christ.

What mode of baptism best symbolizes the meaning of baptism given in Colossians 2:12? (See also Acts 8:38, 39.)

In the New Testament one of the meanings of the Greek word *baptismos* is "immersion." John the Baptist chose a place in the Jordan where there was much water (John 3:23). The only form of baptism requiring much water is immersion. This symbolized man's totally lost condition before God, as well as his complete cleansing. After Jesus' death and resurrection, the idea of dying and being resurrected to a new life was best symbolized by immersion. The same applies to the meaning of washing. The words "washing," or "washing away," are used parallel to "baptize." (See Acts 22:16; Eph. 5:26.) When in later years the practice of pouring and sprinkling became a rule, the idea of washing was discarded. Though the effect of baptism does not lie in the rite itself, but in the faith of the believer, the mode of baptism by immersion remains very significant in light of Jesus' own baptism, the New Testament practice, and the biblical meaning of the rite.

THINK IT THROUGH

How effective has the baptism signifying death and resurrection been in my life?

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 6, pp. 98, 99.

Part 6 **“According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of**
REBIRTH **regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Titus 3:5).**

The resurrection to a new life with Christ (Romans 6; Col. 2:9-15) has also been described as a new birth. (See 1 Peter 1:3.) It is not a result of water baptism, but of a conscious turning away from the old life and a turning toward Christ, with whom the believer becomes united. But the water is important, since it indicates that the new birth is not a result of the will of man, but of the grace of God.

By what means is the new birth accomplished? John 3:6-8.

The new birth is new because it is generated by the Holy Spirit. Through this new birth ordinary human beings become children of God. A new family is created, with its own life-style, characteristics, and name. This is the church. It is not merely a gathering of born-again individuals; it is a family, in which we are all brothers and sisters. We are not only united to the one Head, Jesus Christ; we are also united with one another.

Who is associated with the rite of baptism? 1 Cor. 12:13.

In the New Testament the giving of the Holy Spirit is associated with baptism. It was at His baptism that Jesus received the Holy Spirit, ordaining Him thereby to His mission as the Messiah. Jesus' baptism was a model for all later baptisms. It is at baptism that believers receive the gift of the Spirit. Through this gift baptism becomes the believers' consecration to the service of Jesus Christ.

The baptism in the name of the triune God is pointing not only at the future when those who are baptized will share forever in the glory of Christ. The believer has already been given his inheritance of salvation in Christ, the bounty of God's grace. His sins have been washed away indeed; his salvation is sure. The Holy Spirit has been given as a down payment and as a seal. Through baptism we are united in fellowship with Christ and with His people whom He is preparing for His glorious arrival.

THINK IT THROUGH

In light of the biblical meaning of baptism, what can the church do to make it more meaningful in the lives of the believers, individually and corporately?

FURTHER STUDY

Evangelism, pp. 306-311.

Called Out—to Go In

"They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

"As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world" (John 17:16, 18).

In the New Testament the church has many aspects; it exists in many forms and structures, and it has a large variety of meanings. It is impossible to grasp these all at once, or to put them all into one common denominator. The New Testament uses nearly a hundred different metaphors and illustrations to describe the essence and meaning of the church. Some of these are the body of Christ, the salt of the earth, a holy nation, the flock, the bride of Christ, the vineyard, ambassadors for Christ, the temple of God. This plurality of illustrations reminds us constantly that the church is and remains a mystery. Each illustration reveals part of that mystery, but it also leaves other parts hidden. To understand those parts we must turn to other illustrations. Each of these enriches the others, completes and corrects them.

One great danger facing the church

at all times is that it stresses one illustration to the neglect of the others. The result is that a picture of the church emerges which is indeed biblical, in the sense that it is rooted in Scripture, but which is unbiblical at the same time because it fails to take into consideration the *whole* biblical view of the church. It is one-sided, quite often lopsided. And since the church's self-understanding determines also the form and nature of mission and evangelism, these too become distorted, even though their roots may be found in the New Testament. To avoid such distortions, each illustration needs to be understood in its *own particular meaning* and accepted as a truth that reveals *only part* of the complex aspects and meanings that the church has in Scripture. Each illustration also helps to balance and correct the meanings, and shades of meanings, given by the other metaphors and illustrations.

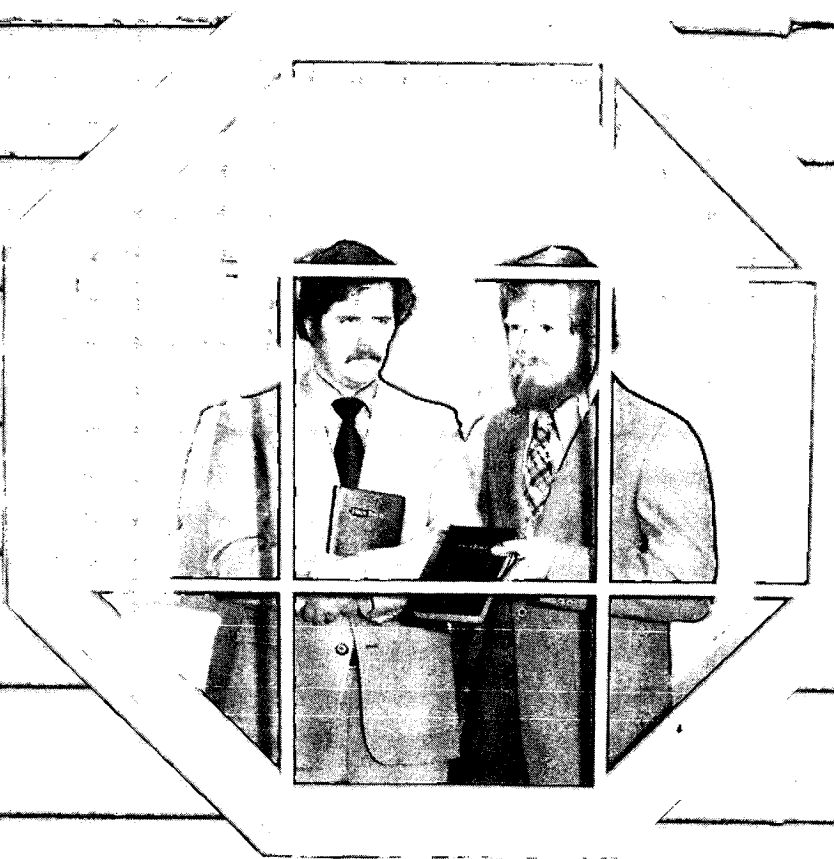
This danger of accepting distorted and partial truths is the more serious since each age and each particular situation in the world or in the church stimulates—even dictates—the development of a special church concept. It happened in the early centuries of the church, during the Reformation, the Pietistic Revivals, and again today. The favorite illustrations thus emphasized and developed by the church fathers, church reformers, or church pioneers become institutionalized and part of the holy heritage and sacred tradition. It then becomes almost impossible to have this picture of the church corrected by other biblical illustrations and metaphors. This means that the church forever stands in need of a reformation.

To be specific: Some of our treasured concepts of the church, as God's fortress, His city of refuge, a holy nation called out of an evil world, though biblical, stand in need of being balanced by such other biblical illustrations as the salt, the yeast, the dispersion, God's pilgrims, etc. However, this can happen only when we look beyond the simple correlation and balancing of these different biblical images to Jesus Christ, the Head of the church, in whom all these

metaphors find their meaning and unity.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. A Holy City (Gal. 4:25, 26)
2. Salt (Matt. 5:13)
3. God's Building (Eph. 2:20-22)
4. Yeast (Matt. 13:33)
5. A Holy Nation (1 Peter 2:9)
6. Aliens and Exiles (Heb. 11:13)



The church is not just the recipient of truth; It is also a vehicle for sharing the "good news" with others.

Part 1
A HOLY CITY

“Sinai is a mountain in Arabia and it represents the Jerusalem of today, for she and her children are in slavery. But the heavenly Jerusalem is the free woman; she is our mother” (Gal. 4:25, 26, NEB).

Literal Israel is often depicted in the Scriptures by Jerusalem, the Holy City, built on solid rock and with walls behind which the people could find refuge. It is the City of David and of his royal descendants, the center of the world where all the nations would come to worship the only true God and find salvation. All these meanings have been transposed to the “heavenly Jerusalem” representing the church.

By what other names is the heavenly Jerusalem called in Hebrews 12:22-24?

Jerusalem is the city of the Messiah. It is the place where God dwells, where salvation is to be found, and where His chosen people live. This city has two forms: an earthly, the church, and a heavenly, which is the model of the church and the hope of the believers. The citizens of this city have the name of God on their foreheads (Rev. 3:12), a sign that they belong to God and to each other in a sacred fellowship.

In Jerusalem there was also the temple of God with the ark where the commandments of God were kept. This pictures the church as God’s channel of grace and as His holy people who observe His commandments.

“The church is the repository of the riches of the grace of Christ; and through the church will eventually be made manifest, even to ‘the principalities and powers in heavenly places,’ the final and full display of the love of God.”— *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 9.

What is the great opposite of Jerusalem, and what does it stand for? Rev. 14:8; 17:5, 6.

From all the descriptions given of Babylon, it is clear that this mysterious name (Rev. 17:5) denotes the very opposite of God’s church. Instead of relying on God and giving glory to Him, it is arrogant and proud, wicked and sinful; it relies on its own strength and power and persecutes those who want to remain loyal to the faith of Jesus and keep His commandments. It stands under the judgment of God, who urges His people, therefore, to leave that city (Rev. 18:4), to give up all unfaithfulness and sin, and return to the Holy City of God.

THINK IT THROUGH

Who really constitute Babylon today, and what are the hallmarks of God’s holy city?

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 381-383.

Part 2 **“Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his
SALT savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for
nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of
men” (Matt. 5:13).**

**What is the meaning of salt as an illustration of the church?
Matt. 5:13. (See also Mark 9:50; Luke 14:34.)**

From the texts and the contexts in which they are given, three functions of the church stand out clearly: It is called to season the world, to preserve it, and to purify it.

What is meant by salt losing its saltiness? In the Old Testament ritual services salt was added to every sacrifice. (See Lev. 2:13; Eze. 43:24.) Without salt the sacrifices were unacceptable. Here the salt stands for the righteousness of Christ. “Referring to this practice, Jesus said, ‘Every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.’ ‘Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.’ All who would present themselves ‘a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God’ (Rom. 12:1), must receive the saving salt, the righteousness of our Saviour. Then they become ‘the salt of the earth,’ restraining evil among men, as salt preserves from corruption. Matt. 5:13. But if the salt has lost its savor; if there is only a profession of godliness, without the love of Christ, there is no power for good. The life can exert no saving influence upon the world. Your energy and efficiency in the upbuilding of My kingdom, Jesus says, depend upon your receiving of My Spirit. You must be partakers of My grace, in order to be a savor of life unto life. Then there will be no rivalry, no self-seeking, no desire for the highest place. You will have that love which seeks not her own, but another’s wealth.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 439.

Christ’s illustration of the salt suggests a method of evangelism. “Salt must be mingled with the substance to which it is added; it must penetrate and infuse in order to preserve. So it is through personal contact and association that men are reached by the saving power of the gospel. They are not saved in masses, but as individuals. Personal influence is a power. We must come close to those whom we desire to benefit.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 36.

THINK IT THROUGH

How does the image of the salt balance the concept of the church as a walled city?

FURTHER STUDY

Prophets and Kings, pp. 231-234.

**Part 3
GOD'S
BUILDING**

"[Ye] are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2:20-22).

What aspects of the church are emphasized in the illustration of the church as a building? 1 Cor. 3:10, 11; 1 Peter 2:4-6.

A building stresses the visibility of the church and its continuity, strength, and unity. The church is not a building completed. It is in process of construction. Only the Foundation and the Cornerstone are laid forever.

What does the Bible teach us concerning the building process? Eph. 2:20-22; 1 Peter 2:5.

From the beginning to the end the construction of the building is the work of God. It is He who gave the contract; He also drew the plans and laid the foundation. Yes, even the stones themselves are first made by Him before they are laid upon the foundation and are fitted together.

What is the human contribution in the building process? The Greek word used for "building," can also be translated "edification." Whatever edifies the believers builds the church. The Greek construction in Ephesians 4:12 indicates that the purpose of apostles and other gifts is to prepare the saints for service and edification. Thus edification is a ministry that falls upon all the believers alike. It takes place when we love one another. Love is the cement that binds us together and is manifested in worship and fellowship, in mission and evangelism, in daily life and in charity. Where people edify one another, there the church is alive and growing.

THINK IT THROUGH

What is the relationship between the individual believer as God's temple, and the church as God's holy building?

"The Christian who faithfully presents the word of life, leading men and women into the way of holiness and peace, is bringing to the foundation material that will endure, and in the kingdom of God he will be honored as a wise builder. . . .

"Christ has given to the church a sacred charge. Every member should be a channel through which God can communicate to the world the treasures of His grace, the unsearchable riches of Christ. There is nothing that the Saviour desires so much as agents who will represent to the world His Spirit and His character."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 599, 600.

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 599-601.

Part 4 **“The kingdom of Heaven is like yeast, which a woman took**
YEAST **and mixed with half a hundredweight of flour till it was all**
 leavened” (Matt. 13:33, NEB).

The characteristic of yeast is that it works quietly and unobtrusively. Yet it permeates the whole dough and gives shape to the whole bread. Yeast identifies itself with the lump, but in doing so it slowly changes the character of the whole lump. Yeast represents the way the Holy Spirit works in the human life; but it also teaches how the church, on receiving the Spirit, is to work in society. (See *The Adventist Home*, p. 33.)

In what ways does the church as yeast balance the church as the building of God? Matt. 13:33; 2 Cor. 6:14-17.

The emphasis in the view of the church as God's building is that God's people must be different from the world. They must separate themselves from unbelievers, and be built into a holy community that stands apart from the secular activities and interests of the world. This aspect of the church can hardly be overstressed.

Yet in the image of the yeast we are introduced to another mode of being in the world as God's church: not isolation and separation, but involvement and infusion, participation and penetration. The church can be the yeast only when it identifies itself with the world's needs and interests, as Christ did. In the New Testament the church worked as yeast in human institutions, reaching even into the emperor's palace. So today the members of the church are called to bear this witness in secular affairs and institutions. As Ellen White said, "The followers of Christ are to be separate from the world in principles and interests, but they are not to isolate themselves from the world."—*Counsels to Teachers*, p. 323.

These two views of the church have to be kept in balance. When the church emphasizes only the model of the temple, it tends to become concerned only about its own holiness; it becomes isolated from the world, much like Israel in the days of Christ. On the other hand, if only the model of the salt and the yeast are stressed, the church stands in danger of becoming so much identified with the world that it loses its identity. The salt becomes saltless. It is in the balance between the two that the church can really be the church after the divine pattern.

THINK IT THROUGH

How could the balance between these two illustrations best be facilitated in the church?

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 9, pp. 19-23.

**Part 5
A HOLY
NATION**

“Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

Frequently in the New Testament the church is referred to by the names used for Israel in the Old Testament. The term “holy nation” is an example. Among all the nations on earth God had one nation that He set apart for His own purpose. Now the church is God’s “holy nation.” It has become holy through the death of our Redeemer. (See Eph. 5:25, 26.) For that reason the New Testament speaks of the members of the church as *saints*, that is, persons who are holy.

What does the term “holy” mean in connection with the church? Christ sanctified a special people for the express purpose of witnessing in the world. First, saints are all those who are sent out by Christ who has sanctified them. Second, saints are people on whom the Holy Spirit has fallen. Third, this holy fellowship means that saints do not defraud one another; they are willing to be defrauded rather than become involved in disputes that demonstrate the absence of the standards of the kingdom of God. Finally, sainthood means a moral perfection, a holiness of character that is completed “in the fear of the Lord” (2 Cor. 7:1). This state of holiness is accomplished by presenting our bodies daily as a holy sacrifice (Rom. 12:1) or by putting on the new humanity (Col. 3:10). To be saints, the members of the church must act as saints, with compassion, meekness, patience, forgiveness, obedience, and love. (See 1 Peter 1:14-16.)

It is noteworthy that the term “holy” is almost never used in the singular as referring only to an individual member of the church. Holiness refers to the community, the church, as a whole. To be a saint is to become a participant in what the church as a whole stands for.

**How can the church reach the state of perfect holiness?
Eph. 5:25-27.**

THINK IT THROUGH

What is the relationship between holiness and love?

“It is the purpose of God to glorify Himself in His people before the world. He expects those who bear the name of Christ to represent Him in thought, word, and deed. . . . Their every business transaction is to be fragrant with the presence of God.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 21.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 9, pp. 21-24.

Part 6
ALIENS
AND EXILES

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

The image of the holy nation represents the church as an institution, stable, visible, and continuous, with its own laws, language, and behavior. The concept of the church as a group of aliens and exiles living scattered abroad, emphasizes the pilgrim nature of the church and its foreignness in this world.

How are believers exiles and pilgrims in their own world? Heb. 11:9-16.

Everyone who is a member of God's chosen people thereby becomes a pilgrim in his own culture and country, all his life. (See 1 Peter 2:11.)

The reason for this foreignness of the church in each country and culture is that we can no longer give final authority to any earthly power. As Christians we honor our government, but we do not worship it. And if we honor our government, obey the rules of the country, and accept its culture and traditions, it is because we first honor God and worship Him. Members of the family of God can never give unconditional loyalty to any earthly society, because their first citizenship is in heaven. “This is cause for great joy, even though now you smart for a little while” (1 Peter 1:6, NEB).

What warning given by Jesus to His disciples indicates the risk of living as aliens and strangers in the world? Matt. 10:16-18.

Any society resents those strangers in its midst who do not join in worshipping the popular idols, or in detesting those whom society discriminates against.

THINK IT THROUGH

What is the relationship between loyalty to God, witnessing to His name, and persecution?

“No man can serve God without enlisting against himself the opposition of the hosts of darkness. Evil angels will assail him, alarmed that his influence is taking the prey from their hands. Evil men, rebuked by his example, will unite with them in seeking to separate him from God by alluring temptations. When these do not succeed, then a compelling power is employed to force the conscience.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 610.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 8, pp. 175, 176; *Steps to Christ*, “Rejoicing in the Lord,” pp. 125, 126.

To Build Up the Church

"How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying" (1 Cor. 14:26).

The multiple nature of the church as holy city and salt, God's temple and yeast, a holy nation and pilgrims, has far-reaching consequences for the whole life of the church. It affects its work and its worship, its organization



God gives gifts to His church, building up the whole as each member freely shares his talents and abilities.

and management, its mission and ministry. When members of the family of God meet together, they do so not just for their own sakes, but to be inspired and prepared for their calling as salt and yeast and pilgrims. The weekly church service is intended to equip the members of the body of Christ to begin their service in the world as soon as they disperse one from another. The church is thus characterized by a movement of gathering and dispersing, withdrawal from the world and return into the world. Church buildings and institutions, church organization and associations, church structures and meetings, exist not for themselves but for the sake of spreading the gospel in all the world. "The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 9. The church as an institution exists for the church as a movement. The members are to find their happiness not in their own gatherings and organization, but in the happiness of others whom they serve and help and bless. When at Pentecost the Holy Spirit touched the hearts of the disciples, the church became a powerful and dynamic movement. People were excited and enthusiastic, active and full of the missionary spirit. But to provide dynamic leadership for the church and to give direction to the zeal of its members, institutions and organizations were necessary. The Holy Spirit uses the church as an institution to protect its members and to guide them, to equip them for service and to guarantee the continuity of the church as a missionary movement. It is true that throughout the history of the church institutionalism and traditionalism have been symptomatic of the formalism and stagnation that have hindered the church from achieving its goal as a missionary movement. This development is also noticeable in our own church. (See *Christian Service*, pp. 35-49.) Hence the cry for

revival and reformation! But one should beware of looking at the institutional aspects of the church as irrelevant and unnecessary. Without form, traditions, and institutions the effectiveness of a church movement is drastically reduced. To make the church grow and give it continuity, to guard the truth that was handed on to us, and to equip the people of God for service, institutions and traditions are indispensable. But these exist not for themselves, but to the glory of God and for service to all men. In short, as is true of the gifts: "All of these must aim at one thing: to build up the church" (1 Cor. 14:26, NEB).

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. The Assembly (Heb. 10:24, 25)
2. The Instruction (Matt. 28:19, 20)
3. The Sermon (Rom. 10:17)
4. Conversation (Acts 20:11)
5. Service (James 1:27)
6. The Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 10:16, 17)

Part 1
THE ASSEMBLY

“Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Heb. 10:24, 25).

Assembling together, the believers are strengthened in their Christian experience through the outpouring of God's grace. Ellen White claims that “God teaches us that we should assemble in His house to cultivate the attributes of perfect love.”—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 288.

What is the purpose of the assembly? Matt. 18:20.

The gathering of the believers is not merely an organizational aspect of the church. The assembly is the place where God and man meet. Here the covenant relationship is reaffirmed again and again. As one body God's people sense in a special way the presence of the Lord and are asked to give a response to His grace. God uses the assembly in a special way to pour out His blessings upon His people and He accepts their renewed dedication and worship as an expression of their love and obedience to Him. To that end God has set aside a special day—the seventh day—on which He would meet with His people. Four aspects of the assembly on the Sabbath day deserve special attention: (1) The believers express their recognition of God as their Creator and as their Lord (see Mark 2:27, 28); (2) They express their gratitude for having been redeemed out of their house of bondage into a state of freedom and joy and peace (Deut. 5:15); they also express their joy over the covenant of which the Sabbath is a sign and a seal (Eze. 20:12, 20); (3) together the believers express their sorrow over their sins, to which God responds in compassion and grace, forgiving even their iniquities; and (4) the believers are reminded of the fact that their gathering on the Sabbath day is an anticipation of fellowship to be enjoyed in the eternal rest. (See Heb. 4:1-11.)

What are some of the means given the gathering of believers to express their relationship with God and with one another? 1 Cor. 11:26; Rom. 10:9, 10; Col. 3:16, 17; 1 Tim. 2:1, 2.

The assembly is not only an expression of man's service to God, but also a channel of God's grace to man and a means of establishing fellowship with one another. The assembly is an expression of the communion of the saints, the oneness of all the believers as the body of Christ.

THINK IT THROUGH

In what way can I contribute to build the church through the assembly?

Part 2
THE INSTRUCTION

“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” (Matt. 28:19, 20).

After a person has been taught, baptized, and brought into union with Christ, further instruction is needed. This will help him to grow in the faith and to strengthen his relationship with Christ. To that end the church has been given the commission to teach after baptism as well as before. It is a channel of grace by which the believer grows in the Spirit and in truth. It is a means by which he grows into that perfect union with Christ and in the fellowship with the other members of the body of Christ.

What is the nature of the ongoing instruction of the believers? Matt. 28:19; John 17:17; 2 Tim. 4:1, 2.

It is clear that the instruction the believer receives after his baptism is not merely some new information, and not just an exercise of the mind. It is a means by which the believer becomes aware of the grace of God in all of his life and of the many ways in which he is challenged to show his allegiance to Christ. It fosters sanctification; it stimulates and empowers the believer to grow into the stature of Christ and be recreated into the image of God. After his baptism the believer is suddenly faced with problems of Christian living and challenges to his Christian experience that need to be solved and answered. He is faced with social issues and economic problems, with poverty and pollution, race relations and social discrimination, the challenge of culture and new developments in society, marriage, and the family. What are the biblical answers to these problems of life? How can a believer live a Christian life amid the many influences of his environment? This is the nature of the instruction by which the believer learns “to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” It is an ongoing means of grace.

THINK IT THROUGH

In what ways is the church accomplishing this divine ordinance of instruction? How does a believer become an instructor?

In the light of Scripture the Sabbath School must be viewed as more than the church at study. It is a means of consecration, sanctification, and Christian growth.

“The Sabbath school, if rightly conducted, is one of God’s great instrumentalities to bring souls to a knowledge of the truth.”—*Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 115.

FURTHER STUDY

Counsels on Sabbath School Work, pp. 61-65.

Part 3
THE SERMON**"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17).**

Although it is difficult to ascertain the precise pattern of the ministry of the Word in the New Testament, it clearly has a central place in the gathering of the believers. In fact, so important is the ministry of the Word that when other services threatened to take up too much of their time, energy, and attention, the apostles decided to put prayer and preaching first. (See Acts 6:1-5.)

What are the nature and the aims of the sermon? 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 4:1-5.

Preaching is to put the believer in contact with the Word of God. Through the sermon Christ becomes present in the minds and hearts of the believers. As such, the sermon is an instrument of grace by which the members are blessed and exhorted, challenged and comforted, instructed and corrected, built up in the faith and equipped for service. (See 2 Tim. 3:16, 17.)

The sermon has two important aspects: the *interpretation* of Scripture, especially the way God has revealed Himself to man, His promises, and His prophecies; and the *application* of the Word of God to the actual situations of the believers' everyday life. In that sense the sermon becomes a means of grace that makes God's promise of salvation a real experience in our time and circumstance.

"The minister who is God's ambassador and Christ's representative on the earth, who humbles himself that God may be exalted, will possess the genuine quality of eloquence. True piety, a close connection with God, and a daily, living experience in the knowledge of Christ, will make eloquent even the stammering tongue."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 314.

Ministers who are teachers, "if they are really men of God, receive their words from God. Their manner of address may be faulty and need much improvement; yet if God breathes through them words of inspiration, the power is not of man, but of God."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 318.

"God has given His ministers the message of truth to proclaim. This the churches are to receive and in every possible way to communicate, catching the first rays of light and diffusing them."—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 425.

THINK IT THROUGH**How should I relate to the sermon after the church service has ended?****FURTHER STUDY***Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 314-318.

**Part 4
CONVERSATION**

"He then went upstairs, broke bread and ate, and after much conversation, which lasted until dawn, he departed" (Acts 20:11, NEB).

Already in Jesus' own ministry the conversation with one or a few people was a very significant means of leading people into a union with Him. Christ has left us thereby an example. Through such conversations during Jesus' ministry, people became convinced of the truth; they became aware of their own needs, and they found in them a means of expressing their faith and gratitude. These conversations, moreover, created a genuine fellowship between the believers. Thus the followers of Christ comforted one another and strengthened each other in the faith. Conversation is a genuine biblical method of ministry.

What are some of the effects achieved through conversation? Mal. 3:16; Luke 4:36, 37.

The Word of God is spread; people become convinced of the truth; new ways are discovered of experiencing the reality of salvation in our daily lives; a community spirit develops; people are comforted and strengthened in the faith. Ellen White tells the ministers that when they have preached their work is just begun. (See *Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 705.)

"Confirm the labor bestowed in the desk by following it up with private effort. Engage in judicious conversation upon present truth, candidly ascertaining the state of mind of those present, and in the fear of God making a practical application of important truth to the cases of those with whom you are associated."—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 705, 706. The messenger of God has stressed over and over again that all believers are called to use conversation as a means to express the grace of God and His truth, and to build one another in the faith. (See *Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 509, 513; vol. 4 pp. 347, 348, etc.)

THINK IT THROUGH

How can the church today stimulate and facilitate conversation as a means of building up the church?

The contents of the conversation should be much like the sermon and the instruction, only more personal and more directly associated with the individual's particular situation. Various forms present themselves: Bible study groups, retreats, after-church dinners, home visitation, prayer groups, community service groups, home churches, etc. The organizing of these groups, however, should not be a goal in itself, but a means whereby the church is built and the gospel is spread.

FURTHER STUDY

Christ's Object Lessons, "Talents," pp. 338, 339 (Speech).

Part 5 SERVICE **“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27).**

From Jesus' own ministry the church has learned that the word and the deed are inseparable. The earliest church saw to it that none of the believers lacked anything. (See Acts 4:34.) And ever since that time the church has been an institution for helping people in their needs.

What was included in the service rendered to people by Jesus and the apostolic church? Matt. 10:8; 11:5, 6; Acts 6:1-4.

Note the difference of the church from a secular service organization. Man is an indivisible whole, a total unit. The physical, social, mental, spiritual, and economic aspects of life are an integrated whole. All of these together make up a person's life before God. Salvation is not a matter, therefore, of the heart or the soul only, or of a person's moral or spiritual life. Salvation is a total experience. As long as one aspect of life has not been affected by God's grace, a person is not fully helped. Healing the body, feeding the hungry, supporting the poor, or visiting prisoners are therefore never isolated ends. Christian service is inspired by the love of Christ, which aims at the salvation of all men. Christian social action is incomplete without the proclamation of the Word and the call to repentance. But the reverse is also true: Witnessing and evangelization remain sterile without Christian service.

THINK IT THROUGH

Given the many service agencies in modern society, what forms of Christian service would be most needed today?

“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. . . . 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.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 511.

“Good deeds are the fruit that Christ requires us to bear: kind words, deeds of benevolence, of tender regard for the poor, the needy, the afflicted. . . . When you succor the poor, sympathize with the afflicted and oppressed, and befriend the orphan, you bring yourselves into a closer relationship to Jesus.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 25.

FURTHER STUDY

Christian Service, pp. 186-193.

Part 6
THE LORD'S
SUPPER

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread" (1 Cor. 10:16, 17).

Among all the means of grace whereby believers are brought into a union with Christ and with one another, none has been considered so important as the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is the most comprehensive expression of Jesus Christ and the salvation He has provided.

What is the meaning of the Lord's Supper? Matt. 26: 26-29:

Through the Lord's Supper two basic elements of the church are realized: the union between God and man, and the union among the believers. This union with Christ has clearly three aspects: a past, a present, and a future. The past is represented in Jesus' words: "This do . . . in remembrance of me," referring in the first place to His death at the cross, whereby He established a new covenant with His people. Through His death our sins have been forgiven and sinners have been reconciled to God. The present comes to the fore in our experience of sins forgiven through Jesus. The future aspect of the union is clearly expressed in Jesus' words: "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matt. 26:29). The celebration of the death of Christ is not that of a funeral, but one of joy over the redemption received and over the promise of an everlasting union, soon to be realized.

The foot-washing service relates directly to the Lord's Supper. Ellen White points out:

"This ordinance [foot washing] is Christ's appointed preparation for the sacramental service. While pride, variance, and strife for supremacy are cherished, the heart cannot enter into fellowship with Christ. We are not prepared to receive the communion of His body and His blood. Therefore it was that Jesus appointed the memorial of His humiliation to be first observed. . . .

"To those who receive the spirit of this service, it can never become a mere ceremonial. Its constant lesson will be, 'By love serve one another.' Gal. 5:13."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 650, 651.

THINK IT THROUGH

Why do Seventh-day Adventists serve an open communion table?

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 656-661.

The People of God

"Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14).

The Bible points out many aspects of the church and uses the word "church" with a large variety of meanings. It is difficult to bring them all under one common denominator. The church stands for a way of life and an assembly of believers; it denotes an institution and a system of beliefs; it is an organization and a means of salvation; it is an accomplished event, and it points toward the future; a body of saints and sinners at the same time, human and divine; a holy nation and a band of pilgrims. Some of these images and metaphors are more dominant in the Scripture than others, but they all need each other. They have been given to instruct us so that we will have correct and balanced views of the church. Yet there are sound reasons to give special attention to one term in particular: the

church as *God's people*. (See 1 Peter 2:9; Titus 2:14.) One reason is that this term is clearly a dominant picture of Israel in the Old Testament and the church in the New Testament. It is the term most frequently used to express the very nature of the church.

A second reason for giving special attention to this term is that it stresses a central viewpoint that permeates practically all other images of the church in Scripture: The church is the work of God. It is only because God elects a people, protects it, dwells in it, and saves it, that there is a church. Apart from God's gracious activity, the church (as would Judah—Isa. 1:9) would long ago have become as extinct as Sodom. The church is God's own people.

A third reason for singling out the concept of the church as the people of God is to balance a rather one-sided view of the church which is prevalent among many believers. Some believe the church is mainly an organization that has ceremonies and priests to conduct them. In the Bible the church is the people who are bound together by belief in Jesus. In other circles, the church has been identified with a particular group (priests or ministers) or with a certain office. The church fathers (Ignatius, Cyprian) expressed the view that the church consists of its bishops and clergy. The Bible teaches that the church is the body of Christ. It is one undivided people, where social, racial, educational, or sexual distinctions have lost their significance. (See Gal. 3:28.) This should correct the traditional view that still separates the "exalted office of the ministry" from the "ordinary church members."

Finally, the awakening of the laity, which has given rise to much new thought, action, and movement in the

church, stands in need of a renewed study on the biblical concept of the people of God. This word "laity" is derived from the Greek word *laos*, meaning people. It is the word used in the New Testament when the writer refers to God's *people*. A rediscovery of the biblical message on the laity as God's own people is not only essential to the revival and reformation we seek in the church today, it is basic to the fulfillment of God's mission in all the world.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. God's Chosen People (Acts 15:14)
2. An Undivided Whole (2 Cor. 6:16)
3. A Kingdom of Priests (1 Peter 2:9)
4. Endowed With His Spirit (John 20:21, 22)
5. The Gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:7)
6. The Ministry of the Laity (Eph. 4:11, 12)



The great strength of God's church is its dedicated laity—men and women who give of themselves in compassionate service.

**Part 1
GOD'S
CHOSEN
PEOPLE**

“God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name” (Acts 15:14).

Throughout the New Testament emphasis is given to the fact that the church has come into existence not through the will of man, but because God has chosen His own people. As Christ said, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you” (John 15:16; see also verse 19).

What is the basis of God's choice? Deut. 7:6-8; Eph. 2:4-8.

God's grace is the source of everything. It is the source of our personal life and existence (Acts 17:25), and of the existence of the church. Grace is the love of God in action; He forgives men their sins and reconciles them to Himself (2 Cor. 5:19; 8:9). Grace makes it possible for the people of God to be what God would like them to be, and by His grace they may be pure and victorious till the end. (See Eph. 5:26, 27.)

What is the purpose of God's choosing? 1 Peter 2:9; Titus 2:14.

God has no favorites. (See Rom. 2:11.) He is the God of all men who does not want any person lost, but who wishes that all might come to a knowledge of truth (1 Tim. 2:4). As God chose His special people in Old Testament times for service, so His church in the New Testament is chosen for service. To make all people aware of His grace and of their reconciliation to God, He has chosen a special people to be the channels of His grace to all men. They are the *firstfruits* of a large harvest from the whole world. (See James 1:18; see also Rev. 14:4.) The church is called as a model of what God wants all men to be. By them God accomplishes His work of grace and redemption. The call to become a member of God's chosen people, therefore, is a call to mission and an appointment to be a minister of Christ.

THINK IT THROUGH

How do I measure up to my call into the church?

“It was the Saviour's purpose that after He ascended to heaven to become man's intercessor, His followers should carry on the work that He had begun. . . . There are some who are willing to go to the ends of the earth in order to carry the light of truth to men, but God demands that every soul who knows the truth shall seek to win others to the love of the truth. If we are not willing to make special sacrifices in order to save souls that are ready to perish, how can we be counted worthy to enter into the city of God?”—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 103.

FURTHER STUDY

Christian Service, pp. 7-13.

Part 2
AN UNDIVIDED
WHOLE

"God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (2 Cor. 6:16).

We generally think of the church as a group of men and women, each of whom has been united to Christ individually. But these individuals are unified into a group by experiences common to all. Each one is controlled to some extent by the group if he is to remain a part of the group.

What illustration does Paul use to describe this oneness of the people of God? Rom. 12:4, 5; 1 Cor. 12:12-14.

Contrary to the classical Greek writings, the Bible uses the term *laos*, people, almost exclusively in its singular form. *Laos*, from which our word "laity" is derived, is a single, indivisible unit. God's chosen people are one unit. An individual believer is never referred to in Scripture as a layman. The Bible speaks only of the people—one undivided whole. And it stands for all the believers in Christ, not just the "ordinary believers," a distinction that is foreign to Scripture.

What is, in Scripture, the opposite of the people of God? 1 Peter 2:9, 10; Rom. 9:25, 26.

In Scripture each people as a distinct unit has a particular characteristic that distinguishes it from all other peoples. Therefore, the people of God stands over and against all other peoples who have not accepted Christ as their Saviour and Lord.

"In order for the work to be built up strong and symmetrical, there is need of varied gifts and different agencies, all under the Lord's direction; He will instruct the workers according to their several ability. Co-operation and unity are essential to a harmonious whole, each laborer doing his God-given work, filling his appropriate position, and supplying the deficiency of another. One worker left to labor alone is in danger of thinking that his talent is sufficient to make a complete whole.

"Where there is a union of workers, there is opportunity for them to consult together, to pray together, to co-operate in labor. None should feel that they cannot link up with their brethren because they do not work in exactly the same line as they themselves do."—*Evangelism*, p. 104.

THINK IT THROUGH

What would be the effects in the church if these biblical concepts were to be more fully implemented?

FURTHER STUDY

Christian Service, pp. 67-71.

**Part 3
A KINGDOM
OF PRIESTS**

“Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

God called a special people in Old Testament times to be “a kingdom of priests” (Ex. 19:6). His chosen people today receive the same call.

What is the nature of the priesthood to which all the believers have been appointed? 1 Peter 2:5, 9; Heb. 10:19-25.

Under the old covenant, the priestly function was threefold: to offer sacrifices, to teach the law, and to serve as intercessor between God and man. (See Heb. 8:3; Deut. 33:10; Heb. 5:1.) These roles have been fulfilled and taken over by Christ, our great High Priest. But He has called a special people to participate in this threefold function on earth in behalf of all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people.

(1) **Sacrifices.** The members of the church are urged to “offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually” (Heb. 13:15), and to do good (verse 16). The kind deeds of the believers not only glorify God before men, but they are priestly acts toward God. Paul calls the ministry of the gospel a “priestly service.” Its purpose is “that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 15:16, RSV).

(2) **Teaching.** God’s people is a kingdom of priests “to proclaim the triumphs of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (NEB). That priestly service is accomplished by being ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor. 5:18-20).

(3) **Intercessor.** God’s people, as a kingdom of priests, are called upon to offer intercessory prayers for one another, for the physical and spiritual needs of people inside and outside of the church, for governments, for the work of the church and its mission in all the world (1 Tim. 2:1, 2).

THINK IT THROUGH

How will this biblical teaching of the priesthood of all believers affect my life?

“The Saviour’s commission to the disciples included all the believers. It includes all believers in Christ to the end of time. . . . All who receive the life of Christ are ordained to work for the salvation of their fellow men. For this work the church was established, and all who take upon themselves its sacred vows are thereby pledged to be co-workers with Christ.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 822.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 818-828.

Part 4
ENDOWED WITH
HIS SPIRIT

"As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John 20:21, 22).

The hallmark of the people of God is that it is a people moved by the Holy Spirit. The church was born at Pentecost. It continues to exist by God's presence among His people through the Holy Spirit.

From Pentecost on, the abundance of the Spirit's activity in the church is testified to in many ways. Our understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit may be deepened by noting His work for His people, and His work *through* His people.

For His people: The Spirit renews us (Titus 3:5) and dwells in us (Rom. 8:11); He is our access to the Father (Eph. 2:18) and makes intercession for us (Rom. 8:26). The Spirit is the means of fellowship (Phil. 2:1) and of prayer (Eph. 6:18), of joy (1 Thess. 1:6) and of worship (Phil. 3:3). He is the seal of our salvation and "the pledge that we shall enter upon our heritage" (Eph. 1:13, 14, NEB). He guides the people of God into all truth (John 16:13) and helps man to confess that Christ is Lord (1 Cor. 12:3). The Spirit wars against the flesh (Gal. 5:17), quickens our mortal bodies (Rom. 8:11), and changes us into the image of the Lord from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3:18). In short: "It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 671.

Through His people: The Holy Spirit is given that men may bear witness for Christ "in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). It is the power of the Holy Spirit that enables His people to become ministers who can bring the gospel to others (1 Peter 1:12). It is when people become filled with the Holy Spirit that they begin to bear witness by speaking the Word of God, through service, or by a genuine fellowship and a holy life.

THINK IT THROUGH

How can the promise of the Holy Spirit become more real in the life of God's people today?

"If all were willing, all would be filled with the Spirit. Wherever the need of the Holy Spirit is a matter little thought of, there is seen spiritual drought, spiritual darkness, spiritual declension and death."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 50.

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 52-56.

**Part 5
THE GIFTS
OF THE
SPIRIT**

"In each of us the Spirit is manifested in one particular way, for some useful purpose" (1 Cor. 12:7, NEB).

"Concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant" (1 Cor. 12:1.) Each believer has been endowed with at least one gift that equips and enables him to do his work of ministry (verse 7). Unlike the pagans who are seized by some power, Christians are not carried away by the Spirit blindly and emotionally. Manifestations of the Spirit lead people to profess that Jesus is Lord (verses 2, 3). The test, therefore, whether a manifestation of the spirit is from God or from some other spirit is whether these manifestations serve the lordship of Jesus Christ, and whether they serve to build the church and advance the gospel.

In what ways is the Holy Spirit manifested in the people of God? 1 Cor. 12:4-7.

God bestows these *gifts* (*charismata*, verse 4) upon His people to bear witness in the world, equipping and enabling the church for *administrations* (*service*, RSV) (*diakonia*, verse 5), following Christ's example in every line of ministry He Himself performed while He lived on earth. *Operations* (*work* RSV) (*energemata*, verse 6) refers to that which is wrought by God through the gifts and the varieties of service. They are the active outworkings of the gifts, such as salvation, the growth of the church in numbers, and its growth in spirit and in truth (Eph. 4:13-16).

What kind of gifts has God bestowed upon His people? 1 Cor. 12:8-10; Eph. 4:8, 11.

A comparison of these texts suggests that the apostle Paul is not attempting to give a full list of all the gifts or a definite ranking order. What stands out clearly is: (1) that these gifts are not offices but abilities for special times and places; (2) that they have been given to benefit the church as a whole, and not just for the growth of the individual believer receiving the gift; (3) in the eyes of God all gifts and services are very significant for the functioning of the body as a whole; (4) though each believer has received some kind of gift and service, according to the measure of God, there is no one believer who unites all of these gifts in himself; and (5) that all gifts, services, and workings are given for the building up of the body of Christ and for the accomplishment of God's mission in the world.

THINK IT THROUGH

What is the relationship between the gifts of the Spirit and the believers' natural talents?

FURTHER STUDY

Christ's Object Lessons, "Talents," pp. 325-328.

Part 6
THE MINISTRY
OF THE LAITY

What is the purpose of, among others, pastors and teachers?

"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Eph. 4:11, 12, NIV).

In the King James Version of verse 12 three phrases begin with "for." In Greek the first "for" has the meaning "in order to," while the other two instances use another Greek word. The thought suggested by this construction is that the perfecting of the saints is for the purpose of their doing a work of ministry. Not that they replace the ordained minister, but that there is a ministry which belongs to the laity.

Since the development of the laity for ministry is a function of the gifts that the Spirit has given, the church may want to help the believers become aware of the particular ways they can serve. Then their gifts could be further stimulated and developed, prepared and coordinated for actual ministry. The accomplishing of God's work on earth greatly depends on how seriously each member of the people of God takes his calling to service, and on how the church will organize itself to facilitate the participation of all the believers in the ministry of Jesus Christ.

"In their [the leaders in God's cause] planning they are to give special study to the work that can be done by the laity for their friends and neighbors. The work of God in this earth can never be finished until the men and women comprising our church membership rally to the work and unite their efforts with those of ministers and church officers."—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, pp. 116, 117.

"In every church the members should be so trained that they will devote time to the winning of souls to Christ. How can it be said of the church, 'Ye are the light of the world,' unless the members of the church are actually imparting light?"—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 436.

In laboring where there are already some in the faith, the minister should at first seek not so much to convert unbelievers, as to train the church-members . . . to work for others."—*Gospel Workers*, p. 196.

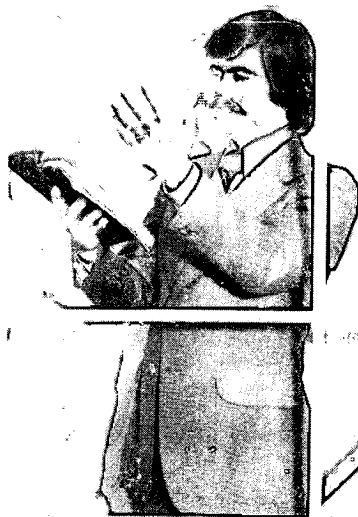
"Let different ones take turns in leading the meetings, and in giving Bible-readings; in so doing they will be calling into use the talents which God has given them, and at the same time be receiving a training as workers."—*Gospel Workers*, p. 197.

Church Order and Ministry

"He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ"

(Eph. 4:11, 12).

The Hebrew faith in Bible times had a priesthood. This was a special class of people that served as mediators between God and man.



God appoints men and women to responsible leadership in His work. How much they need our prayer and support!

They had particular privileges and duties. In the Christian church priesthood belongs to Jesus Christ alone. (See Heb. 5:6; 8:1-4; 10:21.) To Him, the only High

Priest, all members of the household of God have equal access. Jesus Christ is called an apostle (Heb. 3:1), a rabbi (teacher) (Matt. 23:8), a shepherd and a bishop (1 Peter 2:25; 5:4), and a minister (Rom. 15:8). His service is the basis of all ministry by His followers (Mark 10:43-45); He is also the basis of all authority in the church. (See Rev. 2:1,7.) The church is a Christocracy, in which all members share alike in the privileges and duties that belong to the body of Christ as a whole. Jesus specifically prohibited His disciples from establishing class distinctions (Matt. 23:8-10). The people of God as a whole are called to participate in the ministry of Jesus Christ. They are appointed to be His priests in the world (1 Peter 2:9; Rev. 1:6). To that end the gifts of grace have been bestowed upon every church member (1 Cor. 12:7; Eph. 4:7). There is some evidence that in the New Testament church every member could baptize, distribute the Lord's Supper, and speak in any assembly where they could teach and contribute to the edification of the church in public service. A sharp cleavage into "clergy" and "laity" is foreign to the New Testament. The word "clergy" (and its cognates) is derived from the Greek word *klēros*, which means "allotment," "inheritance," or "portion." In the Scripture *klēros* is used to indicate (1) the share of salvation in Jesus Christ, (2) the inheritance of eternal life, and (3) the portion of peace and joy. These special privileges belong to all the members of the household of God.

The way that the word *klēros* is used in the New Testament contradicts the way we use its derivative "clergy" today. We have noticed the three New Testament uses that are related to this subject. Thus it is seen that it was the people of the church who received the lot or inheritance, and not just a

privileged few who were professional religionists.

Of course there were, in New Testament times, individuals such as Paul, Timothy, and Peter who were called to full-time service for God's cause. There was not, however, the drastic distinction between clergy and laity that developed in the apostasy and is still seen in some quarters today.

Through baptism every member receives a ministry to perform for Jesus Christ. Laity refers to belonging to the body of Christ. Ministry is the function of the one who belongs to Christ's body. To be a member of the laity and not also a minister or servant of Jesus Christ is like calling oneself a cook while refusing to work in the kitchen.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. The Gift of Ministry (Rom. 12:6)
2. Christ, Our Minister (1 Peter 2:25)
3. Apostles (1 Cor. 12:28)
4. Prophets (Eph. 2:20)
5. Evangelists and Teachers (Eph. 4:11, 12)
6. Ordination (1 Tim. 4:14)

Part 1
THE GIFT OF
MINISTRY

“Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them” (Rom. 12:6, RSV).

Although the believers share alike in the calling and the privileges of the ministry of Jesus Christ, the Bible insists that all of these functions be carried out “in order” (1 Cor. 14:40). Each function can properly be carried out only in cooperation with other gifts and services. Thus there are limitations on the service of each believer. These limitations are determined by the particular gift received and the place of service. Under Christ’s guidance the church defines and regulates the varieties of service. This becomes apparent in the church’s appointment and affirmation of specialized ministers.

What special ministries does Paul mention? Eph. 4:11; 1 Cor. 12:28.

These specialized ministries are unmerited gifts of grace. They are functions, not offices; services, not positions. These specialized ministries belong to the whole church; but they can best be carried out through “chosen servants” to whom God has given these special gifts. The specialized ministry, therefore, is performed by delegation to individuals. The authority for this ministry rests with the church. God takes the initiative in calling persons from among His chosen people and in endowing them with special gifts. The church then tests these people to know whether their call is from God. If the call has been found genuine, the church then recognizes, confirms, and supports their services with the gifts and services of every other member.

What is the hallmark of ministry according to the teaching of Jesus? Matt. 20:25-28.

The usual word in the New Testament for “ministry” is *diakonia*, and the minister is called a *diakonos*, from which our word “deacon” comes. Given the large choice of words available in Greek to describe the function of a minister, it is remarkable that the New Testament writers usually chose this term, which stresses the idea of *servicing*. The basic meaning of *diakonia* is “to serve at the table.” The New Testament emphasizes that ministry is characterized by a special *subordination*. The inspired writers of the New Testament emphasized that everyone who is called to minister by the grace of God is thereby called to follow Christ, who, being equal with God, made Himself a slave of all men. He did not come to be served, but to be a servant of all.

FURTHER STUDY

Gospel Workers, pp. 63-65.

Part 2
CHRIST, OUR
MINISTER

“Ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls” (1 Peter 2:25).

All appointed ministries and services rest in Jesus. All gifts have validity, only to the extent that they are based on Christ's own ministry on earth and in heaven, and to the extent that they are carried out in the spirit of Jesus Christ. Ministry in the church becomes in reality the imitation and the continuation by believers, through the Spirit, of the ministry of Jesus Christ (John 15; 16:1-15).

Service characterized the ministry of Jesus. He made Himself nothing; He took the form and nature of a slave and lived a life that was wholly dedicated to God and to His fellowmen. The great motive of His servanthood was love. It manifested itself in subordination and obedience, in lowliness and humility, in witnessing and suffering.

It is precisely these characteristics of Jesus' ministry that lend it such great authority! Worldly powers and authorities demand obedience on the ground of their position, status, or dignity. In the church authority does not stem from an office or status, but from the church's recognition that the ministers are really faithful representatives of Jesus Christ who continue their ministry in lowliness and humility, obedience and sacrifice, and who give their lives to serve others out of love.

In what two ways can the church recognize whether a ministry is based on Christ's ministry? Luke 22:25-27; 2 Cor. 5:18-20.

Ministry, the call to service, is an unmerited gift of grace. (See 1 Cor. 15:8-10.) Nobody can be a servant of God by his own will, intellect, or training. “We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us” (2 Cor. 4:7). Such a ministry can be performed only by the person in whom Christ lives and who is truly converted. Only the person whose sins have been forgiven and who lives in the newness of life can really serve as a representative of Jesus Christ.

THINK IT THROUGH

What makes ministry permanent in the church?

FURTHER STUDY

Gospel Workers, pp. 48-50.

Part 3 "God has set some in the church, first apostles" (1 Cor. 12:28).
APOSTLES

The word "apostle" means "someone who is sent." He is one sent for a particular task and with the authority of him who has sent him. An apostle, in the New Testament, is therefore a representative of Jesus Christ, who sends him with His authority to carry out His mission. (See John 20:21-23.) Our word "missionary" reflects the meaning of "apostle" in this literal sense of the word. The apostles Peter and Paul stress the fact that apostles were eyewitnesses of the resurrected Jesus, who also have been called to preach the great events of His life. (See Acts 1:15-26; 1 Cor. 9:1, 2.) This special call distinguishes the apostle from others who had also been eyewitnesses (Luke 24:13, 18, 33; 1 Cor. 15:5-8). Sometimes the term "apostle" is limited to the Twelve, the original bearers of the gospel message, the "foundation stones" of the church. Their names appear also on the foundations of the wall of the New Jerusalem (Eph. 2:20; Rev. 21:14). "Apostle" is used for Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:4, 14) Apollos (1 Cor. 4:6, 9), and Silvanus and Timothy (1 Thess. 1:1; 2:6). And, of course, Jesus Himself is called an apostle (Heb. 3:1). These facts point out that "apostle" in the New Testament has both a technical and a general meaning. In its technical sense it refers to those who have seen the risen—or exalted—Lord, who have been entrusted with the gospel to keep it, and who have been directly commissioned by Jesus to preach it. Apostles in the wider sense of the word, then, are all those who are specially sent by the church on the basis of the word delivered by Christ and His apostles, the foundation stones of the church. We would do well to remember, however, that the word "apostle" refers to a function, a call to service.

THINK IT THROUGH In what ways can the church of God truly be apostolic?

"As Christ sent forth His disciples, so today He sends forth the members of His church. The same power that the apostles had is for them. If they will make God their strength, He will work with them, and they shall not labor in vain."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 599.

"All heaven is waiting for men and women through whom God can reveal the power of Christianity.

"The church is God's agency for the proclamation of truth, empowered by Him to do a special work.

"It is the privilege of every Christian, not only to look for, but to hasten the coming of the Saviour."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 600.

FURTHER STUDY *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 593, 594.

Part 4 "Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and
PROPHETS prophets" (Eph. 2:20).

Sometimes in the New Testament the prophets are mentioned together with the apostles. For examples, see Luke 11:49 and Rev. 18:20. Both functions are a gift of the Spirit. The church chooses neither prophets nor apostles. It can test them and recognize whether or not their words are from God; it can allow them to speak or refuse them; it can accept their word or reject it. The criterion for testing them is whether they testify to Jesus as Lord and whether they edify the church. (See 1 Cor. 12:3, 7; 14:1-40.)

What is the function of the prophets in the church? 2 Peter 1:19-21; 1 Cor. 14:3.

The gift of prophecy is the authority to speak to men for God. Prophets declare what the will of God is for the present, and sometimes they predict future events, such as Agabus did. (See Acts 11:28; 21:10, 11.) The primary function of the prophets is edifying the church. Prophets, through visions, dreams, auditions, or a special enlightenment of the mind, give new truths or new insights into truths already revealed. They are also sent to call the church back from erroneous thought or behavior, to awaken the church, and to arouse it to faith and action. Commonly the revelations these people receive are to meet special needs and immediate situations in the church. Since such needs arise ever anew, the gift of prophecy is an abiding feature of the church of God and a mark of its authenticity. (See Rev. 12:17; 19:10.)

Many Christians believe that the gift of prophecy ceased with the early church. The Scriptures testify that this gift will be present in the church until the last day (Eph. 4:11-13). Seventh-day Adventists believe that the gift of prophecy was manifest in the work of Ellen G. White.

THINK IT THROUGH**What is the relationship of the gift of prophecy to the canon of the Holy Scripture?**

"The Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience. . . .

"Yet the fact that God has revealed His will to men through His word, has not rendered needless the continued presence and guiding of the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, the Spirit was promised by our Saviour to open the word to His servants, to illuminate and apply its teachings."—*The Great Controversy*, p. vii.

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. v-xii.

**Part 5
EVANGELISTS
AND TEACHERS**

“He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry” (Eph. 4:11, 12).

According to Hebrews 5:12, the whole church “ought to be teachers.” However, many believers continue to need someone to teach them the ABC’s of God’s oracles again. For this reason teachers are extremely important to the church. They are mentioned along with apostles and prophets in First Corinthians 12:28 and in Ephesians 4:11.

What is the role of teachers in the church? Matt. 28:19, 20.

Teaching in the New Testament means much more than what is commonly understood by it today. Teaching is not merely giving instructions and explanations or passing on information. It means edification, care and nurture of the spirit as much as of the mind. Without such teachers the church cannot grow—that is, grow in the understanding of truth, in maturity and perfection, in the stature of Christ. Teaching is a gift that guards the truth and spreads it; it edifies the congregation and helps the people of God to apply it to their everyday life situation. Teaching, therefore, is a function of the pastor, the evangelist, the elder, or the deacon. (See 1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17; 2 Tim. 2:2, 24.) It is an extremely important service, which carries grave responsibilities.

The name “evangelist” is related to the word *euangelion*, which is translated as “the gospel.” From the few indications the Bible gives us concerning their service, evangelists were preachers of the gospel, especially to those who had never heard it before. To that end these men traveled from place to place, proclaiming the message of Jesus Christ, raising up churches and organizing them. They were not just preachers; they were also pastors of the flock the Lord gave them. Neither was evangelism the function of a specialist only. Philip, the evangelist, was one of the seven deacons chosen to wait on the tables of the widows (Acts 6:1-6), and Timothy, whom the apostle Paul exhorted to do the work of an evangelist, was the pastor of a local church. The work of an evangelist, like any other service, was not an office or a position; it was rather a gift entrusted to people in the church who either full-time or part-time employed that gift.

THINK IT THROUGH

What gift of the Spirit did I receive by which I am equipped to “edify the body of Christ”?

FURTHER STUDY

Christian Service, pp. 14-22.

**Part 6
ORDINATION**

“Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophetic utterance when the elders laid their hands upon you” (1 Tim. 4:14, RSV).

Some words which the King James Version has translated “ordain” actually mean “to appoint” or “to choose.” In the New Testament no special rite is implied in the word “ordain.” However, there are a number of instances in the New Testament where by a special service persons were dedicated to ministry.

By what service were people in the early church set apart for gospel work? Acts 6:6; 13:1-3.

By the act of laying on of hands, today called ordination, the church recognizes and affirms the gift which God has bestowed upon certain people to equip them for their special ministry. It is important to note that first comes the special gift of God, then its services and workings, and finally the church’s affirmation by which some people are installed for a definite form of ministry. By the rite of the laying on of hands the one set apart receives no new authority, no special power, no new grace or qualification. As the case of the seven deacons clearly indicates, the men were already equipped for their task before the laying on of hands, being “full of the Spirit and of wisdom” (Acts 6:3, NEB).

Wrong ideas about ordination developed in the church after apostolic times. We can avoid these by understanding the nature of the ceremony of ordination in the New Testament. The ceremony of the laying on of hands “added no new grace or virtual qualification. It was an acknowledged form of designation to an appointed office and a recognition of one’s authority in that office. By it the seal of the church was set upon the work of God. . . .

“At a later date the rite of ordination by the laying on of hands was greatly abused; unwarrantable importance was attached to the act, as if a power came at once upon those who received such ordination, which immediately qualified them for any and all ministerial work.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 162.

THINK IT THROUGH

In what way are the New Testament concepts of ordination followed in our church today?

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 159-163.

Church Order and Organization

“Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Cor. 14:39, 40).

The New Testament writers teach of one body of Christ but many churches; of one ministry but many forms of service. What is the relationship between local congregations and the church universal? Between the one ministry of Jesus Christ and the church’s many forms of work? The answer begins with church unity. There is only one church, inseparable and undivided; one Lord, who is the Head of that church; one gospel, which is the basis of the church; and one mission, which is the reason for its existence. A local congregation, therefore, is much more than an organizational unit of the church at large. And a group of churches (conference, union) is much more than the sum of x-number of members or a group of local congregations. Each church and each group of churches is a manifestation of the one body of Christ in a particular location or area. This stands out clearly from the New Testament use of the Greek word *ekklēsia*, which is used more than 100 times to denote what in our language is called the church. (Our word “church” is a derivation from another Greek word, *kuriakos*, which means “the Lord’s” or “belonging to the Lord.” *Ekklēsia*, from which our word “ecclesiastical” has been derived, is a compound of the words *ek*, meaning “out,” and *kaleo*; which means “to call,” “to summon.” Literally, *ekklēsia* therefore means “a calling out.” This does not refer, as sometimes has been suggested, to the church members’ separation from the world. It rather

means a summons to a special service, a calling out from among the people for the sake of serving them, much like a congress or a parliament or even the army, all of which can be used as translations for the Greek word *ekklēsia*. These institutions do not exist for themselves. Their members have been called to serve the whole society. So it is with the church. The word *ekklēsia* in the New Testament refers to the church in three ways: (1) *the entire body of Christ*, the one universal church, such as in Matthew 16:18. This is not the assembling place; it is the people who constitute the church. It is not the organization or a group of local churches; it is the men and women whose lives have been united with Christ and who are also members of one another. (2) *the local church*—that is, the people of God manifested in a particular locality, such as the church at Thessalonica (1 Thess. 1:1) or every local church (1 Cor. 4:17); or in its plural form it designates a group of churches in a particular region, such as “the churches of Galatia” (Gal. 1:2). The one universal church is not the sum of many individual churches. Rather, the universal church is preeminent, the local congregations are the individual expressions of that one undivided church. Typical of this New Testament view are Paul’s epistles to the believers in Corinth, whom he addresses as “the church of God which is at Corinth” (1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1). For our time and situation such a view of the church is best expressed in such terms as “the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Thailand” or “the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Brazil.” (3) *the actual assembly of believers*, such as in First Corinthians 11:18. This does not refer to the building, or the time, but

just to the fact of gathering, the actual worship.

The New Testament concept of the church, then, is that of one body. It manifests itself in local congregations, such as in Ephesus and Corinth and Rome, and so on. The church stretches out not only in space, but it also extends in time. Therefore it is manifest in every age. For this reason the organization and discipline of the New Testament church are patterns that should guide the whole church

everywhere and at all times.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

- 1. Order, an Essence of the Church (Acts 15:6, 22)**
- 2. The Elder (Acts 14:23)**
- 3. The Bishop (Titus 1:7)**
- 4. The Deacon (1 Tim. 3:13)**
- 5. Church Discipline (Matt. 18:15-17)**
- 6. Church Government (1 John 2:20)**



Each congregation must be organized for worship and witness; there is a work for each to do.

**Part 1
ORDER, AN
ESSENCE OF
THE CHURCH**

"The apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter."

"Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company" (Acts 15:6, 22).

The New Testament does not offer us a fixed plan of organization. The church was then only in the beginning stages of development. But from that beginning the Holy Spirit provided for its further development. The church is a spiritual body that must constantly be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit. That demands a flexible organization which will allow new ministries to be born either as a result of divine revelation or because of new circumstances.

What are some scriptural evidences of a definite order and organization in the New Testament church? Acts 6:1-8; 15:22, 23; 2 Thess. 3:6, 7; Titus 1:5.

Organization and order have characterized the church from its very beginning. Some of the organizational steps they took were these: The believers held meetings; a definite discipline and decorum was maintained; letters of recommendation were sent from one church to another; collections were taken and sent from one church to another; registers were kept of the widows under the care of the church; elders and deacons were appointed; and new members were added and instructed.

"We want to hold the lines evenly, that there shall be no breaking down of the system of regulation and order. In this way license shall not be given to disorderly elements to control the work at this time. We are living in a time when order, system, and unity of action are most essential."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 228.

"Some have advanced the thought that as we near the close of time, every child of God will act independently of any religious organization. But I have been instructed by the Lord that in this work there is no such thing as every man's being independent."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 489.

"How Satan would rejoice if he could succeed in his efforts to get in among this people and disorganize the work at a time when thorough organization is essential and will be the greatest power to keep our spurious uprisings and to refute claims not endorsed by the word of God!"—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 489.

THINK IT THROUGH

How can a church organization remain flexible so that new forms can develop in response to new challenges and needs?

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 1, pp. 650-653.

Part 2 **“When they had ordained them elders in every church, and**
THE ELDER **had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on**
whom they believed” (Acts 14:23).

Apostles, prophets, teachers, and evangelists were general ministers whose gifts and services benefited the entire church. The words “elder,” “bishop,” “pastor,” and “deacon” refer to one who served primarily in a local congregation or district. Elder, bishop, and pastor are synonymous.

What were some duties of the elder in the New Testament church? Acts 20:28-31; 1 Peter 5:1-3; Titus 1:9.

Wherever a new church was planted and organized, the apostles appointed elders to administer it, to care for the believers, to instruct them, and to nurture them. This work of tending “the flock” was to be done after the pattern of Christ, “neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:3). It means serving, not dominating; humbling oneself, not exalting. The elder is called to be a good shepherd: He does not act as an hireling, who is motivated only by money and flees when danger comes (John 10:12, 13), but who is willing to sacrifice his all for the sake of the flock. He is called to feed and nurture the flock by declaring to them “all the counsel of God” (Acts 20: 27), as “a good teacher” (1 Tim. 3:2, NEB). From Paul’s example we see that the elder’s work is to admonish and to encourage (1 Thess. 5:12-14), to help and to comfort, even with tears (Acts 20:31, 35), to counsel and to discipline with patience and tenderness, to exhort in sound doctrine, and to refute those who contradict (Titus 1:9). The service of an elder in the church is certainly not easy. It is described as laboring at great cost and much sacrifice.

What qualifications for becoming an elder did Paul record? 1 Tim. 3:1-7.

The fact that God inspired the apostle Paul to write twice (see Titus 1:5-9 also) a rather extensive list of the qualifications for elders evidences God’s concern over the leadership of the church and the necessity for great care in choosing such leaders. These qualifications concern the personal character of the elder, his family, his relations to others, both inside and outside the church, his abilities, talents, and gifts, his standing before God, and his faith.

THINK IT THROUGH

What system of church government is based on the leadership of elders?

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 5, pp. 617-619.

Part 3
THE BISHOP **“A bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God” (Titus 1:7).****What was the role of the bishop in the New Testament?**
1 Tim. 3:2, 5; Titus 1:7-9.

In the New Testament the words “bishop,” “elder,” and “pastor” were used of the same men. The English word “bishop” is a transliteration of the Greek word *episkopos* (overseer), who in the New Testament looked after the needs of a local congregation. Bishop or overseer was neither a title nor an office. It was the function of an elder, and clearly a service based on a special gift of grace.

In Acts 20:17 the apostle Paul summoned the elders of the church at Ephesus to meet him at Miletus. In speaking to them he addressed them as pastors and overseers (bishops) of the flock (verse 28). Similarly in Titus 1:5, the apostle gives instruction for the ordination of elders in every city. When he subsequently lists their qualifications, he calls them “bishops” (verse 7). In doing the work of an overseer (bishop) and pastor, the elder is continuing the ministry of Jesus Christ, “the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls” (1 Peter 2:25). This pastoral and administrative leadership of a local church is not that of “lording it over” the believers who are allotted to the elders’ care (1 Peter 5:3), but after the pattern of Christ, who taught His disciples that their form of leadership would not be like that of the world (Luke 22:26, 27). “Whoever wants to be great must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be the willing slave of all” (Mark 10: 44, NEB). It is on the basis of this kind of service, and of their special qualifications (see 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9), that the congregation is called to recognize their church elders as pastors and bishops and to “hold them in the highest possible esteem and affection” (1 Thess. 5:13, NEB). (See also Heb. 13:17.)

THINK IT THROUGH **Is it a wrong ambition to strive to become a bishop? What is the Christian motive for such an aspiration?**

“To aspire to leadership is an honourable ambition” (1 Tim. 3:1, NEB).

“Whatever gift each of you may have received, use it in service to one another, like good stewards dispensing the grace of God in its varied forms. Are you a speaker? Speak as if you uttered oracles of God. Do you give service? Give it as in the strength which God supplies. In all things so act that the glory may be God’s through Jesus Christ; to him belong glory and power for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Peter 4: 10, 11, NEB).

Part 4
THE DEACON **“Those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith which is in Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 3:13, RSV).**

In the New Testament the leadership of the local churches was in the hands of elders (bishops) and deacons. (See also Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1-13.) The word “deacon” comes from the greek *diakonos*, which in Greek literature denotes a servant or a slave whose duties consist of waiting on his master’s table and sometimes doing the shopping for him. Throughout the New Testament the word *diakonos*, and its cognates is used in a large variety of meanings. All of these stress some kind of servanthood. Christ is called a *diakonos*; and His ministry both in form and in attitude, is spoken of as *diakonia*. (See Phil. 2:7.) These words are also used of the ministry of Paul and of other apostles and elders. The information in the New Testament makes it highly plausible to conclude that the deacons were originally the assistants of the apostles (see Acts 6:1-8) and that they later served as “associate pastors,” assisting the elders or bishops in the performance of their many duties, according to their particular gifts.

What were the qualifications for a deacon? 1 Tim. 3: 8-13.

The functions of the deacon were connected with both the administration of the church and the spiritual life of the believers. To carry out these responsibilities, the gifts and the qualifications necessary to become a deacon were about the same as those of an elder or bishop. Deacons served as administrators, according to their gift. (Rom. 12:6, 7), especially in relation to material and financial matters. Thus they were to be honest, not “greedy for gain.” Since they were called to visit the believers at home, they should be “serious, not double-tongued” (1 Tim. 3:8, RSV).

“The appointment of the seven [deacons] to take the oversight of special lines of work, proved a great blessing to the church. These officers gave careful consideration to individual needs as well as to the general financial interests of the church, and by their prudent management and their godly example they were an important aid to their fellow officers in binding together the various interests of the church into a united whole.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 89.

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 87-91.

Part 5
CHURCH
DISCIPLINE

“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 if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican” (Matt. 18:15-17).

Jesus taught three steps to follow in dealing with an offender:

1. Settle the matter first between brothers. Do not expose him, thereby increasing the difficulty of disciplining him. But go to the erring one, with a heart filled with Christ's love and sympathy, and seek to adjust the matter. Read James 5:20.
2. If this fails, witnesses are to be included in a second attempt, so that if it comes before the church, it will be established.
3. In case further action becomes necessary, it is to be taken by the whole church.

What is the purpose and means of church discipline? Matt. 18:15-17; Gal. 6:1; Titus 3:9, 10; 1 Thess. 5:14.

The aim of church discipline is to make men and women disciples of Jesus Christ. Where members refuse to become united with Christ and follow Him, discipline must be carried out for the sake of those who still are disciples of Christ, but who may suffer great harm if falsehood and evil are not put away. As such, the Bible mentions contention between members, disorderly conduct, divisiveness, false teachings, and gross sins. Among these the apostle Paul lists immorality, covetousness, idolatry, abusive speech, drunkenness, swindling.

Among the forms of discipline the Scripture mentions: warning, admonition, and rebuke (1 Thess. 5:12, 14); withholding the full rights and privileges of church members (2 Thess. 3:6-16); still counting the offender as a brother but forbidding him to hold certain offices or to represent the church publicly; and, as a last resort, disfellowshipping. (See 1 Tim. 1:20; Matt. 18:17.)

What will be the effect of successful discipline? 2 Tim. 2:25, 26.

THINK IT THROUGH

What is the relationship between discipline and love? (See Prov. 3:12; Heb. 12:6.)

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 7, pp. 260-264.

Part 6
CHURCH
GOVERNMENT

Three main types of church government exist in modern Christianity:

1. *Presbyterian.* The name comes from the Greek word for elder. Thus a church with a presbyterian government is one governed by elders. The elders are of two kinds—ruling elders who are laymen, and teaching elders who are ministers. Four groups of elders make up the system—the session, the presbytery, the synod, and the general assembly.

2. *Episcopal.* There are three orders of ministry: bishops, priests (elders, ministers), and deacons. The right to consecrate other bishops and to ordain priests and deacons belong to the bishop only. This provides for a succession of bishops and their authority over the priests (ministers, elders), and deacons, and thereby their rulership over the whole church. The papal system adds a pope who is over all the bishops.

3. *Congregational.* Here the authority of the church resides in each local church as an independent unit with no person or organization above it except Christ the Head. Ministers and other elected church officers represent functions of the priesthood of all believers, based on these people's special calling, gifts, and training.

Each of these three systems has some roots in the New Testament. The episcopal form goes back to the special power and authority given to the apostles (Matt. 10:40; 18:18); the presbyterian, to the equality of the elders, or bishops (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; 5:17; etc.) and the concept of the gifts mentioned in Ephesians 4:7-16; while the congregational form grows out of the biblical notion of the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:9) and the concept of the church as a "charismatic movement."

In light of the essence and nature of the church, each of these principles stands in need of being balanced, complemented, and corrected by the others. A system of government stands constantly in need of becoming corrected by the other principles given in the New Testament. This means that every church order must be both constant and flexible in its structure, definite and at the same time always open to correction and reformation.

THINK IT THROUGH

How do you think the Seventh-day Adventist system of church government compares with these New Testament principles?

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 3, pp. 428-430; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 680.

The Church and the World

"The world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil" (John 17:14,15).

Ever since the church came into existence, it has faced the tension between God's call to come out of the world and His commission to go into the world. This tension is inherent in the nature of the church, which on the



Being "in the world but not of it" means sharing the rich counsels God has given, meeting human needs with compassion.

one hand is called God's temple and holy nation, and on the other hand the salt of the earth and the yeast that leavens the world. Throughout the history of the church, believers have tried to solve this tension either by stressing the church's separation and isolation from the world or by emphasizing the church's solidarity and identification with the world. Both attitudes reflect genuine biblical thinking, and both offer certain guidelines for Christian living. But both attitudes also suffer from a terrible misunderstanding which leads to a distortion of the biblical concept of the role of the church in the world. The first attitude fails to understand that the church exists not only for itself, but also for the sake of the world. It should be holy and pure, undefiled and without spot or wrinkle, not for its own sake, but to become a better instrument in God's hand to save the world and be a model of what God wants all humans to be. The second attitude tends to blur the great distinction between the church and the world. It is as the Bible says: "If the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men" (Matt. 5:13).

What, then, is the relationship between the church and the world? If neither just separation and distance from the world, nor just solidarity and identification with the world, are the solution to the tension the believers face, then what is the biblical answer? The New Testament does not try to solve the tension that is inherent in the nature of the church. It stresses the one as well as the other, separation as well as solidarity. It urges those who are united with Christ not to pattern themselves after the models and ideas and concepts of the world (Rom. 12:2). But this should not lead to a seclusion from the world. For the church exists for the sake of the world. It is because God loves the world that He sent His Son into the world, not to condemn it,

but to save it (John 3:16, 17). God has reconciled the world unto Himself (2 Cor. 5:19, 20), and therefore He sends His church into the world in the same way as Christ was sent into the world (John 17:18). He became as one of us, so that we might become what He was: the image of God. As Christ identified Himself with the world and became one with us sinners, yet without sin Himself, so the church should also be identified with the world, yet without partaking in its sin. To that end Jesus prayed, not to take His church out of the world, but to protect it from evil (John 17:15). Ellen White continuously urges the church to "stand out separate and distinct from the world"—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 437. At the same time she calls on God's people "not to isolate themselves from the world." *Counsels to Teachers*, p. 323.

The withdrawal of the ancient Jews from the world prevented them from doing God's work. God "will finally accomplish through His church on earth today" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 713) what Israel failed to do. Therefore the responsibility rests on us both to separate from the sin of the world, and to carry the gospel to the sinners in the world.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. The World (John 3:17)
2. Into All the World (John 17:18)
3. In the World, But— (John 15:18, 19)
4. Church and State (Matt. 22:21)
5. Church and Society (1 Cor. 9:22, 23)
6. The Church as the Firstfruits (Rev. 14:4, 5)

Part 1 **“God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world;
THE WORLD but that the world through him might be saved” (John 3:17).**

In the New Testament the four Greek words which are translated as “world” have at least six different meanings and many more different shades of meaning. Which meaning is intended can be determined only by the context in which the words occur and by comparison with other passages of Scripture. For an understanding of the church’s relation to the world it is imperative, therefore, that we first understand the biblical meanings of the term “world.” The most important ones are: (1) God’s creation, the earth, its people and their activities, such as in Acts 17:24; Matt. 24:21; Heb. 11:3; (2) the people on earth, of all times and places, who are the object of God’s love, as in John 1:29; 3:16, 17; 2 Cor. 5:19; (3) hypocritical people who have rejected Jesus but appear religious: John 15:18-21; (4) human thoughts and activities that are not in harmony with the purposes and laws of God’s kingdom: Rom. 12:2; 1 Cor. 1:20; (5) the geographical earth; Mark 16:15; Matt. 26:13; (6) ideas, concepts, and activities related to our human condition. In this last sense, for instance, Jesus was in the world (John 1:10; 17:13; 1 Tim. 1:15), sharing our flesh and blood, and participating in the world’s economic and social activities, culture, and way of life.

It is important to notice that the meaning of the term “world” in the New Testament is determined by its relationship to Jesus Christ. The discussion on the relationship of the church to the world, therefore, should not be guided by what social scientists or our cultural or religious traditions understand by the term “world,” but by its New Testament meaning.

THINK IT THROUGH **Compare the meaning of the word “world” in the New Testament with the way we generally use it in the church or in our society.**

For the sake of the work of God it is imperative that we see what relationship ideally exists between the church and the world. The standard by which we may make that distinction is the person and the work of Jesus Christ.

FURTHER STUDY *Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 124-133.

**Part 2
INTO ALL
THE WORLD**

“As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world” (John 17:18).

For what purpose did Christ come into the world? John 3:16, 17; 18:37; 1 John 3:8.

Christ came to establish the kingdom of God. He came to vindicate the name of God, to reveal His true character and what the foundations of His kingdom are: love, in which are freedom and obedience, mercy and justice. Christ came to unmask the devil, to destroy his works, and to defeat him. In Christ's suffering and death the true nature of sin became manifest, but also God's love for the world and the way to eternal life, joy, and peace. When this message of the kingdom will have been preached in all the world, the end will come (Matt. 24:14).

For what purpose did Christ send His church into the world? Matt. 28:18-20; Rev. 14:6, 7.

How comprehensive is the object of the mission Christ has given His church? Mark 16:15.

In the Scriptures, the world is not in the first place areas and places. It stands for the *people* of the world and their activities, ideas, and thoughts. The task of the church, therefore, is not accomplished by its mere presence in all the countries or areas or places of the world, but by its contact with all the *people*, by penetrating their activities, and by influencing their thoughts and ideas. Though the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been planted in nearly 95 percent of the countries of the world, there are some two billion *people* who have never even heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. Another billion people, perhaps, have never heard the three angels' messages with clarity. Not until “all the world”—that is, the poor and the rich, the educated and the uneducated, the Hindu and the Buddhist, the Muslim and the ones who are “born” Christians, the secularist and the communist, the Westerner and the Easterner, people of all races, languages, cultures, nations—will have heard the message of the kingdom with clarity, will the work of Christ in the world be accomplished.

THINK IT THROUGH

How can the church accomplish its mission in the world in this generation?

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 27-32.

**Part 3
IN THE
WORLD, BUT—**

“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you” (John 15:18, 19).

For what does the Christian suffer in the world? 1 Peter 2:19-25.

The world hated Christ not just because He was different, but because His difference exposed them as liars and hypocrites. This included pious and religious people who stood condemned in the light of Jesus' whole life and work and words. It is because Jesus spoke “openly to the world” (John 18:20) that the world hated Him, persecuted Him, and finally murdered Him. The people could not stand having a holy person in their midst. It made them uncomfortable and uneasy. This is true also concerning the followers of Jesus Christ. The more they imitate their Lord's example, the more they will draw the ire and persecution of the world, especially of the religious leaders. If a church is really active and the members live a life of purity and honesty, the world around them will feel condemned for living in sin. The Christians will be hated and despised just as Jesus was.

Sometimes government authorities will try to force Christians to give up their faith and persecute the church because it is felt to be a threat to the unity of the country or to the principles upon which the nation is founded. Sometimes suffering and persecution come from unbelieving, secular people, in the form of ridicule and boycott, because their social life is affected or their commercial interests are threatened. Worst of all, though, is the suffering caused by “worldlings” who claim to be believers themselves, even teachers or leaders.

THINK IT THROUGH

What may be wrong when the world likes and praises a church?

“The apostle Paul declares that ‘all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.’ 2 Timothy 3:12. Why is it, then, that persecution seems in a great degree to slumber? The only reason is that the church has conformed to the world's standard and therefore awakens no opposition. . . . It is only because of the spirit of compromise with sin, because the great truths of the word of God are so indifferently regarded, because there is so little vital godliness in the church, that Christianity is apparently so popular with the world.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 48.

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 39-48

**Part 4
CHURCH
AND STATE**

“Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s” (Matt. 22: 21).

As followers of Jesus Christ, the church seeks no earthly power. That would be a denial of its very nature. The church’s involvement in government affairs would detract from its own particular work and calling; it would also deny Christ’s very own life and ministry. Governmental oppression and intolerance of religion are the inevitable result. This does not mean that church and state are not related. For the Head of the church is also the Lord of lords and King of kings. (See Rom. 13:1-4.) Because of the role governments have in the economy of God, Christians are urged to “pay tax and toll, reverence and respect” (Rom. 13:7, NEB), obedience and honor to the authorities in power. (See also 1 Peter 2:16, 17.)

What are some possible points of conflict between church and state? Acts 5:27-33.

Ideally, there should be no conflict. But governments are not always willing instruments of God. As a result, laws may be passed, decrees given, institutions established, which conflict with the very nature and goals of the church. When that happens, the church has no other choice but to “obey God rather than men.”

Another area of possible conflict arises from the church’s use of instruments for the accomplishment of its mission. Many of these instruments fall under the proper jurisdiction of the state, or are claimed to be the sole prerogative of the government. Notable examples are schools and educational programs, medical facilities and health programs, radio and television, land and other properties.

THINK IT THROUGH

Since points of conflict seem to be unavoidable, what would be the best relationship between church and state?

1. Separate the activities and duties of the state from those of the church, and recognize and respect each other’s sole authority in its own sphere and domain.

2. Where cooperation seems necessary because of mutual concerns such as in education, medical institutions, properties, etc., respect for each other and recognition of each other’s rights and duties should be a guide to settle possible conflicts. Without compromising its obedience to God, the church should always recognize that it is called to be a servant of all men, and that the example of its Lord and Master demands that it subordinate itself, choosing suffering rather than force.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 9, pp. 239-244.

**Part 5
CHURCH
AND SOCIETY**

“I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel’s sake” (1 Cor. 9:22, 23).

The church, like its Head and Founder, has clearly two dimensions: a human and a divine. Though distinguishable, these two are inseparable. On the one hand, the church is absolute and unchangeable, the same forever; on the other hand, it is open to influence from its surroundings.

As a divine institution, the church stands over and above all culture and society. It must warn people of the evil trends in a given society and their effects on people’s relationship to Christ and to one another—for instance: smoking, gambling, the use of alcohol, drug abuse, the degrading influence of certain films and television programs, etc.

As a human institution the church must adapt itself, where not contrary to principle, to the cultural practices and the structures of the society from which its members come. (See 1 Cor. 9:19.)

What principles should guide the church in its relation to culture and society? 1 Cor. 9:19-23. (See also Phil. 2:5-8.)

As Christ, the Son of God, became as one of us, taking upon Himself the human form after thousands of years of sin, so also is the church called to identify itself with people of every race, society, language, nation, culture, political or economic system, philosophical or religious orientation. Though clearly distinct from all cultures and societies in love and holiness the church must at the same time identify itself in appropriate ways with all people.

THINK IT THROUGH

How will this understanding of the role of the church in society affect its life and work in its universal expansion?

“The varying circumstances taking place in our world call for labor which will meet these peculiar developments.”—*Manuscript 8a*, 1888.

“He reached the hearts of the people by going among them as one who desired their good. . . . He met them at their daily vocations, and manifested an interest in their secular affairs.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 151.

“The apostle [Paul] varied his manner of labor, shaping his message to the circumstances under which he was placed. . . .

“ . . . Tact and good judgment increase the usefulness of the laborer a hundred-fold. If he will speak the right words at the right time, and show the right spirit, this will exert a melting power on the heart of the one he is trying to help.”—*Gospel Workers*, pp. 118, 119.

FURTHER STUDY

Gospel Workers, pp. 117-119.

**Part 6
THE CHURCH AS
THE FIRSTFRUITS**

"These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God" (Rev. 14:4, 5).

The church is God's chosen agency to fulfill His mission of redemption and judgment in the world. It does so through the proclamation of the gospel, verbally and in service, care, charity, fellowship, and community. However, the church can accomplish its function of proclamation only to the extent that it truly is a model of what God wants all people to be.

What biblical image expresses this dual role of the church as model and servant of all humanity? James 1:18; Rev. 14:4.

In the Old Testament the firstfruits are considered a special gift to God and as a pledge from God of an abundant crop. This precious gift was returned to God as a token of gratitude, in recognition of man's total dependence and indebtedness to God. This concept played a central role in Israel's national festivals and religious rituals. God's people are His firstfruits (Rev. 14:4, 5). They are one with humanity, but separated for God. They are the promise of a large crop, as well as God's own chosen and precious few.

In what way only can the church fulfill its role as the firstfruits of all humanity? Col. 3:1-4.

The full harvest has been delayed not because of the enmity of the world against God and His chosen people; it is not a result of a lack of care on the part of the husbandman; it is the disobedience of God's own people who have failed to live up fully to their calling to be God's firstfruits.

THINK IT THROUGH

When will the church on earth reach the stage where God wants it to be? How?

"Had the purpose of God been carried out by His people in giving to the world the message of mercy, Christ would, ere this, have come to the earth, and the saints would have received their welcome into the city of God."—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 450 (1900).

"We may have to remain here in this world because of insubordination many more years, as did the children of Israel; but for Christ's sake, His people should not add sin to sin by charging God with the consequence of their own wrong course of action."—*Evangelism*, p. 696 (Letter 184, 1901).

FURTHER STUDY

Evangelism, pp. 694-696.

Characteristics of Christ's Church

"Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God" (Rev. 3:11, 12).

The church of God is one body that extends worldwide and spans many ages. As each local congregation today is a manifestation of the whole body of Christ, though it has its own particular form and flavor, so is also the church of each particular age or generation. Each period in the history of the church is a manifestation of the whole church of God, and its marks ought to be the marks of the church at all times. Yet at the same time it shows also certain trends and characteristics that are peculiar to the era in which it exists. Glimpses of such trends and characteristics are found throughout the New Testament, especially in the book of Acts and in the epistles written to the particular churches and church leaders. No other passage in the New Testament, however, contains a more detailed and comprehensive description of the characteristics of the true church, its life, work, and needs, than the second and third chapters of the book of Revelation. Though written by the apostle John,

Christ's "beloved disciple," these messages concerning the characteristics of the church come directly from Jesus, the Head of the church. By praise and censure, warning and exhortation, Jesus makes plain what His will is for His church. His words come in the form of particular messages to seven local churches in the Roman province of Asia, each of which represents also a particular period in the history of God's church from its beginning until the very end of time. In their completeness and fullness these seven letters of Jesus make plain what He considers to be the marks of His own church. Seven times Jesus urges everyone who hears these messages to listen to them and apply them to his own life and time and situation. For, though each message from Christ applies in particular to the church in the one location and in the particular period of history, His revelation has at the same time universal significance and eternal value. In His messages to the seven churches Jesus speaks to the whole church, of all ages, everywhere. The number seven, which occurs repeatedly in the book of Revelation, indicates completeness, or wholeness.

There are two very important reasons why the church today ought to take these messages concerning its true nature, life, work, and needs very seriously. The first is because these messages are not the words of an ordinary human being—they are the words of Jesus Christ Himself. This is exactly what the church needs today: a revelation from Jesus Christ. He is "the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth," the One "that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Rev. 1:5).

He walks in the midst of His church. What Jesus Christ thinks of the church, so is it! What He considers its true characteristics to be, that is what they are—no more, no less!

The second reason is that the messages to the church are "to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass" (Rev. 1:1). In different forms this thought of the nearness of the events described is repeated over and over again. (See Rev. 1:3; 3:11; 22:6, 7, 12.) (See also

Rev. 6:11; 12:12.) Jesus said, "Surely I come quickly." May John's response to these words of Christ to His church, therefore, also be ours: "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:7, 20)

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. Love (Rev. 2:4, 5)
2. Suffering (Rev. 2:9)
3. Keeping the Truth (Rev. 2:13)
4. Holiness (Rev. 2:20)
5. Reality (Rev. 3:1)
6. Opportunity (Rev. 3:8)



In every age God's people have found strength through three things: Bible study, prayer, and sharing with others.

Part 1 **"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because**
LOVE **thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence**
 thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works" (Rev. 2:4, 5).

Ephesus was the capital city of the Roman province of Asia and a very prosperous commercial center. It boasted a magnificent Ionic temple in honor of Diana, or Artemis, acknowledged as one of the seven wonders of the world. The apostle Paul, on his return from his second missionary journey, visited Ephesus about AD 52. On his third missionary journey he spent nearly three years there. (See Acts 19.) Upon his departure he appointed Timothy to supervise the rapidly growing work. Later he wrote his letter to the Ephesian church, and later still his two letters to its pastor, Timothy.

What commendation did the church in Ephesus receive from Christ? Rev. 2:1-3, 6.

The church at Ephesus exhibited three virtues which Jesus could commend: (1) It was a very active church, busy in the service of God and men. (2) Patience—the believers endured the hatred of the world, perhaps even physical violence and abuse. (3) They staunchly defended the truth. They rejected the teachings of so-called apostles as well as the practices of the Nicolaitans. A splendid church, indeed! In this period from AD 31 till about AD 100 the church stood for missionary activity, patience in suffering, and doctrinal purity.

What complaint did Jesus have? Verse 4.

Love is the first mark of a living church. Paul ended his letter to the Ephesians with a prayer for all "who love our Lord Jesus Christ with undying love" (Eph. 6:24, TEV). But in time their love did die. They came to have activity, patience, and orthodoxy without love.

"Is not this experience of the Ephesian church repeated in the experience of the church of this generation?"—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 422.

THINK IT THROUGH

How can the church today recapture their first love? (See 1 John 4:19; 2 Cor. 5:14.)

"The believers [in Ephesus] did not sense their spiritual fall. They knew not that a change had taken place in their hearts, and that they would have to repent because of the noncontinuance of their first works. But God in His mercy called for repentance, for a return to their first love and to the works that are always the result of true, Christlike love."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 957.

FURTHER STUDY

Steps to Christ, "Repentance," pp. 31-36.

Part 2
SUFFERING

"I know how hard pressed you are, and poor—and yet you are rich" (Rev. 2:9, NEB).

The city of Smyrna boastfully regarded itself as "the pride of Asia." Constantly in competition with Ephesus, this port city had an excellent natural harbor and a flourishing export trade. Paul first visited here around AD 53 or 54.

What was the ascended Lord's message to His servants in Smyrna? Rev. 2:8-11.

The mark of a true and living church is love. This love will bring unavoidable suffering. No Christian should seek it, but a church that has not lost its love for its Lord and Saviour will be "counted worthy to suffer shame for his name" (Acts 5:41).

From about AD 100 till AD 313 Christianity was illegal, and the believers experienced repeated periods of persecution.

What forms did the tribulation take? Rev. 2:9, 10.

Four trials are mentioned: (1) In the midst of wealthy and prosperous Smyrna, the believers were poor. Poverty is often part of the cost of discipleship. (2) Slander: People were spreading untrue, unkind remarks behind the Christians' backs. In this they were serving Satan, the chief slanderer and the father of lies (Rev. 12:10; John 8:44). (3) Prison; and (4) Death: Sometimes through permissive persecution, sometimes in aggressive forms, the Roman government subjected the Christians to arrests, imprisonment, and even death if they refused to recant. Their story of suffering and firmness is illustrated by the well-known account of Polycarp, the faithful bishop of Smyrna, who was executed probably about AD 160. "Eighty and six years have I served Him," the old man remarked at his trial, "and He has done me no wrong; how then can I blaspheme my King who saved me?" May his example guide the lives of all who believe in Christ.

THINK IT THROUGH

What comfort does Christ give to those who follow Him in suffering? (See Rev. 2:10, 11.) (See also Ps. 56:3; Matt. 10:28.)

"We must share the conflicts if we wear the crown of victory. Like Jesus, we must be made perfect through suffering. Had Christ's life been one of ease, then might we safely yield to sloth. Since His life was marked with continual self-denial, suffering, and self-sacrifice, we shall make no complaint if we are partakers with Him. We can walk safely in the darkest path if we have the Light of the world for our guide."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 71.

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 626-632.

Part 3
KEEPING **"You are holding fast to my cause. You did not deny your faith in me" (Rev. 2:13, NEB).**

Jesus said to Pergamum: "I know where you live" (verse 13, NEB). Not only does Christ know what His people are doing (Ephesus) and what they have to endure (Smyrna) but He knows where they are. After AD 323, when Constantine the Great converted to Christianity, it became popular to be a Christian. But the Christian church that emerged was a blend of paganism and Christianity that in effect was "the home of Satan" (verse 13, NEB).

What is Christ's concern for the church at Pergamum? Rev. 2:12-15.

Pergamum was the religious capital of the Roman province of Asia. There emperor worship began. There stood the altar of Zeus and the temple of Athena. Christ's concern for His church in Pergamum is that it preserve and propagate the truth. In the Bible love and truth belong together. Love becomes sentimental if it is not rooted in and strengthened by the truth; and truth becomes hard if it is not shared in love. We need to hold the truth in love, to love others in the truth, and to grow in love and in discernment of truth. (See Eph. 4:15; 3 John 1; Phil. 1:9.)

Why is truth such an important mark of the church? John 14:6; 8:12, 31, 32; 18:37.

What essential truths is Christ concerned about? Rev. 2:14.

1. *Doctrine.* They tolerated members who held the doctrine of Balaam. They should have upheld faith in Jesus.

2. *Practice.* The doctrine determines the practice. The teaching of Balaam led to idolatry and fornication. The exaltation of Jesus will lead to a holy life.

THINK IT THROUGH **How is the church today threatened in its characteristic of holding fast to the truth?**

"One of the landmarks under this message [teaching the truth on the sanctuary and the three angels' messages] was the temple of God, seen by His truth-loving people in heaven, and the ark containing the law of God. The light of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment flashed its strong rays in the pathway of the transgressors of God's law. The nonimmortality of the wicked is an old landmark. I can call to mind nothing more that can come under the head of the old landmarks. All this cry about changing the old landmarks is all imaginary."—*Counsels to Writers and Editors*, pp. 30, 31.

FURTHER STUDY *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 504-508.

Part 4
HOLINESS

"I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols" (Rev. 2:20).

The longest letter of Christ is addressed to the church in a city that was the least important of the seven; it describes the situation of the church in a period of history that, certainly as far as the church is concerned, was the least glorious of all eras. It was the time of the blending of church and society into an unholy mixture.

What commendations did Christ give His church in Thyatira? Rev. 2:18, 19.

The church in Thyatira had love and faith; it showed good service and great endurance. Beyond these, the church is characterized by spiritual growth. Ephesus was backsliding; it had abandoned its first love. Thyatira showed a continual growth in love and in ministry. Growing into the full stature of Christ is indeed an experience that should characterize the whole church of God. (See 2 Thess. 1:3.) It is as Ellen White remarks: "God designs that Christians shall grow continually, grow up unto the full stature of men and women in Christ. All who do not grow stronger, and become more firmly rooted and grounded in the truth, are continually retrograding."— *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 556.

What reproof did Christ give His church at Thyatira? Rev. 2:20-23.

Ephesus lacked love, but it could not bear evil, self-styled apostles. Thyatira had growing love, but it tolerated an evil, self-styled prophetess. What was lacking, then, was holiness of life, righteousness of character, which is another indispensable mark of the true church and the real Christian. (See Titus 2:12; 1 Thess. 4:3, 7.) Where Satan cannot destroy the church by persecution from without, he resorts to polluting the church from within. The unholiness that subtly threatened Thyatira was much more an unholiness of thought than of behavior, of sins festering in their hearts than of words or deeds. To be holy, the church must learn again to live in the presence of Christ, who has eyes like a flame of fire and who searches mind and heart (Rev. 2:18, 23).

THINK IT THROUGH

Are there any hidden sins in my life that separate me from God?

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 470-478.

Part 5
REALITY **"Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead" (Rev. 3:1).**

When the church at Sardis received its letter from Christ, the city's ancient glory was gone. There coins had been invented and used as money for the first time in history. There the fabulous king Croesus had reigned amid his treasures until the city fell to Cyrus. Over the centuries Sardis declined until in AD 17 it was destroyed by an earthquake. Though it was rebuilt under the emperor Tiberius, the city of Sardis was only a name, not reality. The same was true of the church, both as a local community and as a period in the history of the church, which is the Reformation era.

What warning does Christ give His church at Sardis? Rev. 3:1-3.

The church in Sardis lived on its reputation, but this no longer accorded with reality. The activities carried out were routine duties, but in the sight of God they did not fulfill His purpose or pattern. The name of Sardis was a lie. Christ gave them a strong rebuke. The church consisted of Christians who were such in name only. It is a danger that the church of all ages, and everywhere, faces after a while.

"When the Saviour pointed out to His followers the signs of His return, He foretold the state of backsliding that would exist just prior to His second advent. . . .

"The condition of the church at this time is pointed out in the Saviour's words in the Revelation: 'Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.'"—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 309, 310.

What remedy does Christ propose? Rev. 3:2-4.

1. In every period of the history of God's church, and in all locations, a godly remnant always remains. God calls His remnant to wake up, to strengthen what remains. He calls for revival and reformation.

2. A second remedy lies in remembering what we have received and heard, to keep that, and to repent (verse 3).

THINK IT THROUGH

What is it that the church has received and heard, and that it should keep?

"Those who have been born again remember with what joy and gladness they received the light of heaven, and how eager they were to tell everybody of their happiness."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 959.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 5, pp. 610, 611.

Part 6
OPPORTUNITY

"I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and has kept my word, and hast not denied my name" (Rev. 3:8).

While Christ's letter to Sardis contained severe censure, the letter to Philadelphia is one of unqualified commendation. A new opportunity was given for the church to awake, and the remnant referred to in the Sardis period made every use of this God-given "open door." At the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, a real awakening took place in the churches all over the world. There was genuine repentance and personal victory over sin. God granted the church an opportunity to discover anew the whole gospel, and an open door was given for this gospel of the kingdom to be spread rapidly in all the world.

What are the meanings of the "open door which no one can shut"? Rev. 3:7, 8; Matt. 25:10; 1 Cor. 16:9.

The metaphor of the door is used in Scripture in two main senses. The first is a reference to God's door of mercy; it is the opportunity of salvation and of the open communication between Christ and man. "Let us thank God with heart and soul and voice; and let us learn to approach unto Him as through an open door, believing that we may come freely with our petitions, and that He will hear and answer."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 961.

The second open door is the opportunity for mission, for service. God called a special people into existence, not for themselves only, but that the whole world may be saved and come to a knowledge of truth. The church would do well to remember that God has chosen His people to spread abroad God's offer of salvation to all men, and that God gives His church every opportunity to accomplish its God-given mission. And even when tribulations will arise in the future, Christ urges His church to avail itself of the God-given opportunity for mission, for "I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation" (Rev. 3:10). God does not spare His church from suffering, but He always upholds His people.

If the door is the symbol of salvation, and of the church's opportunity for service, the key is the symbol of Christ's power and authority. Both of these "keys" Christ has given to His church. (See Matt. 16:19; Acts 2:14-41; 8:14-17; 10:44-48.)

THINK IT THROUGH

What meaning is there for me in the symbol of the open door?

FURTHER STUDY

Early Writings, pp. 42-45.

Jesus and His People

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

Each of the six letters of Jesus we

studied in last week's lesson stresses a different characteristic of the people of God everywhere and at all times. They are the signs of a true and living church: love for Christ, and the willingness to suffer for Him; truth of



The people of God, like a bride, await the soon return of the Bridegroom in all His royal splendor.

doctrine and holiness of life; living up to its name and taking hold of each God-given opportunity to serve God and humanity in mission. The seventh letter does not spell out a particular

desirable characteristic; it rather urges the church to make sure that it bears them all wholeheartedly. The church at Laodicea had not been infected with the poison of any particular sin. No error in doctrine is mentioned, no particular heresy. But though they know the truth and though they think they are rich in faith and in holiness, and carry out the mission of God, the people of Laodicea are utterly complacent. They revel in the self-conceit that they bear all these characteristics; and this delusion makes them think that they are God's favorites. They are, indeed, God's chosen people, His very own. God has given them riches that no other church has had. But in their complacency and self-glorification they forget that God has chosen them, not for their own sake, but for the sake of bringing the gospel of salvation to the whole world. The church of Laodicea is repeating the failure of Israel. They "cherished the idea that they were the favorites of heaven, and that they were always to be exalted as the church of

God."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 294. "All their advantages they appropriated for their own glorification. . . . They robbed God of the service He required of them, and they robbed their fellow men of religious guidance and a holy example."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 14, 15. The point is that merely bearing the marks of the true church is not enough. We should bear them wholeheartedly! It is the boasting of the Laodicean church, the claim to be rich, to have done well, and to possess everything it wants (Rev. 3:17) that leads to stagnation in the work of God in this very last period of the history of God's church. Pride in the true doctrines, institutionalism, reliance on organization, exclusivism, all tend to misrepresent the work of God. Christ counsels us to repent, to listen

to His Word, and to open the door, so that He may come in and forever fellowship with His chosen people. Amen, come Lord Jesus. (See Rev. 3:19-22; 22:20.)

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. Halfheartedness (Rev. 3:15)
2. Christ's Advice (Rev. 3:18)
3. Repentance (Rev. 3:19)
4. Christ Is Knocking (Rev. 3:20)
5. A Victorious Church (Rev. 3:21)
6. The Church Stands Firm (Eph. 6:10, 11)

Part 1 "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would
HALFHEARTEDNESS thou wert cold or hot" (Rev. 3:15).

Little is known about the origin of the church at Laodicea. The apostle Paul wrote an epistle to this church which has not been preserved unless it is the letter we know as the "Epistle to the Ephesians." (See Col. 4:16.) This may have been a circular letter intended for the various churches in the province of Asia, but sent first to Laodicea. (See Col. 1:7; 2:1; 4:12-16.)

What is Christ's opinion of His last church? Rev. 3:14-16.

A lukewarm people! The words are probably an allusion to the hot springs at nearby Hierapolis. Flowing across the plateau, the water grew cooler; and by the time it plunged over the cliff opposite Laodicea, it had become lukewarm. Lukewarm water nauseates the drinker. Jesus said, "I will spue thee out of my mouth" (Rev. 3:16). And why does Christ prefer the ice cold and the boiling hot over the nauseating lukewarm? "It would be more pleasing to the Lord if lukewarm professors of religion had never named His name. They are a continual weight to those who would be faithful followers of Jesus. They are a stumbling block to unbelievers."—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 188.

What diagnosis does Jesus give to His last church? Rev. 3:17.

Laodicea possessed great wealth. When in AD 60 the city suffered destruction by earthquake, Laodiceans refused the financial aid offered them by the Roman emperor to rebuild the city. This pride of the citizens of Laodicea was infectious. Christians caught the plague. "We need nothing," they felt. So long as they kept this spirit, they were, indeed, beyond help.

THINK IT THROUGH **In what ways does Christ's diagnosis apply to His church today?**

"The Laodicean message applies to the people of God who profess to believe present truth. . . . They profess to love the truth, yet are deficient in Christian fervor and devotion. They dare not give up wholly and run the risk of the unbeliever, yet they are unwilling to die to self and follow out closely the principles of their faith. . . .

" . . . The internal work of grace is wanting in their hearts."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 87, 88.

FURTHER STUDY *Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 83-87.

Part 2
CHRIST'S
ADVICE **What advice does Christ give His church?**

"I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see" (Rev. 3:18).

"I know all your ways," Jesus said, but "you do not know" (verses 15, 17, NEB). To contradict the testimony of the True Witness assures disaster.

Christ's advice fitted the real situation at Laodicea very well. The city was famous for (1) gold handled by large banks; (2) the manufacture of a soft and glossy black wool fabric; (3) a medical school where physicians prepared the famous Phrygian eye powder for the cure of eye inflammation. In contrast to these assets Jesus called the believers wretched, poor, blind, and naked.

What is the meaning of the gold, the white garments, and the eyesalve? James 2:5; Gal. 5:6; 3:27; John 9:39-41; 16:8-11.

"The gold mentioned by Christ, the True Witness, which all must have, has been shown me to be faith and love combined, and love takes the precedence of faith."—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 36.

"The white raiment is the righteousness of Christ that may be wrought into the character. . . .

"The eye is the sensitive conscience, the inner light, of the mind. Upon its correct view of things the spiritual healthfulness of the whole soul and being depends. The 'eyesalve,' the Word of God, makes the conscience smart under its application; for it convicts of sin."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 965.

THINK IT THROUGH **In what ways does Christ's advice apply to me personally?**

"Brethren and sisters, are your thoughts after this order? 'These sharp, decided words do not mean me; I am in a fairly good condition spiritually, though I may not have all the fervor and zeal that some have. I believe the truth. Those to whom this message belongs may take it. I think some need it.' You who think and reason thus, be assured that you are the very ones to whom this message belongs. While the costly wares of heaven are open before you, draw nigh and buy that which you have lost—the gold of love and faith, and the white raiment which is the righteousness of Christ."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 964, 965.

FURTHER STUDY *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 214-216.

Part 3 **“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous there-
REPENTANCE** **fore and repent” (Rev. 3:19).**

Though the church may, in effect, have forsaken its Head and repudiated its Founder, Jesus Himself promised, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb. 13:5). Though the church may have given up its love and its zeal, Christ’s love is so broad, so deep, so full, that He has reserved the most tender advice, the greatest promise, the highest reward, for His church at Laodicea. Why, then, do we continue to think lightly of the riches of God’s kindness, love, and mercy? Don’t we know that it is the goodness of the Lord that leads us to repentance? (Rom. 2:4).

**What does repentance mean for the church? Joel 2:13;
Mark 1:14, 15.**

To praise God with our lips while our heart is far from Him is characteristic of a lukewarm church. Repentance, in this connection, means more than being sorry for one’s misdeeds and turning away from sin. It really means a change of heart!

Why is repentance such an urgent matter? Luke 13:3-5.

This message is especially relevant to the church of Laodicea. Christ is coming. He is at the door, already knocking. Repentance now means entrance into the eternal kingdom, or being shut out from the presence of the Lord forever. Therefore, be zealous, and repent.

THINK IT THROUGH **How can the church be led to repentance?**

“It is when the vital principles of the kingdom of God are lost sight of, that ceremonies become multitudinous and extravagant. It is when the character building is neglected, when the adornment of the soul is lacking, when the simplicity of godliness is despised, that pride and love of display demand magnificent church edifices, splendid adornings, and imposing ceremonials. But in all this God is not honored. He values His church, not for its external advantages, but for the sincere piety which distinguishes it from the world. He estimates it according to the growth of its members in the knowledge of Christ, according to their progress in spiritual experience. He looks for the principles of love and goodness.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 565, 566.

FURTHER STUDY *Steps to Christ*, “Repentance,” pp. 23-30.

Part 4 **"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" (Rev. 3:20).**
CHRIST
IS KNOCKING

Christ wants to enter into a new relationship with His people, individually, ("If any man hear my voice—") and collectively as a church. He stands at the door of each heart and wants to be admitted. It is a visit from the lover of our soul, so beautifully described in the Song of Solomon:

"Hark! my beloved is knocking.

'Open to me, my sister, my love, my perfect one; . . .'

My beloved put his hand to the latch,
and my heart was thrilled within me.

I arose to open to my beloved."

Song of Solomon 5:2-5, RSV.

When this happens, the old world is gone; a new era has begun; the believer is united with Jesus.

What happens when we open the door? Rev. 3:20.

No other image in Scripture illustrates more clearly the fellowship and communion between Christ and His people than that of partaking of food together. In traditional Eastern societies, sharing food stands for sharing love and friendship; it signifies reciprocity and interdependence, oneness, fellowship, communion, equality, brotherhood, and mutuality. All of these characteristics are implied in Christ's promise to "sit down to supper" (NEB) with us. They are also a part of the relationship when we celebrate the Lord's Supper.

Every time the Laodicean Church meets to partake of the flesh and the blood of Jesus Christ, it is not only celebrating the unity of the church with its Head, and the oneness of the members; it is also reminded of its own condition that calls for genuine repentance. Repentance, unity, and fellowship are a guarantee that the church will soon celebrate the "wedding supper of the Lamb."

THINK IT THROUGH

What is preventing me from opening the door to Christ?

"Jesus is knocking through the prosperity He gives you. He loads you with blessings to test your fidelity, that they may flow out from you to others. Will you permit your selfishness to triumph? Will you squander God's talents, and lose your soul through idolatrous love of the blessings He has given?" —Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 967.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 1, pp. 141-146.

Part 5
A VICTORIOUS
CHURCH

“To him who is victorious I will grant a place on my throne, as I myself was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne” (Rev. 3:21, NEB).

The thought of being “victorious,” of “overcoming,” is a recurring theme in the book of Revelation. Glorious are the promises to those who overcome: They shall eat from the tree of life and shall not taste the second death; they will receive a new name and white garments; they will be called the sons and daughters of God and forever be in His presence. The specific promise given to the believers at Laodicea is that they will sit with Christ on the throne of God.

How can the Laodicean Church become a victorious church? Rev. 12:11.

The form of the Greek verb used in Revelation 3:21 implies that the believers “continue to overcome,” “keep on winning.”

How did Jesus remain victorious while on earth? John 8:28, 29; 14:30, 31.

The Scripture tells us that we shall be conquerors in Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:37). As He has overcome the world, so will also His church, if it perseveres in communion with Him who has all the power in heaven and on earth. But the faith that overcomes the world is the faith of Jesus. It implies a relationship that Christ had with His Father. The Bible describes that relationship as one of wholehearted obedience and trust, complete surrender to the will of God, and humility. Christ became victorious by making Himself a servant of all; His glorification followed His obedience; His exaltation was a result of His humiliation.

THINK IT THROUGH

How can I be victorious through humility?

“In the kingdom of God, position is not gained through favoritism. It is not earned, nor is it received through an arbitrary bestowal. It is the result of character. The crown and the throne are the tokens of a condition attained—tokens of self-conquest through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . .

“ . . . The one who stands nearest to Christ will be he who has drunk most deeply of His spirit of self-sacrificing love,—love that ‘vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, . . . seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil’ (1 Corinthians 13:4, 5),—love that moves the disciple, as it moved our Lord, to give all, to live and labor and sacrifice even unto death, for the saving of humanity.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 543.

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 529-533.

**Part 6
THE CHURCH
STANDS FIRM**

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6: 10, 11).

The church of Laodicea is the last church; it is the church at the end of time. Knowing that his time is short, the devil unleashes in fury his whole array of weapons against the remnant of God. Will the church stand firm?

How will the church stand firm amid the delusions of Satan at the end of time? Eph. 6:10-18.

"Only those who have been diligent students of the Scriptures and who have received the love of the truth will be shielded from the powerful delusion that takes the world captive. By the Bible testimony these will detect the deceiver in his disguise. To all the testing time will come. By the sifting of temptation the genuine Christian will be revealed. Are the people of God now so firmly established upon His word that they would not yield to the evidence of their senses? Would they, in such a crisis, cling to the Bible and the Bible only?"—*The Great Controversy*, p. 625.

What is Christ's assurance to His church in these last days? Matt. 28:18-20.

"Christ, the almighty Victor, holds out to His weary soldiers a crown of immortal glory; and His voice comes from the gates ajar: 'Lo, I am with you. Be not afraid. I am acquainted with all your sorrows; I have borne your griefs. You are not warring against untried enemies. I have fought the battle in your behalf, and in My name you are more than conquerors.'"—*The Great Controversy*, p. 633.

THINK IT THROUGH

What in particular have I heard the Spirit say to the churches?

"Christ has given to the church a sacred charge. Every member should be a channel through which God can communicate to the world the treasures of His grace, the unsearchable riches of Christ. . . .

" . . . It is the privilege of every Christian, not only to look for, but to hasten the coming of the Saviour.

"If the church will put on the robe of Christ's righteousness, withdrawing from all allegiance with the world, there is before her the dawn of a bright and glorious day. God's promise to her will stand fast forever."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 600, 601.

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 601, 602.

Lessons for 4th Quarter/1977

Sabbath School members who have not received a copy of the Adult lessons for the fourth quarter of 1977 will be helped by the following outline in studying the first two lessons. The title of the series is "The Time of the End."

First Lesson

THE FINAL TIMES. Memory text, 1 Peter 1:10-12.

1. *Time's Focus* (Heb. 9:28)
2. *Time's End* (Matt. 24:3)
3. *Expected Time* (2 Thess. 2:1-4)
4. *Prophetic Time* (Dan. 7:25)
5. *Time of the End* (Dan. 11:33-35)
6. *Prophecy and Time of the End* (Dan. 12:4, 9)

Second Lesson

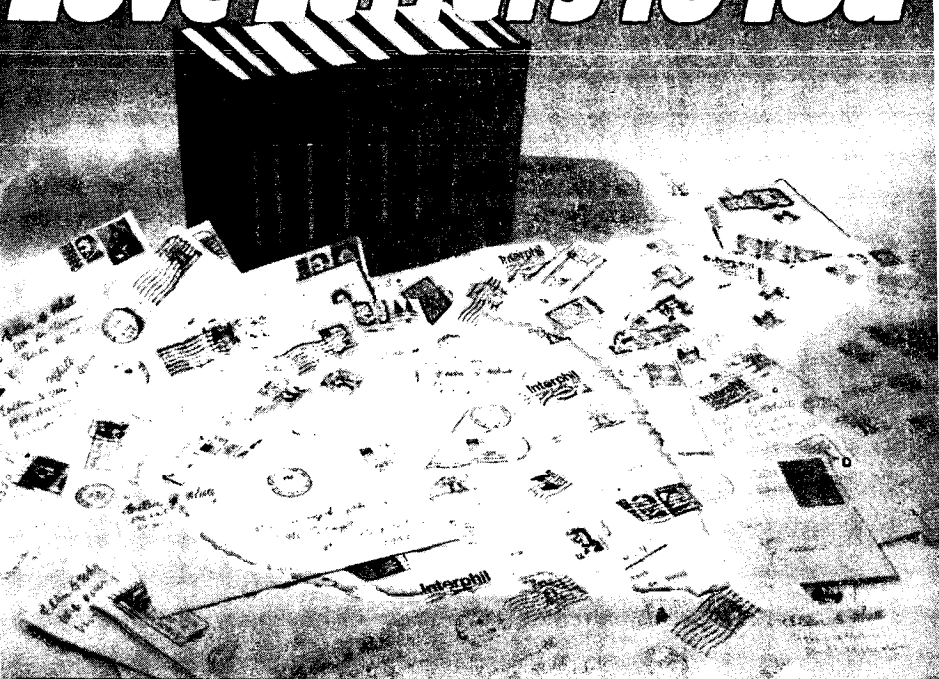
THE REMOVAL OF A SEAL. Memory text, Acts 17:30, 31.

1. *End-time Judgment* (Dan. 7:9, 10)
2. *Angel Explanations* (Dan. 8:16, 17)
3. *A Trampled Sanctuary* (Dan. 8:13, 14)
4. *Forecasts of Messianic Mediation* (Dan. 9:24)
5. *Issues in the Judgment—I* (Dan. 8:14)
6. *Issues in the Judgment—II* (Rev. 3:5)

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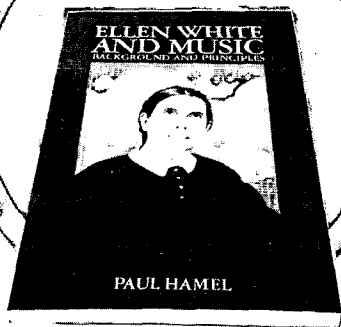
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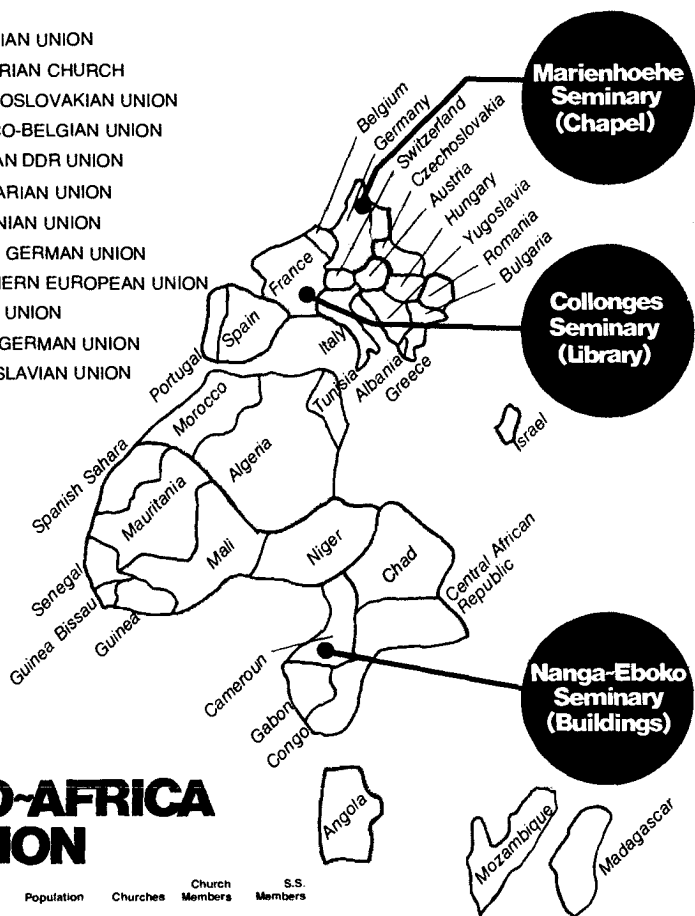


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Equatorial African	17,576,000	80	17,762	38,226
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Israel Mission	3,010,000	4	51	35
Mozambique	7,392,000	44	16,639	27,445
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