

DAYBREAK SERIES



APRIL-JUNE/1979

Adult Sabbath School Lessons

Standard Edition

THE LAST HOUR



When you care enough to give your very best



Jesus gave His all to save us. Are we willing to give of ourselves to help introduce a child to Him?

Vacation Bible School is a planned program in which each of us can help.

Do you care enough?



President WALTER R. L. SCRAGG Secretary B. B. BEACH Treasurer R. UNNERSTEN

NORTHERN EUROPE-WEST AFRICA DIVISION

THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

119 ST. PETER'S STREET, ST. ALBANS, HERTFORDSHIRE, ENGLAND, AL1 3EY
Telephone: ST. ALBANS 50331 Telegrams/Cables: 'ADVENTIST ST. ALBANS' Telex: 262284 Ref: 1720

Sabbath School Members,
World Divisions of the
Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Dear Member,

Greetings in the Lord from more than 200,000 fellow Sabbath School members in the 18 nations of the Northern Europe - West Africa Division!

First of all a word of thanks to you for the help given in the last Thirteenth Sabbath Special Project Offering. The library at the Adventist Seminary of West Africa is almost complete. The additions to the junior college in Finland now help that school function smoothly. The last of the projects to get under way - the new Publishing House building for Norway - is being built. Thank you for making this possible.

Now for the new projects your offerings will help this June 30.

The first of these is part of a new health strategy for West Africa. Despite the loss of several of our hospitals to government expropriation we are trying to help more people than ever before. To do this we are establishing small clinic buildings throughout West Africa with mobile units attached. These will take health to the people where they are, through on-the-spot check-ups, out-patient treatments and public health lectures. So we are asking you to help us put a clinic into the Togo-Benin mission with a mobile unit attached. This will also be the first organized health work in the French-speaking territories of this Division.

Two schools will benefit from the special project offering. In Sweden the historic campus and buildings of Ekebyholm Junior College will be enhanced by the construction of a Gymnasium and assembly hall. In England, a similar unit will be constructed on the beautiful Stanborough Park estate. Throughout the European section of the Division schools are essential to the spiritual welfare and evangelistic growth of the church. Both these structures will serve these purposes.

While you are lifting your sights toward our needs we are joining you in seeking to finish the work in our territories. This year we have a faith objective of 1000 souls baptized each month. Will you join us in praying that we shall reach and surpass this objective?

God bless you for your support and your prayers,

Walter R.L. Scragg, President

When the Devil starts his latter rain, will you get wet?

Is your spiritual umbrella solid, or is it full of holes? Will you be able to tell the difference between the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and Satan's counterfeit?

The Impending Drama by Dr. Fernando Chaij, noted authority on last-day events and author of the popular *Preparation for the Final Crisis*, deals with such vitally important issues as glossolalia, spiritism, the charismatic movement, Armageddon, and the 144,000.

Written to help in your study of the Sabbath School lessons for the second quarter, *The Impending Drama* is a

must addition for anyone interested in last-day events.

Special Introductory Offer!

Available until June 30 for only \$3.50 (After that the price jumps to \$3.95!) from your nearest Adventist Book Center. Or order by mail from the ABC Mailing Service, P.O. Box 37485, Omaha, Nebraska 68137. In Canada, send your order to Box 398, Oshawa, Ontario L1H 7L5. Please add state sales tax and an additional 7 percent (minimum 50¢) for shipping and handling. Prices 10 percent higher in Canada.



Contents

1. Future Events
2. Christ With His Church
3. Persecution and the Christian
4. Symbols of Persecuting Powers
5. The Time of Trouble—1
6. The Time of Trouble—2
7. Spiritualism and the Occult
8. Spiritualism and Bible Prophecy
9. Spiritual Manifestations, True and False
10. The Battle of Armageddon
11. Liberation of the Church
12. The Second Coming
13. Christ, Our Victory

The Adult Sabbath School Lessons are prepared by the Sabbath School Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The preparation of the lessons is under the general direction of a worldwide Sabbath School Lesson Committee, the members of which serve as consulting editors.

Editorial Office: 6840 Eastern Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20012

Lesson Author: Fernando Chaj

Editor: W. Richard Leshar

Editorial Secretary: Florence L. Wetmore

Circulation Manager: Arthur R. Mazat

Art and Design: Pacific Press

Scripture references other than from the King James Version used in this quarterly are as follows:

NEB. From *The New English Bible*, copyright © by the Delegates of the Oxford University Press, and the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press 1961 and 1970. Used by permission of Cambridge University Press, New York City.

RSV. From the *Revised Standard Version Bible*, copyright © 1946 (renewed © 1973), 1952 and © 1971, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., and used by permission.

Braille lessons available. See page 112.

Adult Sabbath School Lessons (standard edition). Published quarterly by Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1350 Villa Street, Mountain View, California 94042, U.S.A. One year subscription in U.S.A., \$2.00; single copy, 50 cents. One year subscription to countries outside U.S.A., \$2.60; single copy, 65 cents. All prices at U.S.A. exchange. Second-class postage paid at Mountain View, California 94042, U.S.A. When a change of address is desired, please send both old and new addresses.

Copyright 1979 by Pacific Press Publishing Association

Cover photo from NASA; p. 8, UPI

Just for the Record?



Our daily study is more than a perfect record. Through it comes knowledge of "The Word." Your Adult Sabbath School Lesson is designed to fill the need.

THE LAST HOUR

Introduction

The daily news reveals more and more that the end is near. Crime, violence, immorality, political animosity, cold and hot wars, general fear, anxiety, the deterioration of economic conditions even in the most developed countries—these are impressive fulfillments of Bible predictions for the last days of history. Political corruption and eroding stability at all levels of society produce decay of public confidence; respect for law and order vanishes even in traditionally conservative areas; exploding population brings distress to lands already overcrowded and hungry. In the modern religious world new theologies undermine the basic principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ, rejecting the law of God as the supreme moral code. All of these and more constitute eloquent signs that the second coming of Christ is at hand.

We do not need to delineate here such an apparent fact. Every church member is convinced of it. Even the world is aware of it. We have these words from the inspired pen: "Rulers and statesmen, men who occupy positions of trust and authority, thinking men and women of all classes, have their attention fixed upon the events taking place about us. They are watching the strained, restless relations that exist among the nations. They observe the intensity that is taking possession of every earthly element, and they recognize that something great and decisive is about to take place—that the world is on the verge of a stupendous crisis."—*Education*, p. 179.

In these lessons we will remind the students that not only will the world pass through troublous times, but the church itself shall experience a difficult crisis. This will affect every one of us.

During this time of crisis the enemy will make the final and most desperate effort to appeal to every believer in such a way as to cause his alienation from Christ and bring about his final destruction. He will adapt his attacks according to the particular weaknesses of every individual.

"At that time the superficial, conservative class, whose influence has steadily retarded the progress of the work, will renounce the faith and take their stand with its avowed enemies."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 463.

God has made ample provision for every one of His children to go through this crisis victoriously. All the inspired predictions regarding the nature and the alternatives of this crisis have been laid out before us, both in the Bible and in the writings of the spirit of prophecy.

All the means of grace have been put at our disposal, so that no one need fail in the hour of darkness. We have been told that "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds" (2 Cor. 10:4).

It is easy to lean toward conformity, lukewarmness, and partial commitment to Christ. We should, by the grace of God, make two resolutions: (1) to study with wholehearted interest the inspired records in order to become acquainted with what we have to face in these last days; (2) to "put on the whole armour of God" not overlooking any of the means that Heaven has provided for growth in our Christian experience.

By implementing these two resolutions we make ours the victory already won by Christ in our behalf, allowing God to fulfill His wonderful promises in our life.

During this quarter we will concentrate on encouraging the reader to draw nearer to Christ and to endure in the crisis we face.

Next quarter our subject will be: Be Ready! We will study how we can be fully prepared for the crisis which we are entering, develop fruits of the Spirit, receive the former and the latter rain, be sealed, and be endowed with the mighty power of God to finish His work.

I. Future Events



“Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. . . . Let us walk honestly, as in the day. . . . Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” (Rom. 13:11-14).

The events of the last days are of such importance that their careful study is essential for every child of God. The end of the investigative judgment, which is the end of probationary time, and the second coming of Christ will surprise many professed Christians. This is why we find this admonition: “Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame” (Rev. 16:15).

We watch by studying the precious messages God has left for us in His Word and in the spirit of prophecy writings, by secret prayer, by a daily surrender to Christ, and by application of God’s messages to our individual lives.

The great happenings foretold in prophecy have a definite relation with each other. Most church members have studied these things at one time or another, but sometimes they do not have a clear idea about the sequence in which the events will come, and this makes the whole picture confused to them.

It is our purpose in this first lesson to present these main issues in their chronological order and to show them in an overview. We will give just a brief explanation of the nature of each one of them, and later we will examine each one in more depth.

Many of us have seen charts of the final events showing the exact

sequence of many details. But can any particular order be sustained by the inspired pen? Notice that in this study we have not tried to fit every detail into exact sequence.

In the chart on page 114 (see page 16 of Teacher’s Quarterly) we place only the main issues in a logical sequence, leaving out of the picture any hypothesis or personal opinion regarding the less important occurrences, or those whose exact order has not been revealed to us. This chart is brief and clear, and every item can be easily verified in the Bible or in Ellen White’s writings.

May this overview help us to know the time. May it prompt us to awake from spiritual sleep. May it lead us to put on now the Lord Jesus Christ, the only source of strength and safety in the trouble-filled days that separate us from the glorious hour of the coming of the Saviour.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **Events During Probation—I**
(Amos 9:9)
2. **Events During Probation—II**
(Rev. 7:3)
3. **Events During Probation—III**
(Rev. 13:15-17)
4. **The Time of Trouble**
(Dan. 12:1)
5. **Events During the Time of Trouble**
(Rev. 16:1-21)
6. **Events From Liberation of the Saints to the Second Advent** (Rev. 12:11)

Part 1
EVENTS DURING
PROBATION—IA. *Shaking.*

**“Lo, I will command,
and shake the house of Israel among all the nations,
as one shakes with a sieve,
but no pebble shall fall upon the earth” (Amos 9:9, RSV).**

In this prophecy it was ancient Israel that was to be shaken, but Ellen White uses this figure of “shaking” to refer also to a time when many who are numbered among the people of God will apostatize. (See *Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 332, 431; *Early Writings*, pp. 273-276.) Many will leave the church because they did not accept the divine call to conversion and reformation.

“Satan will work his miracles to deceive; he will set up his power as supreme. The church may appear as about to fall, but it does not fall. It remains, while the sinners in Zion will be sifted out—the chaff separated from the precious wheat. This is a terrible ordeal, but nevertheless it must take place.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 911.

B. *Reformation.*

What greatly needed experience of Israel of old is a prime necessity in these days? Joel 2:12, 13.

“A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 121.

The shaking will occur as a counterpart of revival and reformation. Under the powerful proclamation of the message of Christ and His righteousness—understood both as forgiveness and as obedience by faith and reception of His perfect character—many will turn completely to the Lord, and they will step forward as one man to finish God's work on earth.

THINK IT THROUGH

Why is it that many will not participate in the reformation within the church, but will be shaken? How can I prevent this tragedy in my own case?

“There must be earnest effort to obtain the blessing of the Lord, not because God is not willing to bestow His blessing upon us, but because we are unprepared to receive it. Our heavenly Father is more willing to give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him, than are earthly parents to give good gifts to their children. But it is our work, by confession, humiliation, repentance, and earnest prayer, to fulfill the conditions upon which God has promised to grant us His blessing.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 121.

FURTHER STUDY

Early Writings, pp. 269-273.

Part 2
 EVENTS DURING
 PROBATION—II
C. *Sealing.*

“Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads” (Rev. 7:3).

In order to prepare His children for the time of trouble, God desires to seal them, to stamp upon them the seal of His law, of His character, of His perfection. This process is taking place right now and will soon be over. It is a personal work done by the Holy Spirit, and it can be described as a process of sanctification which starts at conversion and ends with the close of probation—whether at the death of the believer or at the end of the investigative judgment. The sign of the seal of God is the true observance of the Sabbath in a time of persecution. Such loyalty demands a dedication that goes deep into the Christian experience.

D. *Latter Rain.*

What great promise to Judah in Joel 2:23, 28, 29 has significance also for the last days?

E. *Finishing of God's Work.*
To what event does Revelation 10:7 point?

According to the great principle enunciated by the prophet Zechariah, it is “not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts” that the proclamation of the last message will be done and the work will be finished.

The completion of God's work is not an uncertain issue in the Bible. Many promises and prophecies assure its success. Revelation 10:7 is just one of the promises.

The promise of the latter rain is for today, and not for some future time. But there are certain requisites for the reception of this great gift: the emptying of self, victory over sin in all its varieties, and a total commitment to witnessing for God. (See *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 216.)

THINK IT THROUGH

What can I do to foster the sealing process in my life and to partake in the experience of the latter rain?

“Those who receive the seal of the living God and are protected in the time of trouble must reflect the image of Jesus fully.”—*Early Writings*, p. 71.

“When one is fully emptied of self, when every false god is cast out of the soul, the vacuum is filled by the inflowing of the Spirit of Christ.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 287.

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 55; *Early Writings*, pp. 279, 280.

Part 3
EVENTS DURING
PROBATION—III

“He had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name” (Rev. 13:15-17).

F. Civil Enforcement of Sunday Observance.

The lamblike beast of Revelation 13, which represents the United States of America, is the subject to which verses 15 to 17 refer. This great country, through the constitutional principles of religious freedom and separation of church and state, has achieved a high degree of religious freedom. But unfortunately the time will come when it will legislate on matters of religion. These laws will require of Sabbath keepers a violation of the fourth commandment.

G. Beginning of Persecution.

Religious legislation will mark the start of persecution. The lamblike beast will speak like a dragon. The dragon of Revelation 12 is a persecuting power. The second beast (the U.S.) will oblige all the inhabitants of the world to worship the first beast, Rome (verse 12). It will command all those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the first beast, namely, the Roman power (verse 14). Since this beast exercised both civil and religious power, the image of the beast will be another power doing the same thing. This image will be formed by those Protestant churches that will persuade the state to impose religious laws. Also the lamblike beast will cause all to receive the mark of the beast. And “the mark of the beast is . . . the observance of the first day of the week.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 117. Under the image of the beast Sabbath keepers will be denied the right to buy and sell (verse 17).

H. Leaving the Large Cities.

After the Sunday law has been imposed nationwide in the United States, it will very soon become a worldwide obligation. This will be the sign for the people of God to leave the big cities and go to rural areas or to less-populated places.

THINK IT THROUGH

What would help me today to be prepared in order to make the great decision of loyalty to God when the mark of the beast will be imposed?

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 604, 605.

**Part 4
THE TIME
OF TROUBLE**

What description does Daniel give of the time of trouble that begins at the end of the investigative judgment?

"At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book" (Dan. 12:1).

When the investigative judgment that began in 1844 is finished and the decree of Revelation 22:11 is pronounced, Michael—Christ—will stand up. He will leave the sanctuary, where He is interceding for sinners. He will take off His priestly robe and will put on His kingly garments. Probation will close. The forgiving grace of God through the blood of Christ will no longer be available. All the world will be in great affliction. The seven last plagues will be poured upon the impenitent.

Although the children of God, the sealed ones, will be protected from the plagues, they also will undergo unmatched anguish, first, because of the persecution, and, second, because of a short but intensive time of spiritual anxiety about their past sins. But God will not allow one of the saints to lose his life during this time. The spiritual anxiety will be brief. Uncertainty will be banished soon.

Note about the order of events preceding the time of trouble.

The order given in the lesson for events preceding the end of probation is not necessarily the order in which these events will happen. Nevertheless there is some logic in the sequence. The shaking and the reform movement will begin before the falling of the latter rain, and the latter rain will start before the finishing of God's work. During a certain period of time the shaking, the reformation, the sealing, the latter rain, and the loud cry will be happening together. All of them will end at the close of probation.

THINK IT THROUGH

Why is it necessary for the children of God—after the sealing—to go through a time of trouble? Why does God allow us to suffer even now?

FURTHER STUDY

Early Writings, pp. 282-285.

**Part 5
EVENTS DURING
THE TIME OF
TROUBLE**

A. *Seven Last Plagues.* (Read Revelation 16:1, and then broaden your vision by reading verses 2 through 21.)

During the time of trouble the seven last plagues will be falling upon the world, but they will affect only the impenitent. No obedient child of God will receive any physical harm. "I will be with him in trouble" is the promise. (Read Psalm 91.)

B. *Death Decree and Fleeing From Small Towns* (Rev. 13:15).

A death decree will be issued against those who observe the Sabbath. They will be cited as enemies of law and order and the cause of all the calamities. A specific date for executing the decree will be set. When this is announced, the commandment keepers will flee from all populated centers and will seek refuge in forests, deserts, and rocky places, where they will have the special protection of God. In the very night set for the death sentence to be carried out God will miraculously deliver His people.

C. *Persecution and Divine Protection* (2 Tim. 3:12; Rev. 3:10).

Although God's people will be severely persecuted, holy angels will defend the loyal ones.

D. *Armageddon* (Rev. 16:12-16).

Armageddon will be the last conflict between good and evil before the advent. It comes under the sixth plague. The earthly powers allied against the saints will be the dragon (spiritualism), the beast (the papacy, Rome), and the false prophet (apostate Protestantism).

"Two great opposing powers are revealed in the last great battle. On one side stands the Creator of heaven and earth. All on His side bear His signet. They are obedient to His commands. On the other side stands the Prince of darkness, with those who have chosen apostasy and rebellion."—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, May 7, 1901.

Miracle-working spirits of devils will deceive the rulers of all the world, to mislead, destroy, and persecute. On the very day set for the carrying out of the death sentence the Lord will paralyze the wicked with a great commotion of the heavens and the earth and with an extraordinary display of power in the natural elements. Soon after this the majestic sight of the returning Son of God will appear in the heavens.

THINK IT THROUGH

Is it enough for me to be acquainted with what is going to happen during the time of trouble? What is needed in addition to knowledge?

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 619-625.

**Part 6
EVENTS FROM
LIBERATION OF
THE SAINTS TO
THE ADVENT**

“They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death” (Rev. 12:11).

Here is a review, summarized from *The Great Controversy*, chapter 40, of the events that will take place between the liberation of God’s people and the second coming of Jesus:

A. *The Liberation Itself.*

Wicked men halt as they are about to destroy God’s people. The sun shines at midnight.

God’s voice is heard, saying, “Look up” and “It is done.”

B. *Successive Signs and Wonders.*

Rivers cease to run.

The voice of God shakes the heavens and the earth.

A great earthquake.

Hail makes a terrible destruction.

The cities fall in ruins.

Prison walls are rent, and children of God are freed.

C. *A Partial Resurrection* occurs in which all participate who died in the faith of the third angel’s message and those who took part in the death of Christ.

D. *A Hand Appears in the Sky Holding the Tables of the Law.*

E. *Enemies of God’s Law, Full of Despair, Curse Their False Shepherds*; the weapons which were to slay God’s people are now employed to destroy the false ministers.

F. *The Voice of God Proclaims the Day and the Hour of Christ’s Coming.*

G. *A Small Cloud Appears That Envelops the Saviour.*

H. *All the Righteous Are Resurrected.*

I. *The Living Righteous Are Transformed and Glorified.*

J. *Both Groups Are Caught Up Together to Meet the Lord.*

K. *The Wicked Still Living Are Destroyed* by the brightness of His coming.

L. *Christ Confers Upon His Followers the Emblems of Victory* and opens the pearly gates of the Holy City, and the redeemed enter.

What is the only way of assuring our liberation? Rev. 12:11; Rom. 13:14.

The blood of the Lamb has washed away all sins, giving the saints a complete forgiveness because of their faith in Jesus as their personal Saviour, and that blood also has given them power over sinful habits and defects of character. On the other hand, the saints will have overcome the devil by the word of their testimony.

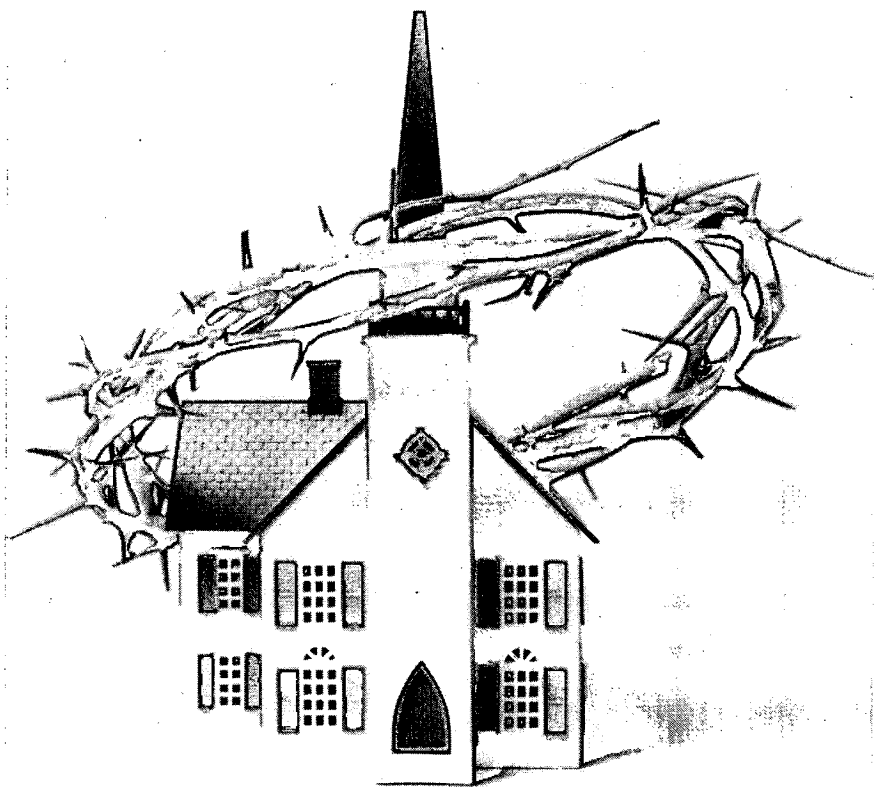
THINK IT THROUGH

How can I make even much more enjoyable for me the wonderful liberation God has prepared?

FURTHER STUDY

Early Writings, pp. 285-291.

2. Christ With His Church



“These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:14, 15).

During this quarter and the next we plan to study a series of events that should stir the church. Therefore we will first study about the church of God on earth.

How does the Bible define and describe the church? What are the main purposes for which it was established by God on this planet? What is its function? What great ideals does God have for it? How did the Lord relate Himself to it in the past, and what is His present relationship? What are His promises for its future?

The Word of God expresses a deep feeling of love and tender consideration by our heavenly Father toward the church, as well as toward every one of His children.

We will see how the church, the ark of salvation, the house of God on earth, has been marvelously protected in persecution and has been tenderly loved by God in spite of its weaknesses.

We will be assured by past experience and future promises that God, who led His church in very difficult times, will continue to be with it, so that the church, now militant, will become triumphant.

Also, we want to discover the most glorious aspect of this subject: namely, that Christ is the head and the foundation of His church, that He is its leader, and that under His direction, it will reach perfection.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

- 1. Definition and Function (1 Tim. 3:15)**
- 2. God’s Ideal for the Church (Eph. 5:25-28)**
- 3. Love and Tender Consideration (Isa. 49:16)**
- 4. Christ With the Church Militant (Matt. 28:18-20)**
- 5. The Church Triumphant (Rev. 6:2)**
- 6. Christ, the Head and the Foundation (Col. 1:18)**

**Part 1
DEFINITION
AND FUNCTION****What does Paul call the church of God?**

"If I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15).

Soon after the beginning of human history the world became divided between the obedient "sons of God" and the disobedient "children of men." God purposed from the first to call out a people to represent Him in the world. These members of God's family would live in the world but not belong to the world. God's people sojourning in a strange land belonged to what the Bible calls "the church in the wilderness" (Acts 7:38).

The New Testament word "church" is translated from the Greek word *ekklesia*, which was used to designate a public convocation. This word has three basic meanings used in the New Testament: (1) The meeting of the children of God (Acts 14:27); (2) the Christians who lived in a definite area (1 Cor. 1:2); and (3) the universal church or people of God (Matt. 16:18). We will be studying the church in this last meaning.

God has designed His church to be the ark of salvation from the flood of sin in the world. It is the "house of God," the institution where Christians assemble for fellowship and for worship and communion with the heavenly Father. Also God wanted to have His church as a means of preserving His truth.

What is another important function of the church? 1 Cor. 1:2-7; 1 Cor. 12:28.

Writing to the church, Paul says that its members are to "come behind in no gift" of the Holy Spirit. Later, in 12:28, he names several gifts. So one purpose of the church is to be the receptacle for the gifts named there. Therefore the manifestation of the gifts would come in the midst of the "church"—the only true church of God.

Besides the fact that the church is the house of God on earth, a center of fellowship and Christian growth, and the receptacle of spiritual gifts, what is another one of her main objectives? Acts 1:8; Matt. 28:19.

THINK IT THROUGH

Why is my attendance at church an important factor in my spiritual growth? How do I go about making every church service a real encounter with God?

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 9-16.

Part 2
GOD'S IDEAL
FOR THE
CHURCH

What is God's ideal for His church?

"Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:25-27).

"Sanctify and cleanse. Christ took away the filthy garments and gave, instead, the robe of His perfect righteousness. . . .

"Washing. Gr. *loutron*, 'bath,' 'bathing place,' or 'bathing.' The word occurs elsewhere in the NT only in Titus 3:5, where it appears in the expression 'washing of regeneration.' Since the context is that of marriage, there is probably an allusion to the ancient custom of the purifying bath of the bride before marriage. Or the reference may be to baptism. In either case, the idea is that Christ has purified the church. Christ gave Himself for the church that she might become a pure church, and so abide with Him forever."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1037.

"Those who are living upon the earth when the intercession of Christ shall cease in the sanctuary above are to stand in the sight of a holy God without a mediator. Their robes must be spotless, their characters must be purified from sin by the blood of sprinkling. . . .

". . . Then the church which our Lord at His coming is to receive to Himself will be a 'glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.'"—*The Great Controversy*, p. 425.

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I devoting enough time to being alone with God every day in the study and meditation of His word (in the Bible and in the spirit of prophecy writings) and in secret prayer in order to grow toward this ideal?

"How are you to know that you are accepted of God? Study His word prayerfully. Lay it not aside for any other book. This Book convicts of sin. It plainly reveals the way of salvation. . . .

"Do not neglect secret prayer, for it is the soul of religion. With earnest, fervent prayer, plead for purity of soul. Plead as earnestly, as eagerly, as you would for your mortal life, were it at stake. Remain before God until unutterable longings are begotten within you for salvation, and the sweet evidence is obtained of pardoned sin."—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 163.

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 600, 601.

Part 3
LOVE AND
TENDER CON-
SIDERATION

What has God done on behalf of Zion, His church?

"Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me" (Isa. 49:16).

Speaking of Judah, His ancient church, how does God regard her? Zech. 2:8.

"The church of Christ is very precious in His sight. It is the case which contains His jewels, the fold which encloses His flock."—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1118.

What does Paul say about the relationship of God with His church? Eph. 5:25, 29.

"We should remember that the church, enfeebled and defective though it be, is the only object on earth on which Christ bestows His supreme regard. He is constantly watching it with solicitude, and is strengthening it by His Holy Spirit."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 396.

Those who speak against the church and try to degrade it are directly condemned by the Bible and the spirit of prophecy, because there is no other institution so dear to the heart of God as His church. It may have great deficiencies, but still Christ loves it and protects it as the object of His supreme love.

A great task has been committed to the church. Its members are to represent Christ's character and carry His message to all the world. The church has not yet fulfilled the purpose for which it has been called.

God has chastened it many times and has drawn it to Him over and over again. But still it lacks faith and needs the deep trust in Jesus that results in being clothed in His righteousness.

Meanwhile, it is being used by God as His agency in this world for spreading the good news until the end of probation.

THINK IT THROUGH

Do I feel the love of God and the tender regard of Christ as something not only exercised toward the church at large, but also toward me personally? Do I dwell every day on this loving affection of my Saviour and feel myself more strongly linked with Him?

"The church is very precious in God's sight. He values it, not for its external advantages, but for the sincere piety which distinguishes it from the world. He estimates it according to the growth of the members in the knowledge of Christ, according to their progress in spiritual experience."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 298. Am I growing with the church?

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 5, pp. 230, 231.

Part 4
CHRIST WITH
THE CHURCH
MILITANT

What promise of Christ to His church has been fulfilled through the ages?

“Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. . . . I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” (Matt. 28:18-20).

The great controversy between good and evil, between truth and error, between Christ and Satan, has caused the church to pass through times of great trials and difficulties and even through episodes of apostasy.

In Old Testament times Israel became largely corrupted and no longer fulfilled the purpose of God. That purpose was to represent His perfect character before the pagan nations and to proclaim His name in a practical way. So God intervened. He allowed some of these countries to conquer Israel and Judah. The rebel people of God were taken captive and lived for 70 years in foreign lands. But God never forsook His people. And after the 70 years the nation was brought back to Palestine to begin a new era.

Israel rejected God when it refused to receive Christ; therefore He established the new or modern Israel, the Christian church. But the door of salvation is still open for the individual Jew.

This church went through great troubles. During the days of imperial Rome, and also during the Middle Ages under papal Rome, the church was greatly persecuted. Millions of the children of God testified of their faith in Christ by suffering and martyrdom.

There were times when the group apostatized, but God always had a smaller group who were loyal to Him and His commandments.

All through the ages God has been with His church, and Christ has fulfilled His wonderful promise. Since we are again approaching times of restriction and persecution, we should keep our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, who will be with us individually and as a church, so that the great purpose of God may be realized.

Chastened many times for its apostasy, but not forgotten—persecuted and afflicted, but not abandoned by God—the church will continue to have the special leadership and protection of God.

THINK IT THROUGH

“Christ is spoken of as walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks. Thus is symbolized His relation to the churches. He is in constant communication with His people.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 586.

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 582-590.

Part 5
**THE CHURCH
TRIUMPHANT**

How does Jesus predict the glorious triumph of His church?

"I saw and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him; and he went forth conquering, and to conquer" (Rev. 6:2).

The white horse represents specifically the apostolic church of the first century. It also has a general meaning (see *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 776) and in this interpretation is a symbol of the church of God in all ages. The full conquest achieved by the rider on the white horse is a prediction of the victorious Jesus at the head of His church. This triumph will take place in spite of the persecution and troubles that have plagued the church of God.

How does the revelator picture the triumphant church of God of all the ages? Rev. 7:9, 10.

He sees a white-robed and happy multitude, so great that no one is able to number them. They hold palms and sing a song of victory, attributing all the glory to God. This vast throng is made up of human beings saved by the blood of Jesus all through the ages, those who from Abel to the last martyr have given testimony with their life, all those who by faith in Jesus have been counted as faithful members of the family of God.

What other symbol is used in the Bible to represent the church in her last triumphant march toward victory? Song of Solomon 6:10.

"Clad in the armor of Christ's righteousness, the church is to enter upon her final conflict. [Song of Solomon 6:10 quoted.]"—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 725.

THINK IT THROUGH

How can I contribute to the excellency of the church—helping it to be true to its allegiance and to prepare for the hour of final victory?

"The church is God's agency for the proclamation of truth, empowered by Him to do a special work; and if she is loyal to Him, obedient to all His commandments, there will dwell within her the excellency of divine grace. If she will be true to her allegiance, if she will honor the Lord God of Israel, there is no power that can stand against her."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 600.

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 593-602.

**Part 6
CHRIST, THE
HEAD AND THE
FOUNDATION**

What position in the church does Paul say Jesus holds?

"He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence" (Col. 1:18).

Read also Eph. 5:23.

In a body every member is very important, and when one is injured all the body suffers. But the head is the most important part. The body cannot function or live without the head. There we find the most vital part of our system, the brain, the headquarters of the personality, the center of the nervous system. Likewise, in the church as a body, Christ is the head. Everything depends upon Him, and the connection of every member with Him is as vital as the connection of every member of the body with the head.

By what symbol did Christ Himself emphasize this great truth? Matt. 16:18.

On Christ Himself, the great Rock of Ages, He built His church, and this is why it is so stable in spite of all adversities, temptations, and dangers.

Using another illustration, how does Paul teach this great fact? 1 Cor. 3:11. (See Eph. 2:20.)

A building, to be of lasting value, requires a firm foundation. A poor foundation can make it unsafe for occupancy. No other feature of the building can make up for weakness at the base. The foundation is the most vital part of any edifice. Thank God that the foundation of the church "standeth sure," because it is none other than the Rock of Ages.

"Men may suppose that they have found a new way, that they can lay a stronger foundation than that which has been laid; but this is a great deception. 'Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid.' In the past, many have undertaken to build a new faith, to establish new principles; but how long did their building stand? It soon fell; for it was not founded upon the Rock.

"Did not the first disciples have to meet the sayings of men? did they not have to listen to false theories; and then, having done all, to stand firm, saying, 'Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid'? So we are to hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end."—*Gospel Workers*, p. 307.

THINK IT THROUGH

How vital is my personal relationship with Christ? Am I abiding with Him every day? (See John 15:4, 5).

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 64, 175, 176.

3. Persecution and the Christian



“Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth” (Heb. 12:5, 6).

Persecution of the church of God presents a problem. Why is it that God permits persecution in the lives of His loyal and faithful children? Worse still, many times the persecution includes martyrdom. Through the centuries millions of self-denying Christians have lost their lives.

We find in the Word of God a number of definite promises regarding the care of our heavenly Father and the assistance of His holy angels in moments of danger. Notice one of them: “The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them” (Ps. 34:7).

In some instances—for example, the three Hebrew young men in the fiery furnace, Daniel in the lion’s den—God wrought miracles to preserve the lives of His children. But in many other instances He did not. John the Baptist met a premature death. All the disciples, probably with the exception of John, were martyred; and in the case of millions of loyal Christians who were witnessing for their faith, God did not prevent their death.

We cannot explain everything. But still we can trust in the infinite wisdom and love of God and determine to be faithful to Him, whether He delivers us from death or not. When the three Hebrew young men were given another opportunity to bow before the image, they answered confidently: “Our God

whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace. . . . *But if not*, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up” (Dan. 3:17, 18). They had no assurance of what God would decide to do in their cases, but they had made up their minds to be loyal to their God.

One thing we know: “All things work together for good to them that love God” (Rom. 8:28). Trials and persecution are tools in the hand of God to perfect our characters and prepare us for eternity, but He stays close to us during the trouble. We know that all troubles and persecution will soon come to an end and fade away in our memories. Heaven will seem very cheap in spite of past trials and sufferings. (See *Early Writings*, p. 17.)

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

- 1. Blessed Purpose of Persecution (2 Tim. 3:12)**
- 2. Persecution in the Past (Acts 7:52)**
- 3. Future Persecution (Rev. 12:17)**
- 4. God’s Way of Dealing With Persecution (Matt. 5:10-12)**
- 5. Victory in Persecution (Rev. 15:2)**
- 6. Our Assurance in Christ (Rev. 12:11)**

Part 1
BLESSED
PURPOSE OF
PERSECUTION

Does godly living prevent persecution?

"All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12).

The statement of the apostle is straightforward and strong. It seems that a consecrated life stirs up the powers of darkness and enrages Satan. On the other hand many times persecution has been the means of awakening interest in the truth and attracting sincere people to God. Could it be that many times the lack of persecution may be a sign of the lack of real godly living in the church?

What attitude did Peter urge believers of his day to take toward persecution? 1 Peter 4:12-14.

"Of all the gifts that heaven can bestow upon men, fellowship with Christ in His sufferings is the most weighty trust and the highest honor. Not Enoch, who was translated to heaven, not Elijah, who ascended in a chariot of fire, was greater or more honored than John the Baptist, who perished alone in the dungeon. 'Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake.' Philipians 1:29."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 478.

What does Paul say is the end result of suffering? Rom. 8:18, 28.

God has a wonderful purpose in allowing us to go through difficulties. Every bitter cup that He asks us to drink is a manifestation of His love toward us.

"The fact that we are called upon to endure trial shows that the Lord Jesus sees in us something precious which He desires to develop. If He saw in us nothing whereby He might glorify His name, He would not spend time in refining us. He does not cast worthless stones into His furnace."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 471.

THINK IT THROUGH

What is the only spirit and attitude whereby, under tribulation, I can receive the blessing God disguises in trials?

"It is because God is leading them [His children] that these things [adversities] come upon them. Trials and obstacles are the Lord's chosen methods of discipline and His appointed conditions of success."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 471.

FURTHER STUDY

The Ministry of Healing, pp. 470-474.

**Part 2
PERSECUTION
IN THE PAST**

What happened to the prophets of old while they were faithfully carrying on their duty?

“Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers” (Acts 7:52).

Of Jeremiah, one of the most persecuted of the prophets, Ellen White says: “When called to drink of the cup of tribulation and sorrow, and when tempted in his misery to say, ‘My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord,’ he recalled the providences of God in his behalf and triumphantly exclaimed, ‘It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness.’ Lamentations 3:18, 22, 23.”—*Prophecies and Kings*, p. 421.

What events did Daniel and John the revelator predict for the Middle Ages? Dan. 7:25; Rev. 13:7.

Millions of loyal Christians were tortured and killed during the Middle Ages at the hands of Rome. They met this fate because of loyalty to God and His Word instead of accepting the dogmas imposed by the apostate church. Religious leaders induced civil power to destroy all who resisted their authority.

“The history of God’s people during the ages of darkness that followed upon Rome’s supremacy is written in heaven, but they have little place in human records. Few traces of their existence can be found, except in the accusations of their persecutors.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 61.

“They [witnesses for God] were branded as heretics, their motives impugned, their characters maligned, their writings suppressed, misrepresented, or mutilated. Yet they stood firm, and from age to age maintained their faith in its purity, as a sacred heritage for the generations to come.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 61.

THINK IT THROUGH

Is it possible for the children of God of this day and age to develop the same faith and loyalty to God, even unto death? Should I seek a martyr’s death?

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 266, 439.

**Part 3
FUTURE
PERSECUTION****Read Revelation 12:17.**

There are three periods when this scripture will be especially fulfilled: (1) The days in which we are living. (2) From the establishment of the federal Sunday law in the United States to the end of probation. In this epoch the image of the beast will be imposed. (3) The time of trouble, after the close of probation, when the death decree will be issued.

What does Revelation 13:12, 16 say about the days of the second period, after the Sunday law?

When the lamblike beast—the United States—will exercise all the power of the first beast—Rome—then the children of God will begin to experience great trouble. The state, at the request of the churches, will impose economic restrictions and severe penalties on those who refuse to disobey God.

"All who refuse compliance [to the observance of the false sabbath] will be visited with civil penalties. . . .

". . . Whoever shall trample upon God's law to obey a human enactment receives the mark of the beast. . . .

"But not one is made to suffer the wrath of God [of Rev. 14:9, 10] until the truth has been brought home to his mind and conscience, and has been rejected. . . . The decree is not to be urged upon the people blindly. Everyone is to have sufficient light to make his decision intelligently.

"The Sabbath will be the great test of loyalty."—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 604, 605.

For what act will a death decree be issued? Rev. 13:15.

This decree comes after the end of probation, during the third and final period of the time of trouble. A definite date will be fixed for its execution. Nevertheless, before that day the wicked will afflict the Christians, in certain areas even trying to kill them. But the protection of God will be over them during the time of the plagues.

On the very night when the opposers of the faithful plan a mass killing of all Sabbath keepers, the sun will shine at mid-night; and the final liberation will come. (See *The Great Controversy*, pp. 635, 636.)

THINK IT THROUGH**Do I need to have a naturally courageous disposition in order to be able to resist the powers of darkness?**

Peter, by his betrayal, revealed a cowardly trait. Later on, though, he stood before the Sanhedrin. At the moment when he knew that such a statement could mean his death, he boldly declared: "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

What caused this complete change? How long did it take for the change to be realized?

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 445-450.

Part 4
**GOD'S WAY OF
DEALING WITH
PERSECUTION**

What did Jesus teach about persecution for righteousness' sake?

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for their's is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matt. 5:10-12).

"Under the fiercest persecution these witnesses for Jesus [Christians of Nero's time] kept their faith unsullied. Though deprived of every comfort, shut away from the light of the sun, making their home in the dark but friendly bosom of the earth, they uttered no complaint. . . .

"... Looking upward by faith, they saw Christ and angels leaning over the battlements of heaven, gazing upon them with the deepest interest and regarding their steadfastness with approval. A voice came down to them from the throne of God: 'Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.' Revelation 2:10."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 41.

What promises of God to His ancient people continue to support suffering people today? Isa. 43:2.

"Though enemies may thrust them into prison, yet dungeon walls cannot cut off the communication between their souls and Christ. One who sees their every weakness, who is acquainted with every trial, is above all earthly powers; and angels will come to them in lonely cells, bringing light and peace from heaven."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 627.

What assurance does Paul give to tempted believers? 1 Cor. 10:13.

What a beautiful thought, that God prevents every trial from exceeding what we can endure and delivers us at the appropriate moment!

THINK IT THROUGH

"What was the strength of those who in the past have suffered persecution for Christ's sake? It was union with God, union with the Holy Spirit, union with Christ. Reproach and persecution have separated many from earthly friends, but never from the love of Christ. Never is the tempest-ried soul more dearly loved by his Saviour than when he is suffering reproach for the truth's sake."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 85.

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 626, 627.

**Part 5
VICTORY IN
PERSECUTION**

Describe the symbolic setting in which John saw the victors.

"I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God" (Rev. 15:2).

These victors "sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb" (verse 3). The song of Moses was a song of victory.

In addition to these who obtained the victory over the beast and its image Revelation also describes another "great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues." They also stand "before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands" (Rev. 7:9, 10). These also proclaim the victory and salvation of God. They belong to all ages.

This vision of a great throng of triumphant people gives us assurance that victory over the world is possible and that we can be victors if only we avail ourselves of the means of grace provided in Jesus.

What can we learn from the experience of the first Christian martyr? Acts 7:55-60.

"Acting more like beasts of prey than human beings, they rushed upon Stephen, gnashing their teeth. In the cruel faces about him the prisoner read his fate; but he did not waver. For him the fear of death was gone. For him the enraged priests and the excited mob had no terror. The scene before him faded from his vision. To him the gates of heaven were ajar, and, looking in, he saw the glory of the courts of God, and Christ, as if just risen from His throne, standing ready to sustain His servant. In words of triumph Stephen exclaimed, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.'"—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 100, 101.

Victory consists in faithfulness to Christ.

THINK IT THROUGH

Why did God permit the martyrdom of Stephen?

"The martyrdom of Stephen made a deep impression upon all who witnessed it. The memory of the signet of God upon his face; his words, which touched the very souls of those who heard them, remained in the minds of the beholders, and testified to the truth of that which he had proclaimed. His death was a sore trial to the church, but it resulted in the conviction of Saul, who could not efface from his memory the faith and constancy of the martyr, and the glory that had rested on his countenance."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 101.

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 84-86.

Part 6
OUR ASSURANCE
IN CHRIST

What did John say was the means of victory for those who would experience the wrath of the dragon?

“They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death” (Rev. 12:11).

A. *“The blood of the Lamb.”* This expression leads our eyes to the great scene of victory on Golgotha. When our Saviour pronounced on the cross—at the moment of His death—the words, “It is finished,” He sealed the plan of salvation by crushing the head of that old serpent, Satan, obtaining the most glorious victory of all ages.

From then on, every human being could look to the cross of Jesus. By faith he could appropriate for himself the same victory: victory over temptation and sin, victory in the midst of persecution and death.

The spilled blood of Jesus that represents His final victory has power. His death has power to atone for every sin and power for us to be victorious—in His name—over our weaknesses and our temptations. This includes power to remain faithful under the most extreme persecutions, even the threat of death.

B. *“The word of their testimony.”* This is the second part of the secret of victory. Stephen was not content with remaining faithful to Jesus till his death; he continued to *testify with his lips* on behalf of his Master till the last moment.

This is the way in which the world has to receive the saving knowledge of the power of Jesus—the words of our testimony. And when we utter our public testimony—whether in a personal conversation, in the privacy of a home or in a meeting, orally or in writing—that testimony strengthens our own faith. It is also used by the Holy Spirit to impress those who hear. No one can measure the far-reaching influence or the deep and permanent impression of such a human testimony. It may cause a person or a group of persons to decide for Christ at a time and a place far removed from the original testimony.

THINK IT THROUGH

How can I avail myself of the power of His blood?

How can I take better advantage of my social and professional contacts with others in order to witness for Christ with the words of my testimony?

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 347, 357; *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 55.

4. Symbols of Persecuting Powers



“The dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev. 12:17).

Throughout the centuries Satan has used various political and religious or spiritual powers with two purposes: (1) to corrupt the faith, and (2) to coerce the conscience.

During the early centuries of the Christian era, through the Roman Empire, the enemy’s method was persecution, intimidation, and death. But in spite of this the church continued to grow, and Jesus was accepted even in the inner circle of the emperor’s palace. The enemy then resorted to deception and cajolery to corrupt the church. This led to the union of church and state.

In the Middle Ages the enemy’s purpose was accomplished through a big and popular church that had apostatized. The church used the power of the law and the armies of the state to enforce a corrupt religion. This continued during most of the dark period of the 1260 years prophesied in Revelation 12:6.

At the time of the Reformation and afterward, near the end of that long prophetic period, this type of action on the part of the official church was abandoned. Today it presents a different front. It has even advocated the concept of religious liberty at Vatican Council II. For this we should be grateful. But the inspired pen warns us to beware of the facade; the real nature of apostasy has not changed.

The old methods of persecution—torture and death—will be resurrected at the last stage of the age-long conflict between truth and error. This

time, though, it will be shorter, and martyrdom of believers will cease at the close of probation.

The state, apostate churches, and spiritualism will unite their efforts to win the loyalty of millions of people.

During all the times of crisis in the past God has had His loyal people. In the last moments of human history He will continue to have His faithful ones, those who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus. They will defy the efforts of the persecuting powers and remain loyal to God.

In this lesson we will try to identify the different powers that will oppose God’s people: the dragon, the first beast, the second (or lamblike) beast, the false prophet. We will see all of them united in a concerted and final action. But God’s people will be a part of the triumph of Christ, His truth, His church, and with her, every loyal one.

To know in advance how the great enemy will work through human agencies will help us to be aware of the dangers of these final days. It should cause us to seek victory through the one unequaled and infallible source, Jesus Christ.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **The Dragon**
(Rev. 12:9)
2. **The First Beast of Revelation 13**
(Rev. 13:1)
3. **The Second Beast of Revelation 13**
(Rev. 13:11-18)
4. **The Mark of the Beast**
(Rev. 13:16, 17)
5. **The Triple Union**
(Rev. 16:13)
6. **The Triumphant Child of God**
(2 Cor. 11:24-27)

Part 1 **What is the first power symbolized by the dragon? Rev. 12:9.**
THE DRAGDN

Satan himself is the first power represented by the dragon, as we see in verse 9. Satan began the war against God right in heaven. Later, on earth he began using different agencies. In this section we will review some of the other powers employed by Satan, the dragon.

What actions of the dragon in Revelation 12:3, 4 help to identify an earthly power represented by the dragon? What is this second power?

The dragon with seven heads and ten horns also represents the Roman Empire. The seven heads or powers are the great world empires which fought against God, moved by Satan. But the prophet, using a figure of speech in which the whole stands for a part (synecdoche), refers here specifically to the Roman Empire. The dragon had also ten horns, which refer to the territory of Rome, which was fragmented into ten nations. In the first century this power, through Herod, stood before the woman (the church) to devour her Child. He ordered the murder of all the children in Bethlehem up to two years of age in an effort to destroy Jesus.

What features in Revelation 12:6, 14 identify a third power symbolized by the dragon? What is this third power?

This is "Christian" Rome in the Middle Ages. The woman—the small, loyal church of God—was persecuted during the prophetic period of the 1260 years—three and a half prophetic years or 42 months. (See Rev. 12:6; Dan. 7:25; Rev. 13:5.)

The fourth stage of persecution by the dragon. (See Rev. 12:17.) There will be a renewal of persecution against God's people by the dragon. The earthly power that he will use for this attack is presented in Revelation 13.

THINK IT THROUGH **What is the effective defense against the dragon who seeks to attack us, not only by open persecution but by temptations and provocations?**

"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).

Study the different parts of this armor and discover how every part of it points to Christ as the source of our strength and the secret of our victory.

FURTHER STUDY *The Great Controversy*, p. 438.

Part 2
THE FIRST
BEAST OF
REVELATION 13

What were the features of the first beast of chapter 13?

“I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy” (Rev. 13:1).

The first ten verses of Revelation 13 present a history more or less parallel to the one described in Revelation 12. But while in the former chapter the events are seen from a political point of view, here in chapter 13 we witness the same persecution and affliction of the people of God from a religious standpoint.

This beast with its seven heads or powers may well represent the succession of the seven great world powers: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, pagan Rome, and papal Rome. Here also the ten horns identify the European territory into which Rome was divided. Papal Rome would exercise her power especially in Europe.

The parallel with the prophetic vision of Daniel 7 is established by verse 2, where we see a beast composed of the parts of three of the four beasts described by Daniel. These beasts symbolized world empires.

What other specifications help identify this first beast? Rev. 13:5-7.

Both here and in Daniel 7:21, 25 it is easy to detect the same great features that depict the papal power: (1) blasphemies, assuming titles and powers that belong only to God; (2) war against the saints; (3) a period of religiopolitical supremacy of 42 prophetic months, equivalent to a literal 1260 years (A.D. 538-1798).

“This symbol, as most Protestants have believed, represents the papacy, which succeeded to the power and seat and authority once held by the ancient Roman empire. . . . This prophecy, which is nearly identical with the description of the little horn of Daniel 7, unquestionably points to the papacy.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 439.

What happened to one of the heads of the first beast? Rev. 13:3.

The death wound was the loss of the political power and supremacy of the papacy, leading up to 1798, when the French General Berthier took the pope prisoner. But the healing process began when Mussolini, in 1929, restored to the pope some of the territories which had been taken from the papacy.

THINK IT THROUGH

Would you think that God will require of us an even stronger testimony than from the medieval Christians? Why?

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, p. 54.

Part 3
THE SECOND
BEAST OF
REVELATION 13

What are the features of the earth beast?

Read Revelation 13:11-18 to have a complete picture.

The following features show why we believe this beast symbolizes the United States:

1. *Time*: "When the first beast was going into captivity in 1798 . . . the United States was growing into prominence and power. The nation arose, not in the Old World, with its teeming multitudes, but in the New World, with its relatively few inhabitants."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 820.

2. *Place*: It came up out of the earth, and not from the sea as did the other beasts. Since the sea represents peoples, the earth may point out a scarcely populated territory, like the U.S. in its early years.

3. *Two lamblike horns*: The two horns, uncrowned, could be the two special features of the United States government: (1) a government without a king, a republican government; and (2) a church without a pope—separation of church and state. This ensures the two main human liberties—civil and religious.

"It has been shown that the United States is the power represented by the beast with lamblike horns."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 579.

In what way was this earth beast changed? Verses 13-17.

The United States has fulfilled—and continues to fulfill—the role of a lamblike beast. To its shores have come persecuted men and women from all parts of the world to seek refuge. But according to prophecy a sad change will come. Review the following points:

(1) It will speak as a dragon, and a dragon is a persecuting power (v. 11). (2) It exercises all the power of the sea beast (Rome); it uses the same forceful methods to impose religious practices (v. 12). (3) It causes everybody to worship the sea beast (v. 12). (4) It says to the inhabitants of the earth that they should make an image to the sea beast. If the sea beast (Rome) is a church united to a state that persecutes people, an image should be something similar—apostate Protestantism using the civil power of the state to enforce religion (v. 14). (5) It gives life to the image of the beast; the state will support the dictates of apostate Christianity (v. 15). (6) It causes all to receive the mark of the beast; it imposes Sunday observance (v. 16). (7) It causes conditions so that no one can buy or sell except the one who has the mark; it abolishes the most elemental freedoms; it suspends some individual rights (v. 16). (8) It pronounces a death decree against all who do not worship Rome (v. 15).

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 578-581.

Part 4
THE MARK OF
THE BEAST

What are the results of not receiving the mark of the beast?

“He [the lamblike beast—the United States] causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast [Rome], or the number of his name” (Rev. 13: 16, 17).

What is the mark of the beast?

“Mark. Gr. *charagma*, ‘an impress,’ ‘a stamp,’ ‘a mark.’ This is evidently some badge of loyalty to the beast, some special feature that denotes that the one displaying such a mark worships the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed (v. 8). Adventist interpreters understand this mark to be not a literal brand but some sign of allegiance that identifies the bearer as loyal to the power represented by the beast. The controversy at that time will center on the law of God, and particularly on the fourth command (see on ch. 14:12). Hence the observance of Sunday will constitute such a sign, but only at the time when the beast’s power will be revived and Sunday observance becomes a matter of compliance with civil law. Adventists hold that simultaneously the third angel’s message will warn against the reception of the mark (ch. 14:9-11). This message, swelling into a loud cry (ch. 18:1-4), will enlighten men as to the issues involved. When the issues are thus clearly before them, and men nevertheless choose to support an institution of the beast, knowing it to be in direct opposition to the command of God, they thereby show their allegiance to the power and receive the mark of the beast.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 822.

“In the issue of the contest all Christendom will be divided into two great classes—those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and those who worship the beast and his image and receive his mark.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 450.

“The warfare against God’s law, which was begun in heaven, will be continued until the end of time. Every man will be tested. Obedience or disobedience is the question to be decided by the whole world. All will be called to choose between the law of God and the laws of men. Here the dividing line will be drawn.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 763.

The establishment of a national Sunday law in the U.S. will be followed by similar laws throughout the world.

“As America, the land of religious liberty, shall unite with the papacy in forcing the conscience and compelling men to honor the false sabbath, the people of every country on the globe will be led to follow her example.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 18.

THINK IT THROUGH

Read Revelation 15:2, 3.

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 449, 450, 605.

Part 5
THE TRIPLE
UNION

What triple union does Revelation foretell?

"I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet" (Rev. 16:13).

Identification of the three confederated powers: (1) *The dragon* is in essence Satan himself. In Revelation 12 the dragon also represents the Roman Empire acting under the leadership of the devil. In chapter 16 the dragon is doubtless Satan operating through spiritualism, used by Satan to promote his aims and to unite the other powers, since from the mouth of the three—the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet—there came out spirits of devils (Rev. 16:14). (2) *The beast* is Rome, the papacy, the first beast of Revelation 13. (3) *The false prophet* is the same power as "the image of the beast" of Revelation 13—the apostate and confederate Protestantism.

"When Protestantism shall stretch her hand across the gulf to grasp the hand of the Roman power, when she shall reach over the abyss to clasp hands with spiritualism, when, under the influence of this threefold union, our country [the U.S.] shall repudiate every principle of its Constitution as a Protestant and republican government, and shall make provision for the propagation of papal falsehoods and delusions, then we may know that the time has come for the marvelous working of Satan and that the end is near."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 451.

"Through the two great errors, the immortality of the soul and Sunday sacredness, Satan will bring the people under his deceptions. While the former lays the foundation of spiritualism, the latter creates a bond of sympathy with Rome. The Protestants of the United States will be foremost in stretching their hands across the gulf to grasp the hand of spiritualism; they will reach over the abyss to clasp hands with the Roman power; and under the influence of this threefold union, this country [the U.S.] will follow in the steps of Rome in trampling on the rights of conscience."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 588.

What will be the end of these persecuting powers? Rev. 19: 19, 20; 20:10.

THING IT THROUGH

What relation do these future events have to my daily life today?

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, p. 588; *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 449-454.

**Part 6
THE TRIUM-
PHANT CHILD
OF GOD**

How does Paul sum up the many afflictions and persecutions of his life?

"Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watching often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness" (2 Cor. 11:24-27).

The account of these tribulations of Paul provides encouragement to the children of God who will have to suffer for their dear Master.

Never did Paul show a rebellious attitude against God or a bitter spirit; but he counted it as a privilege to suffer for the sake of the truth. He always kept his eyes fixed on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of his faith. This promise of God kept ringing in his ears, "My grace is sufficient for thee," and the apostle went ahead as a conqueror, always with a triumphant mood.

In spite of all these vicissitudes, how did Paul view his ministry? What did he consider to be the secret of success? 2 Cor. 2:14, 15.

Honoring his conviction about his final victory, what were the last words of Paul before his martyrdom? 2 Tim. 4:6-8.

"Inspiration has preserved for us his dying testimony. Like a trumpet peal his voice has rung out through all the ages since, nerving with his own courage thousands of witnesses for Christ and wakening in thousands of sorrow-stricken hearts the echo of his own triumphant joy."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 513.

THINK IT THROUGH

What are some reasons why God showed us in advance what these apostate powers were going to do?

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 576, 577.

5. The Time of Trouble--I



“Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping” (Mark 13:35, 36).

This solemn appeal applies in a very specific way to our days. It refers, not to the physical appearance of Christ at His second coming, but to the end of the investigative judgment and the time of grace. (See *Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 190.) These events mark the beginning of the time of trouble. After that moment there will be no more possibility of forgiveness and acceptance by God.

“Solemn are the scenes connected with the closing work of the atonement. Momentous are the interests involved therein. The judgment is now passing in the sanctuary above. For many years this work has been in progress. Soon—none know how soon—it will pass to the cases of the living. In the awful presence of God our lives are to come up in review. At this time above all others it behooves every soul to heed the Saviour’s admonition: ‘Watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.’ Mark 13:33.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 490.

We do not know when the judgment will turn from the dead to the living, but we know that when that hour arrives, none need fear who are abiding in Christ.

This week and next we will study one of the most difficult periods the church of God will pass through. By that time most Bible prophecies will have been fulfilled, the proclamation of the gospel will have been finished, the shaking and the sealing will have occurred, and the latter rain will have fallen.

During the time of trouble the seven last plagues fall on the impenitent while the children of God are protected. The four angels have

released the winds of strife, giving free rein to nature and men to cast off the restraint of law. The plagues descend unmixed with God’s mercy and without the restricting influence of the Holy Spirit.

The persecution, which will have commenced during the time of probation with the imposing of the Sunday laws, will become more severe during this period, reaching maximum fierceness with the death decree. But that decree will not be carried out, because at the date set for the execution, God will liberate His people amidst a tremendous display of natural phenomena and fearful manifestations of His anger. Under the sixth and seventh plagues Armageddon occurs.

Although the faithful will not suffer the plagues and will be miraculously fed, guarded, and protected, they will nevertheless go through a double ordeal: (1) physical hardship because the persecution will force them to flee from all centers of population; (2) mental anguish, because of their concern about the forgiveness of all their sins. But finally peace and tranquillity take the place of anxiety. Only those who have received the refreshing and have been sealed are in a condition to pass safely through this stormy hour, standing firmly to welcome the Lord Jesus at His second coming.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **Definition**
(Dan. 12:1)
2. **The Time: Beginning and End**
(Rev. 22:11)
3. **Jacob’s Dramatic Experience**
(Gen. 32:24-29)
4. **Mental and Physical Anguish**
(Jer. 30:7)
5. **Purpose**
(Mal. 3:2, 3)
6. **Our Only Safety During the Trouble** (Rev. 3:18, 19)

Part 1
DEFINITION **What is Daniel's description of the time of trouble?**

"At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book" (Dan. 12:1).

Here inspiration opens before us a dark episode in the long controversy between good and evil, namely, the time of trouble. "At that time"—that is to say, at the time of the end of human history—the last scenes of Daniel 11 are occurring. Then "Michael . . . the great prince [Jesus Christ; see Jude 9; 1 Thess. 4:16; John 5:25; Rev. 12:17] which standeth for the children of thy people," leaves His intercessory duties on behalf of the children of God. He "stands up" and arises to deliver His people because "there shall be a time of trouble."

Although this trouble is the most severe that has happened in human history, the promise is that "at that time thy people shall be delivered."

What warning and promise made to Judah will also be fulfilled in the time of trouble? Jer. 30:7.

"When He [Christ] leaves the sanctuary, darkness covers the inhabitants of the earth. In that fearful time the righteous must live in the sight of a holy God without an intercessor. The restraint that has been upon the wicked is removed, and Satan has entire control of the finally impenitent. God's long-suffering has ended. The world has rejected His mercy, despised His love, and trampled upon His law. The wicked have passed the boundary of their probation; the Spirit of God, persistently resisted, has been at last withdrawn. Unsheltered by divine grace, they have no protection from the wicked one. Satan will then plunge the inhabitants of the earth into one great, final trouble. As the angels of God cease to hold in check the fierce winds of human passion, all the elements of strife will be let loose. The whole world will be involved in ruin more terrible than that which came upon Jerusalem of old."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 614.

THINK IT THROUGH **Should we worry about events in the future? If Jesus is sufficient to save us now, will He not prove to be sufficient for our needs then?**

"We are standing on the threshold of the crisis of the ages. . . . The angel of mercy cannot remain much longer to shelter the impenitent."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 278.

FURTHER STUDY *The Great Controversy*, pp. 613, 614.

Part 2
THE TIME:
BEGINNING
AND END

What decree fixes human destinies?

“He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still” (Rev. 22:11).

“An angel returning from the earth announces that his work is done; the final test has been brought upon the world, and all who have proved themselves loyal to the divine precepts have received ‘the seal of the living God.’ Then Jesus ceases His intercession in the sanctuary above. He lifts His hands and with a loud voice says, ‘It is done;’ and all the angelic host lay off their crowns as He makes the solemn announcement: ‘He that is unjust, let him be unjust still.’ . . . Every case has been decided for life or death.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 613.

When does the time of trouble end?

Although no one knows exactly what the duration of the time of trouble will be, we infer that it will be short. And at the appointed time the deliverance will come just shortly before the actual appearance of Jesus.

Said the servant of the Lord: “Satan’s host and wicked men will surround them [the saints], and exult over them, because there will seem to be no way of escape for them. But in the midst of their revelry and triumph, there is heard peal upon peal of the loudest thunder. The heavens have gathered blackness, and are only illuminated by the blazing light and terrible glory from heaven, as God utters His voice from His holy habitation.

“The foundations of the earth shake; buildings totter and fall with a terrible crash. The sea boils like a pot, and the whole earth is in terrible commotion. The captivity of the righteous is turned, and with sweet and solemn whisperings they say to one another: ‘We are delivered. It is the voice of God.’”—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 354.

THINK IT THROUGH

“The devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time” (Rev. 12:12).

Commenting on this, Ellen White wrote: “Fearful are the scenes which call forth this exclamation from the heavenly voice. The wrath of Satan increases as his time grows short, and his work of deceit and destruction will reach its culmination in the time of trouble.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 623.

What is the only effective shelter against “deceit and destruction”? Rev. 12:10, 11.

FURTHER STUDY

Prophets and Kings, pp. 275-278.

Part 3
JACOB'S
DRAMATIC
EXPERIENCE

Analyze the experience of Jacob at Padan-aram. Gen. 32:24-29.

"Jacob's experience during that night of wrestling and anguish represents the trial through which the people of God must pass just before Christ's second coming."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 201.

To what portion of the time of trouble at large does the expression "the time of Jacob's trouble" especially apply?

"They [the wicked] thought that we [the righteous] had brought the judgments of God upon them, and that if they could rid the earth of us, the plagues would be stayed. A decree went forth to slay the saints, which caused them to cry day and night for deliverance. This was the time of Jacob's trouble. Then all the saints cried out with anguish of spirit, and were delivered by the voice of God."—*Early Writings*, pp. 36, 37.

From this paragraph we may draw two conclusions: (1) the "time of Jacob's trouble" embraces the period which extends from the announcement of the death decree to the liberation; (2) the period begins after the plagues have started to fall.

What are the two characteristics of the night of Jacob's wrestling that apply to the time of trouble? Read today's text again.

1. Jacob experienced anguish because of the material situation which confronted him. His brother was coming against him with 400 armed men, apparently with intentions of revenge. *Persecution* is symbolized here.

2. Jacob felt *intense mental anguish* in his struggle with God in prayer because he was not sure his sins had been forgiven.

THINK IT THROUGH

The only road to real revival, reformation, and victory is persevering and fervent, secret prayer. Are you entering into this experience? (See *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 344.)

While Jacob was humiliating his soul before God and crying for mercy and surety of forgiveness, the Angel appeared. Deep into the night the patriarch continued to wrestle physically for his life. But as soon as he discovered that this stranger was the Angel of God, he clung to Him with persevering faith claiming His blessing; and he was blessed with peace and assurance. By a fervent experience of secret prayer, confession, and commitment the forgiveness was assured, the victory was won, and his character as well as his name was changed.

FURTHER STUDY

Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 195-203.

Part 4
MENTAL AND
PHYSICAL
ANGUISH

What Old Testament text gives symbolic meaning to Jacob's experience?

"Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it" (Jer. 30:7).

Jacob, during his night of trouble, experienced the physical anguish of persecution and the mental anguish of uncertainty concerning the forgiveness of his sins. The saints will also suffer these two kinds of trouble.

1. *Persecution.* "As the decree issued by the various rulers of Christendom against the commandment keepers shall withdraw the protection of government and abandon them to those who desire their destruction, the people of God will flee from the cities and villages and associate together in companies, dwelling in the most desolate and solitary places. Many will find refuge in the strongholds of the mountains. Like the Christians of the Piedmont valleys, they will make the high places of the earth their sanctuaries and will thank God for 'the munitions of rocks.' Isaiah 33:16. But many of all nations and of all classes, high and low, rich and poor, black and white, will be cast into the most unjust and cruel bondage. The beloved of God pass weary days, bound in chains, shut in by prison bars, sentenced to be slain, some apparently left to die of starvation in dark and loathsome dungeons."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 626.

We will see in the next lesson that in all of this trouble every child of God will be under divine protection. His life will be preserved and his basic needs satisfied until the deliverance.

2. *Mental anguish.* "Though God's people will be surrounded by enemies who are bent upon their destruction, yet the anguish which they suffer is not a dread of persecution for the truth's sake; they fear that every sin has not been repented of, and that through some fault in themselves they will fail to realize the fulfillment of the Saviour's promise. . . .

" . . . Their faith does not fail because their prayers are not immediately answered. Though suffering the keenest anxiety, terror, and distress, they do not cease their intercessions. They lay hold of the strength of God as Jacob laid hold of the Angel."—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 619, 620.

But like Jacob, they have confessed their sins and soon recover their peace and joy in the Lord.

THINK IT THROUGH

What do we need to do now, while probationary time lingers, in order to be finally liberated in that day of spiritual anxiety? (Read *The Great Controversy*, p. 620.)

FURTHER STUDY

Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 201-203.

Part 5 **In the light of Malachi 3:2, 3, what is the purpose of God in**
PURPOSE **permitting His people to experience trouble and distress?**

“Who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness” (Mal. 3:2, 3).

The spirit of prophecy applies the figures from this passage to the experience of God’s people in the time of trouble.

“The assaults of Satan are fierce and determined, his delusions are terrible; but the Lord’s eye is upon His people, and His ear listens to their cries. Their affliction is great, the flames of the furnace seem about to consume them; but the Refiner will bring them forth as gold tried in the fire. God’s love for His children during the period of their severest trial is as strong and tender as in the days of their sunniest prosperity; but it is needful for them to be placed in the furnace of fire; their earthliness must be consumed, that the image of Christ may be perfectly reflected.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 621.

At the time of these experiences the saints have already been sealed. Still they need to continue to grow and be perfected through patience and suffering. Their faith needs to become stronger, their character more similar to that of the great Model.

“The people of God must drink of the cup and be baptized with the baptism. The very delay, so painful to them, is the best answer to their petitions. As they endeavor to wait trustingly for the Lord to work they are led to exercise faith, hope, and patience, which have been too little exercised during their religious experience.”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 630, 631.

THINK IT THROUGH **What relation is there between tribulations in our life now and the severest of all afflictions, the time of trouble?**

“Those who exercise but little faith now, are in the greatest danger of falling under the power of satanic delusions and the decree to compel the conscience. And even if they endure the test they will be plunged into deeper distress and anguish in the time of trouble, because they have never made it a habit to trust in God. The lessons of faith which they have neglected they will be forced to learn under a terrible pressure of discouragement.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 622.

FURTHER STUDY *The Great Controversy*, pp. 622, 623.

Part 6
OUR ONLY
SAFETY
DURING THE
TROUBLE

In what sense is the counsel of the True Witness the only effective preparation for the time of trouble?

"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. . . . Be zealous therefore, and repent" (Rev. 3:18, 19).

Gold: faith and love, the fruits of the Spirit.

White raiment: the imputed righteousness of Christ, or forgiveness and cleansing from sin; and the imparted righteousness of Christ, His pure and perfect character reproduced in us by faith.

Eyesalve: wisdom and insight in order to recognize sin under any disguise. In other words, a sensitive conscience led by the Holy Spirit. (See *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 358, on above interpretations.)

These three elements will finish the work of sealing our lives, making us ready for the time of Jacob's trouble and for translation at Christ's coming.

"The season of distress before God's people will call for a faith that will not falter. His children must make it manifest that He is the only object of their worship, and that no consideration, not even that of life itself, can induce them to make the least concession to false worship. To the loyal heart the commands of sinful, finite men will sink into insignificance beside the word of the eternal God. Truth will be obeyed though the result be imprisonment or exile or death.

"As in the days of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, so in the closing period of earth's history the Lord will work mightily in behalf of those who stand steadfastly for the right. He who walked with the Hebrew worthies in the fiery furnace will be with His followers wherever they are. His abiding presence will comfort and sustain. In the midst of the time of trouble—trouble such as has not been since there was a nation—His chosen ones will stand unmoved. Satan with all the hosts of evil cannot destroy the weakest of God's saints. Angels that excel in strength will protect them, and in their behalf Jehovah will reveal Himself as a 'God of gods,' able to save to the uttermost those who have put their trust in Him."—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 512, 513.

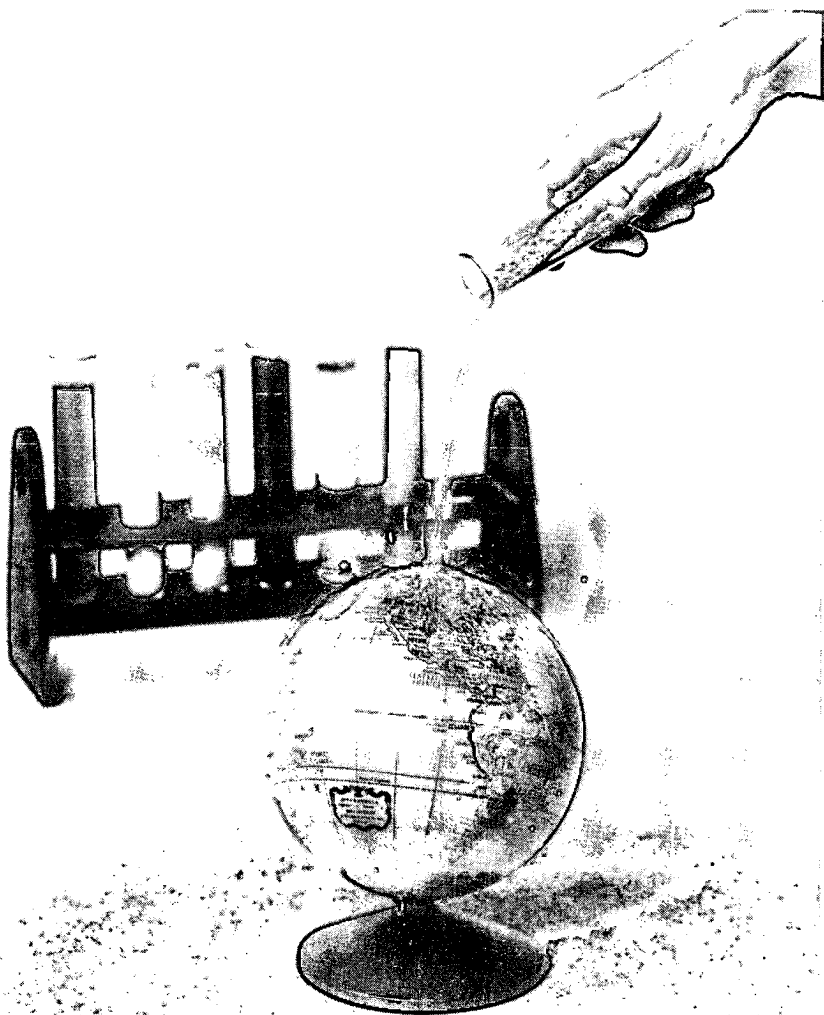
THINK IT THROUGH

Christ, His righteousness, and the Holy Spirit—the remedies offered by Jesus to the Laodiceans—are the only answer to our greatest need today as children of God. Am I buying daily from the heavenly Physician these effective medicines? How do I go about "buying" them?

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 650-652.

6. The Time of Trouble--2



“Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame” (Rev. 16:15).

These inspired words apply to the close of the investigative judgment and the period of grace. Both will terminate at an unexpected time. To this special moment the prophecy of Daniel 12:1 also refers when it says, “There shall be a time of trouble, such as never was.” Also Revelation 22:11 points to this specific hour, since when it comes, “he that is unjust” continues to be unjust, and “he that is righteous” continues to be righteous.

The most important point about the time of trouble is not to understand completely all the facts; but rather, to have a firm, true faith in Jesus that will enable us to pass through that ominous time safely. Those who have a faith in Jesus that leads them to obey Him will be protected fully from the seven last plagues, sealed by the seal of the living God for eternal salvation and covered completely by the beautiful and perfect garment of the righteousness of Christ.

The only key to victory is to have a heart cleansed by the blood of Jesus. This lesson seeks to confront us with our vital need of acquiring the personal Christian experience of one whose life “is hid with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3) so that nothing can affect him or change his glorious destination.

This is even more important in view of the fact that the end of probation is very near, and it will come unexpectedly, even to the children of God.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

- 1. The Seven Last Plagues (Revelation 16)**
- 2. Protection and Care of God (Ps. 91:1, 2, 15)**
- 3. No More Mediator: No More Probation (Rev. 15:8; 8:5)**
- 4. Unexpectedness of the Time (Rev. 16:15)**
- 5. The Sealed (Eze. 14:20)**
- 6. Key to Success (Rev. 12:11)**

Part 1
THE SEVEN
LAST PLAGUES

Read Revelation 16.

What is the main point of each one of the seven plagues?

These last plagues are similar in nature to the plagues of Egypt but are much more terrible and destructive. They fall on the wicked "just before the final deliverance of God's people. . . . Terrible as these inflictions are, God's justice stands fully vindicated. The angel of God declares: 'Thou art righteous, O Lord, . . . because Thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and Thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.'" Revelation 16:2-6.—*The Great Controversy*, p. 628.

The falling of the plagues takes place during the time when the temple in heaven is pictured as closed and filled with smoke. (See Rev. 15:8.) "It was impossible for the plagues to be poured out while Jesus officiated in the sanctuary; but as His work there is finished, and His intercession closes, there is nothing to stay the wrath of God, and it breaks with fury upon the shelterless head of the guilty sinner, who has slighted salvation and hated reproof."—*Early Writings*, p. 280.

"These plagues are not universal, or the inhabitants of the earth would be wholly cut off. Yet they will be the most awful scourges that have ever been known to mortals. All the judgments upon men, prior to the close of probation, have been mingled with mercy. The pleading blood of Christ has shielded the sinner from receiving the full measure of his guilt; but in the final judgment wrath is poured out unmixed with mercy."—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 628, 629.

The duration will be brief. If the word "day" mentioned in Revelation 18:8 is prophetic time (Eze. 4:6), it may be reasoned that the plagues will last for one year. Except for this passage, neither the Bible nor the spirit of prophecy makes any reference to the length of the period. The *S.D.A. Bible Commentary* suggests that the words of the original "stress suddenness and unexpectedness rather than duration."—Volume 7, p. 863.

THINK IT THROUGH

"A book has been given us to guide our feet through the perils of this dark world to heaven. It tells us how we can escape the wrath of God, and also tells of the sufferings of Christ for us, the great sacrifice that has been made that we might be saved and enjoy the presence of God forever. . . . The word of God tells us how we may become perfect Christians and escape the seven last plagues."—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 125, 126.

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 627-629.

Part 2
PROTECTION
AND CARE
OF GOD

“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.”

“He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him” (Ps. 91:1, 2, 15).

“The people of God will not be free from suffering; but while persecuted and distressed, while they endure privation and suffer for want of food, they will not be left to perish. That God who cared for Elijah will not pass by one of His self-sacrificing children. He who numbers the hairs of their head will care for them, and in time of famine they shall be satisfied.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 629.

What promises are given to those who must endure the seven last plagues? Isa. 33:16; Ps. 37:19.

“By this promise [Isa. 33:16] the children of God will live. When the earth shall be wasted with famine, they shall be fed. [Ps. 37:19 quoted.] To that time of distress the prophet Habakkuk looked forward, and his words express the faith of the church: [Hab. 3:17, 18 quoted].”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 122.

“While the wicked are dying from hunger and pestilence, angels will shield the righteous and supply their wants. To him that ‘walketh righteously’ is the promise: ‘Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.’ ‘When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.’ Isaiah 33:15, 16; 41:17.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 629.

The angels will minister to God’s children during that time.

“In the time of trouble just before the coming of Christ, the righteous will be preserved through the ministration of heavenly angels; but there will be no security for the transgressor of God’s law. Angels cannot then protect those who are disregarding one of the divine precepts.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 256.

THINK IT THROUGH

What do I need to do now in order to be protected by the holy angels during the seven plagues? Does Revelation 18:4 have any application to us as Seventh-day Adventists?

FURTHER STUDY

Early Writings, p. 71.

Part 3
NO MORE
MEDIATOR;
NO MORE
PROBATION

What is the meaning of the following biblical symbols?

“The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled” (Rev. 15:8).

“The angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake” (Rev. 8:5).

Revelation 15:8 states that “*no man* was able to enter into the temple.” In other words, nobody will have access to the mercy seat, because mediation has ceased. The censer which symbolizes the mediatorial work of Jesus is represented as thrown to the earth by an angel, signifying that the ministry of Christ has ceased.

At the beginning of the time of trouble the decree of Revelation 22:11 is announced in heaven.

“When He [Christ] leaves the sanctuary, darkness covers the inhabitants of the earth. In that fearful time the righteous must live in the sight of a holy God without an intercessor. . . . The world has rejected His mercy, despised His love, and trampled upon His law. The wicked have passed the boundary of their probation; the Spirit of God, persistently resisted, has been at last withdrawn.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 614.

Ellen White gives the following description of the end of the time of grace:

“An angel returning from the earth announces that his [sealing] work is done; the final test has been brought upon the world, and all who have proved themselves loyal to the divine precepts have received ‘the seal of the living God.’ Then Jesus ceases His intercession in the sanctuary above. He lifts His hands and with a loud voice says, ‘It is done;’ and all the angelic host lay off their crowns as He makes the solemn announcement: ‘He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: . . . and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still. . . .’ Revelation 22:11. Every case has been decided for life or death.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 613.

THINK IT THROUGH

Jeremiah 8:20 depicts the saddest of all exclamations found in the Bible: “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.” Now is the time to prevent that awful experience, when the opportunity is still ours.

What considerations make our preparation for the future urgent?

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 8, pp. 314, 315.

Part 4
UNEXPECTEDNESS
OF THE TIME

What is the admonition of Jesus regarding readiness for the end of the time of grace?

“Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame” (Rev. 16:15).

It is always an unhappy experience to receive a very loved and respected visitor at home without the necessary preparation. We like to have everything in order—the house clean, the beds made, the yard neat. We consider preparation for a human visitor very important. How much more vital it is that we be ready spiritually when the Lord leaves the sanctuary and takes off His intercessory garment to put on His royal garb in preparation for His coming back to earth.

What counsel did Christ give to the disciples about readiness? Matt. 24:42, 44.

“Come when it may, the day of God will come unawares to the ungodly. When life is going on in its unvarying round; when men are absorbed in pleasure, in business, in traffic, in money-making; when religious leaders are magnifying the world’s progress and enlightenment, and the people are lulled in a false security—then, as the midnight thief steals within the unguarded dwelling, so shall sudden destruction come upon the careless and ungodly, ‘and they shall not escape.’ ”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 38.

What is the meaning of the question of Jesus recorded in the last part of Luke 18:8?

“The world is stirred with the spirit of war. The prophecy of the eleventh chapter of Daniel has nearly reached its complete fulfillment. Soon the scenes of trouble spoken of in the prophecies will take place.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 14.

“As the approach of the Roman armies was a sign to the disciples of the impending destruction of Jerusalem, so may this apostasy [Sunday legislation, the threefold alliance, and the repudiation of the principles of the American Constitution] be a sign to us that the limit of God’s forbearance is reached, that the measure of our nation’s iniquity is full, and that the angel of mercy is about to take her flight, never to return.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 451.

THINK IT THROUGH

“The ‘time of trouble, such as never was,’ is soon to open upon us; and we shall need an experience which we do not now possess and which many are too indolent to obtain.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 622.

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 621-623.

Part 5
THE SEALED

How important is personal preparation to meet the Lord? What will be the only credential valid to be counted with the victors in the great day of reckoning?

“Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness” (Eze. 14:20).

In connection with this passage Ellen White remarks, “In that time of trial, every soul must stand for himself before God.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 622.

The only thing that will count in that day will be the personal, individual experience and spiritual preparation.

Who will be the only ones to be delivered and to sing the great song of victory? Only the 144,000 sealed with the seal of the living God will be ready to go unharmed through the time of trouble. Only those who, by the grace of God, and by a close daily relationship with Christ, have attained a victorious experience will sing the song of triumph and will finally inherit the kingdom.

“Upon the crystal sea before the throne, that sea of glass as it were mingled with fire,—so resplendent is it with the glory of God,—are gathered the company that have ‘gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name.’ With the Lamb upon Mount Zion, ‘having the harps of God,’ they stand, the hundred and forty and four thousand that were redeemed from among men; and there is heard, as the sound of many waters, and as the sound of a great thunder, ‘the voice of harpers harping with their harps.’ And they sing ‘a new song’ before the throne, a song which no man can learn save the hundred and forty and four thousand. It is the song of Moses and the Lamb—a song of deliverance. None but the hundred and forty-four thousand can learn that song; for it is the song of their experience—an experience such as no other company have ever had. ‘These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.’ These, having been translated from the earth, from among the living, are counted as ‘the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb.’ Revelation 15:2, 3; 14:1-5. ‘These are they which came out of great tribulation;’ they have passed through the time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation.”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 648, 649.

THINK IT THROUGH

How can I have the characteristics of the 144,000 and be sealed?

Is this a prerogative of just a few, or is it open to every Christian?

FURTHER STUDY

Early Writings, pp. 15, 16, 19, 37.

**Part 6
KEY TO
SUCCESS**

What is the only key to success in our hard conflict with the enemy?

“They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb” (Rev. 12:11).

Christ and His sacrifice, Christ and the power of His spilled blood, is the only hope for us weak, sinful human creatures. That blood does two things for us: (1) It allows us to have forgiveness and complete cleansing from all sin; (2) it gives us power to overcome sin and be sanctified. Only by unity with Jesus, a personal contact with Him, maintained day after day and moment after moment, will we be able to succeed.

What is the Christian to do with his sins? 1 John 1:7-9.

Sometimes there is a tendency for Christians to consider that repentance, confession, and forgiveness are isolated acts that happen at the beginning of the Christian life. It is not so. Rather, they are a continual experience. As the soul has a closer contact with Christ and His light illuminates the heart, the Christian becomes progressively aware of selfishness and defects of character. Under the work of the Holy Spirit he finds it always necessary to avail himself of the imputed righteousness of Christ.

But at the same time the Christian grows, and by the grace of God through the work of the Holy Spirit he gains spiritual victories.

Read the following promises of victory over sin and of sanctification. Jude 24; 2 Peter 1:14; Phil. 4:13.

“We have little idea of the strength that would be ours if we would connect with the source of all strength. We fall into sin again and again, and think it must always be so. We cling to our infirmities as if they were something to be proud of. Christ tells us that we must set our face as a flint if we would overcome. He has borne our sins in His own body on the tree; and through the power He has given us, we may resist the world, the flesh, and the devil. Then let us not talk of our weakness and inefficiency, but of Christ and His strength.”—*Messages to Young People*, p. 105.

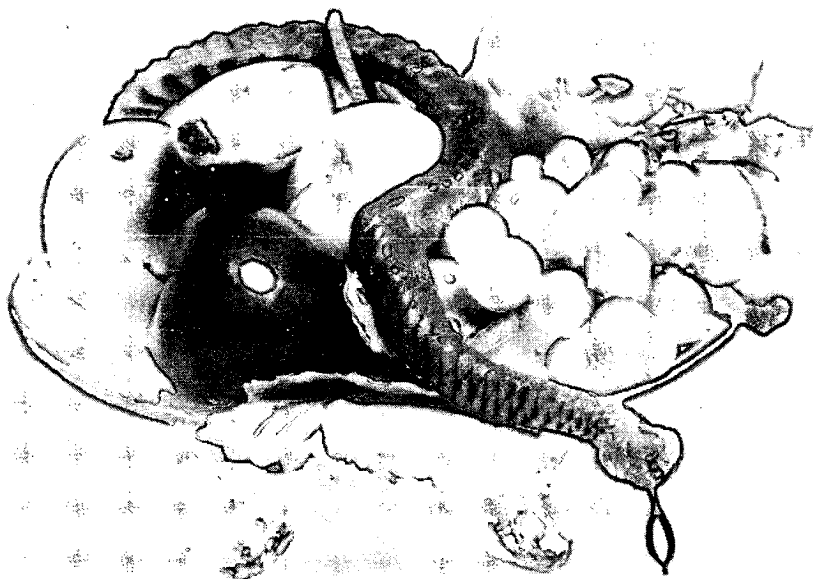
THINK IT THROUGH

“Christ’s humanity was united with divinity; He was fitted for the conflict by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. And He came to make us partakers of the divine nature. So long as we are united to Him by faith, sin has no more dominion over us. God reaches for the hand of faith in us to direct it to lay fast hold upon the divinity of Christ, that we may attain to perfection of character.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 123.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 311, 312.

7. Spiritualism and the Occult



“The serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:4, 5).

This week we begin to study one of the most popular and subtle deceptions that the enemy will use in the last days. Spiritualism will be one of the three big elements in the ungodly confederacy that will make the final, desperate attack against God, the truth, and the church. According to Revelation 16:13, 14 the three ungodly powers are the dragon (spiritualism and allied activities), the beast (the papacy), and the false prophet (the united Protestantism that will apostatize).

This power—spiritualism—will be so deceptive as to trap, if possible, the very elect. Only those who are well-grounded in the Bible and who have a living experience with God will be able to stand this attack of the devil.

Spiritualism and the occult are so varied, comprising so many activities, organizations, and methods, that many careless children of God will be misled, especially because these different aspects appear to have no relationship with each other. Spiritualism wears different labels in order to adapt itself to all kinds of people, from the superstitious and uneducated to the highly cultured, and from the atheist to the highly religious.

There is only one way of detecting error—by the Holy Scriptures and the truths it presents in order to unmask deception. There is only one method of preventing our being confused by spiritualism and of our falling into the hands of the great deceiver: a

close contact with Christ through a conscientious study of the Bible and secret prayer, thus ensuring the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

- 1. Origin of Spiritualism**
(Gen. 3:1-6)
- 2. Later Manifestations**
(Luke 8:26-39; Acts 8:9; 13:8; 16:16-18)
- 3. Who the Spirits Are**
(Eph. 6:11, 12)
- 4. Goal of Spiritualism**
(1 Peter 5:8)
- 5. Spirit Communication and Christianity** (1 John 4:1)
- 6. The Source of True Knowledge**
(Matt. 11:28-30)

**Part 1
ORIGIN OF
SPIRITUALISM**

Read carefully Genesis 3:1-6 and by imagination reproduce the story of the first deception.

The Garden of Eden was the scene of the first great satanic deception. The devil disguised himself as a beautiful serpent. He began the dialogue by asking a misleading question. He formulated the great lie of the ages—"Ye shall not surely die." He made a false promise—"Ye shall be as gods." He tempted Eve, showing her that the fruit was appetizing and good for food, and made her believe that she would gain wisdom. As in Eden, so also today it is deadly dangerous to put aside the clear commandment of God and to dialogue with the evil forces of darkness.

What are some of the names by which spiritualism was known during Old Testament times? Deut. 18:10, 11.

Note two cases of spirit communication recorded in the Bible in 1 Samuel 28 and 2 Kings 1:1-4.

In the story of Saul and the witch of Endor, the person whom the woman saw could not have been Samuel. Samuel was dead and "the dead know not anything" (Eccl. 9:5). Further, "a communication from Samuel, speaking as a prophet, would indirectly be a communication from God, and it is expressly stated that the Lord refused to communicate with Saul (1 Sam. 28:6)."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 587. This early spiritualistic séance had all the characteristics of the modern ones.

What is the character of Satan? John 8:44.

Tempting as the promises of spiritualism are, they all come from the great liar and lead into final destruction. To resort to spiritualism and the occult to find answers to the problems of life, is to put oneself in the hands of Satan. His sole purpose is to deceive in order to destroy body and soul.

What was the punishment for spiritualistic activities in Israel? Lev. 20:6, 27.

THINK IT THROUGH

"Side by side with the preaching of the gospel, agencies are at work which are but the medium of lying spirits. Many a man tampers with these merely from curiosity, but seeing evidence of the working of a more than human power, he is lured on and on, until he is controlled by a will stronger than his own. He cannot escape from its mysterious power."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 258.

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 531-534.

**Part 2
LATER
MANIFESTATIONS**

Note these manifestations of the work of evil spirits recorded in the New Testament: Luke 8:26-39; Acts 8:9; 13:8; 16:16-18.

"The fact that men have been possessed with demons, is clearly stated in the New Testament. The persons thus afflicted were not merely suffering with disease from natural causes. Christ had perfect understanding of that with which He was dealing, and He recognized the direct presence and agency of evil spirits."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 514.

Where and when did modern spiritualism begin?

During the month of March in 1848 the peaceful village of Hydesville, New York, was disturbed by strange happenings in the home of the Fox family. As a result of responding to noises and rappings of undetermined origin, the two daughters of the family became mediums. Soon the practice of spiritualism in its new form spread like an epidemic over the United States, then to England and to the rest of Europe and the Americas.

Spiritualism has gone, since 1848, through a remarkable evolution in its forms. It has accommodated its methods to the nature and culture of the people. Today a wide variety of forms under very different names coexist in our world.

There are the primitive forms that prevail in the pagan countries. There are also the magic and sorcery that appeal to the uneducated people, not only of primitive cultures, but also of some more sophisticated countries. There is, too, the spiritualism practiced among higher classes of society, within beautiful and luxurious halls. Then there is the religious kind of spiritualism, with meetings in which prayers are offered and hymns are sung. Some kinds of speaking in tongues and healing meetings are spiritualistic. On the other hand, spiritualism has appeared under a scientific label in the universities under the name "parapsychology." Also astrology and fortune-telling have the same origin. Some of the phenomena that appear in the deeper level of hypnotism may be devil-produced. New manifestations of spiritualism may appear from time to time.

What is the divine counsel regarding any communication with the spirits? Isa. 8:19.

THINK IT THROUGH

"As spiritualism more closely imitates the nominal Christianity of the day, it has greater power to deceive and ensnare. Satan himself is converted, after the modern order of things. . . . And as the spirits will profess faith in the Bible, . . . their work will be accepted as a manifestation of divine power."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 588.

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 511-517.

Part 3
WHO THE
SPIRITS ARE

Against what spiritual forces does Paul warn?

“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph. 6:11, 12).

The rebel angels who followed Lucifer in his war against God, and who are the spiritual evil forces causing all the strange manifestations of spiritualism, were expelled from heaven along with their captain, Satan. But they still keep many of their former characteristics and powers. This is why they can do many things that seem to go against the laws of nature and that no science can explain. Nevertheless, their power is limited to boundaries established by God, especially in dealing with His children.

They can appear as forms imitating deceased people. They can transmit information unknown to the mediums and the receivers. They manifest themselves as apparitions or ghosts. They cause rappings, instruments to play by themselves, messages to be written without hand, people to be taken mysteriously from one place to a distant place in a short time. Also they cause persons or heavy objects to be elevated in the air without human aid (telekinesis), and mediums to speak with another voice. Many other things which we do not have room to describe here are part of modern spiritualism.

What does the Word of God say about the ability of deceased people to participate in the affairs of this world? Eccl. 9:5, 6.

Since the evil spirits who are the cause of all the spiritualistic phenomena pretend to be the spirits of the dead, it is evident that they are liars. Allan Kardec, an apostle of spiritualism, admits that “communications that are received from the spirits may be . . . true or false, . . . according to the nature of the spirit that presents itself.” “Lying spirits may be erratic.” “There are some [spirits] that are satisfied with being trifling and mischievous, while others are liars and deceivers.”—*Qué es el espiritismo? (What Is Spiritism?)*, p. 88. *El Evangelio según el espiritismo (The Gospel According to Spiritism)*, p. 193; *Qué es el espiritismo*, p. 84. (Read John 8:44; Rev. 12:7-9.)

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, p. 556.

**Part 4
GOAL OF
SPIRITUALISM**

What is the devil's main objective?

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

Satan is always trying to conquer the human mind and the will so as to destroy the person. In order to achieve this goal he uses deceit. Even his wonders are "lying wonders."

What great wonders does John prophesy will be performed to deceive the world in the last days? Rev. 13:13, 14.

It is evidently through the power of the evil spirits, with whom it will be allied (Rev. 16:13, 14), that the second beast of Revelation 13 "doeth great wonders."

Consider how every miracle of the evil spirits is done in order to deceive:

They impersonate deceased human beings, making people believe that they are actually communicating with spirits of the dead.

They imitate the voices and appearance of deceased persons. They reveal many secrets.

They convey information by extrasensory means.

In the future the devil will add to these deceptions attempts to impersonate Christ Himself (Matt. 24:23-27), and he will even endeavor to imitate the second coming of Christ.

All this is done to convince the human mind that these evil spirits are the true spirits of the dead and that spiritualism is an authentic way of communicating with deceased persons.

As in the Garden of Eden, the devil is fighting to conquer the human mind and the will in order to lead men and women to perdition.

THINK IT THROUGH

What is the difference in the way in which God and Satan endeavor to gain the human heart? What is the ultimate consequence of heeding the voice of Christ through the Holy Spirit as He knocks at the door of the heart instead of following the deceiver? (See Rev. 3:20; Mark 5:1-5; Deut. 30:19.)

"God never forces the will or the conscience; but Satan's constant resort—to gain control of those whom he cannot otherwise seduce—is compulsion by cruelty."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 591.

FURTHER STUDY

Prophets and Kings, pp. 210-212.

Part 5
SPIRIT COMMUNI-
CATION AND
CHRISTIANITY**What is John's caution about spirits?**

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

It is a contradiction to claim to have faith in Jesus Christ and at the same time trust in spiritualism. It is condemned in the Bible, and its fundamental teachings are out of harmony with the teachings of the Scriptures. For example:

1. Its basic belief, that the dead are still alive and intelligent, is contrary to the clear Bible teaching that the dead are not alive and they know nothing.

2. "God has expressly forbidden all pretended communication with departed spirits. In the days of the Hebrews there was a class of people who claimed, as do the spiritualists of today, to hold communication with the dead. But the 'familiar spirits,' as these visitants from other worlds were called, are declared by the Bible to be 'the spirits of devils.' (Compare Numbers 25:1-3; Psalm 106:28; 1 Corinthians 10:20; Revelation 16:14.)"—*The Great Controversy*, p. 556.

Even prominent Christian leaders are deceived by these spirits. No less than 15 bishops of the Anglican Church serve on the advisory board of that church's Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies, a spiritualistic organization with headquarters in London.

It is interesting to remember the case of the late Episcopal Bishop James A. Pike. In an effort to establish communication with his son, dead from suicide, Pike relied on the services of a pastor who was also a medium. The story made headlines in the newspapers of North America in 1966. The truth is, though, that not only Bishop Pike but many other clergymen and ministers of Christian churches have had an intimate association with spiritualistic activities. Some of these activities are disguised by names such as "psychical research," "parapsychology," "spiritual frontiers," "extrasensory perception," and others. Some ministers are officers and leaders of spiritualistic organizations, and in some cases they are also mediums, as in the case of the pastor who aided Bishop Pike.

What three criteria in the following texts help us to decide about the source of spiritualism? Isa. 8:20; 1 John 4:3; Matt. 7:16, 17.

THINK IT THROUGH

In this day when psychic phenomena are so popular, what can I do to persuade as many as possible to reject all forms of spiritualism?

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 289, 290.

Part 6
THE SOURCE OF
TRUE KNOWLEDGE

What is the tender and generous offer of Christ to the weary and heavy-laden?

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30).

One of the main objectives of man in looking into the theories and activities of spiritualism, the occult, and kindred beliefs, is to solve his problem of moral and physical pain and to alleviate his hopelessness. But all the psychic disciplines and spiritualistic activities are powerless to confront successfully the deep problems of the soul. There is only one way to salvation.

"Christ is the wellspring of life. That which many need is to have a clearer knowledge of Him; they need to be patiently and kindly, yet earnestly, taught how the whole being may be thrown open to the healing agencies of heaven. When the sunlight of God's love illuminates the darkened chambers of the soul, restless weariness and dissatisfaction will cease, and satisfying joys will give vigor to the mind and health and energy to the body."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 247.

What spiritualism cannot give, Christ bestows abundantly:

1. Physical and mental rest ease the burdens. (Matt. 11:28-30.)

2. Confession of sin directly to God not only relieves guilt but grants divine pardon of all past sin. (Read Ps. 32:1-5.)

3. Bible study, secret prayer, surrender to Christ, and the indwelling of the Spirit produce a complete transformation of life and open a new and beautiful road to a life of victory, service, and happiness. (Read 2 Cor. 5:17.)

"Those who oppose the teachings of spiritualism are assailing, not men alone, but Satan and his angels. They have entered upon a contest against principalities and powers and wicked spirits in high places. Satan will not yield one inch of ground except as he is driven back by the power of heavenly messengers. The people of God should be able to meet him, as did our Saviour, with the words: 'It is written.' Satan can quote Scripture now as in the days of Christ, and he will pervert its teachings to sustain his delusions. Those who would stand in this time of peril must understand for themselves the testimony of the Scriptures."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 559.

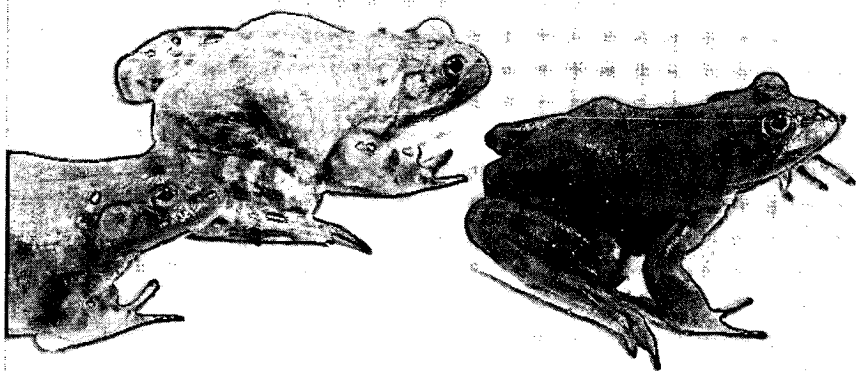
THINK IT THROUGH

Have I solved all my personal problems in Christ? Is my experience with Him something real? Do I renew it daily? Can I really present to my friends and neighbors the triumphant testimony of a happy life in Jesus?

FURTHER STUDY

The Ministry of Healing, pp. 469, 470.

8. Spiritualism and Bible Prophecy



“For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before” (Matt. 24:24, 25).

Jesus loved His people, and He wanted to protect them through the ages from the deceptions of Satan.

He foresaw the spiritual confusion of these last days that would spread darkness among the inhabitants of this planet. He foresaw the proliferation of so-called Christian theologies and philosophies that would constitute Babylon. Also He saw Satan developing his many schemes in order to becloud human minds and consciences.

He saw the spirits of devils operating closely with the churches and capturing the interest of all kinds of peoples—religious, pagan, superstitious, educated. Therefore, He inspired His writers to record a number of important prophecies. He did this to make it possible for human beings to unmask any kind of erroneous philosophy or institution.

This is why, after Christ predicted the rise of false prophets and deceitful spiritual powers, He added: “Behold, I have told you before.” Nothing can strengthen our faith or open our eyes to the truth more fully than the fulfillment of prophecy regarding the specious delusions of the last days.

And here apply the words of Jesus: “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God” (John 7:17). In other words, nobody needs to be deceived; anyone who has a sincere interest in discovering the will of God will find the true doctrine. The Holy Spirit will guide his mind and will lead him

to the truth. He will see the error unmasked. He will hear very clearly the voice of God calling him: “Come out of her [of Babylon], my people” (Rev. 18:4).

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

- 1. Deceitful Miracles**
(Rev. 16:13, 14)
- 2. Satanic Delusions**
(2 Thess. 2:8-10)
- 3. The Master Attempt of Satan**
(2 Cor. 11:14, 15)
- 4. A Defense Against Deception**
(John 7:17)
- 5. Only Safeguard Against Spiritualism—I** (John 17:3)
- 6. Only Safeguard Against Spiritualism—II** (John 10:4)

Part 1
DECEITFUL
MIRACLES

What three great powers does the revelator say will deceive the world in the last days?

"I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty" (Rev. 16:13, 14).

We have noted that these three spirits represent three powers: (1) the beast—Rome; (2) the dragon—spiritualism; (3) the false prophet—apostate Protestantism.

We see here that spiritualism (the dragon) in all its numerous modern forms will constitute one of the three great powers that will form an alliance in order to persecute and delude. At the same time we see that every one of the three spirits—even the one that comes out of the mouth of the Roman power and the one that comes out of the mouth of the false prophet—are also spirits of devils. This shows that spiritualism will be not only one of the three but the main one, the one that will dominate and unite them.

What are the two great beliefs that help tie the three powers together?

"Through the two great errors, the immortality of the soul and Sunday sacredness, Satan will bring the people under his deceptions."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 588.

"A belief in spiritual manifestations opens the door to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, and thus the influence of evil angels will be felt in the churches."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 604.

THINK IT THROUGH

What are some of the subtle ways besides spiritualism in which Satan attacks us?

"Satan studies every indication of the frailty of human nature, he marks the sins which each individual is inclined to commit, and then he takes care that opportunities shall not be wanting to gratify the tendency to evil."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 555.

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, p. 554.

**Part 2
SATANIC
DELUSIONS****How does Paul predict the occurrence of satanic delusions and lying wonders?****"Then shall that Wicked be revealed, . . . whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish" (2 Thess. 2:8-10).**

"No mere impostures are here foretold. Men are deceived by the miracles which Satan's agents have power to do, not which they pretend to do."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 553.

Ellen White, writing of the growth of spiritualism, says: "Through the agency of spiritualism, miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and many undeniable wonders will be performed."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 588.

To what extent will Satan have power to work miracles in order to delude people? Rev. 13:13, 14.

This power that works great wonders is the lamblike beast, namely the United States. But evidently it works miracles by the power of Satan through spiritualism, with whom it is allied. (See Rev. 16:13, 14.)

"Through spiritualism, Satan appears as a benefactor of the race, healing the diseases of the people, and professing to present a new and more exalted system of religious faith; but at the same time he works as a destroyer. His temptations are leading multitudes to ruin. Intemperance dethrones reason; sensual indulgence, strife, and bloodshed follow. Satan delights in war. . . .

" . . . In accidents and calamities by sea and by land, in great conflagrations, in fierce tornadoes and terrific hailstorms, in tempests, floods, cyclones, tidal waves, and earthquakes, in every place and in a thousand forms, Satan is exercising his power. He sweeps away the ripening harvest, and famine and distress follow. He imparts to the air a deadly taint, and thousands perish by the pestilence. These visitations are to become more and more frequent and disastrous."—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 589, 590.

THINK IT THROUGH**What temptations may be devised by spiritualism that would be attractive to Seventh-day Adventists?**

"Love is dwelt upon as the chief attribute of God, but it is degraded to a weak sentimentalism, making little distinction between good and evil. God's justice, His denunciations of sin, the requirements of His holy law, are all kept out of sight. The people are taught to regard the Decalogue as a dead letter."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 558.

FURTHER STUDY*The Great Controversy*, pp. 551-553.

**Part 3
THE MASTER
ATTEMPT
OF SATAN****What did Paul say is a tactic of Satan and his agents?**

"Nor do their tactics surprise me when I consider how Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is only to be expected that his agents shall have the appearance of ministers of righteousness—but they will get what they deserve in the end" (2 Cor. 11:14, 15, Phillips).

Before the coming of Jesus there will be outstanding instances of this transformation of Satan into an angel of light and his ministers into ministers of righteousness. Ellen White describes it in *The Great Controversy*, page 624.

"As the crowning act in the great drama of deception, Satan himself will personate Christ. The church has long professed to look to the Saviour's advent as the consummation of her hopes. Now the great deceiver will make it appear that Christ has come. In different parts of the earth, Satan will manifest himself among men as a majestic being of dazzling brightness, resembling the description of the Son of God given by John in the Revelation. Revelation 1:13-15. The glory that surrounds him is unsurpassed by anything that mortal eyes have yet beheld. The shout of triumph rings out upon the air: 'Christ has come! Christ has come!' The people prostrate themselves in adoration before him, while he lifts up his hands and pronounces a blessing upon them, as Christ blessed His disciples when He was upon the earth. His voice is soft and subdued, yet full of melody. In gentle, compassionate tones he presents some of the same gracious, heavenly truths which the Saviour uttered; he heals the diseases of the people, and then, in his assumed character of Christ, he claims to have changed the Sabbath to Sunday, and commands all to hallow the day which he has blessed. He declares that those who persist in keeping holy the seventh day are blaspheming his name by refusing to listen to his angels sent to them with light and truth. This is the strong, almost overmastering delusion."

In Jesus' prediction of false christs, how convincing did He say they would be? Matt. 24:24.

THINK IT THROUGH

"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.

FURTHER STUDY

Early Writings, pp. 262-266.

Part 4
A DEFENSE
AGAINST
DECEPTION

Where is truth found?

“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17).

We should be thankful to God that He has not left us in uncertainty regarding the way of salvation. We have an inspired Book that is the truth itself. It is the test for other claims of truth. So in order to be defended against error and deception, we should cling to it as to an immovable rock in a turbulent sea.

With an unbiased study of the Bible, comparing passage with passage and investigating all the scriptures that deal with a specific subject, we have the whole picture before us and the truth becomes clear. Any doctrine, any theory, any philosophy that does not fit into that picture is a deception. So long as we trust in God and remain on the platform of His Word, nothing will be able to move us from that firm foundation.

But we need to study the Word for ourselves and not simply take it for granted or rely on a secondhand knowledge. We must eat of the bread of life ourselves in order to be fed. No one can eat for us.

“The people of God will not be misled. The teachings of this false christ [Satan] are not in accordance with the Scriptures. His blessing is pronounced upon the worshipers of the beast and his image, the very class upon whom the Bible declares that God’s unmingled wrath shall be poured out. . . .

“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.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 625.

THINK IT THROUGH

How can I improve my daily schedule in order to leave more time for Bible study? What Bible study aids should I acquire?

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 593-602.

**Part 5
ONLY SAFEGUARD
AGAINST
SPIRITUALISM—I****What knowledge is essential to salvation?****"This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).**

The only way to obtain life eternal consists in knowing God and in knowing Christ, in having a personal experience with God the loving Father and Christ the Saviour and best Friend. Those who have an intimate relationship with the Lord have both eternal life and a shield against deception.

How does a human being enter into that relation? How does he go about knowing God the Father and the Son, his Redeemer, in a real way? *First of all* he studies the Word. He studies it in a search for the truth because he feels a deep spiritual need. He not only reads and understands, but he also takes time to meditate, to apply the Word to his personal life, to contemplate the wonderful character of Jesus. And by "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18), by dwelling on the meekness of Jesus, on His love, His patience, His purity, His self-denial, His self-control, he is "changed into the same image."

Second, he obtains a closer walk with Jesus by a life of prayer. He loves to talk with God, not only in family worship and in church and groups, but alone. He opens his heart completely every day and exposes his life to the wonderful light of heaven, and that light expels all darkness and impresses in his heart the perfect character of Jesus. There are no unconfessed sins in his life. The way of communication with God is always open; and he is not only cleansed from all unrighteousness and accepted in the Beloved, but he becomes a true partaker of the divine nature. Gratitude to God is always flowing from his lips, and the joy and love imparted by the Holy Spirit make him a kind and a happy Christian in spite of trials. By experience he learns to pray better, and the result is power and grace from on high.

Under part 6 we will consider two more elements in the barrier against sin and deception.

THINK IT THROUGH

"Many attend religious services, and are refreshed and comforted by the word of God; but through neglect of meditation, watchfulness, and prayer, they lose the blessing. . . . It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 83.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 1, pp. 343, 344.

**Part 6
ONLY SAFEGUARD
AGAINST
SPIRITUALISM—II****Why is it that the sheep follow their own shepherd?****"When he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice" (John 10:4).**

What an apt illustration this is of the right relationship of the true children of God with their beloved Shepherd, Jesus! The sheep follow the Shepherd because they know Him, and they are well acquainted with His voice.

The best safeguard against any delusion or temptation is an intimate knowledge of and a close relationship with the only Shepherd. Under part 5 we learned that this personal knowledge that brings life eternal and safety is achieved (1) through a fervent, daily study of the Word of God, and (2) by a life of daily, sincere prayer.

But there are two more elements: (1) a daily surrender to God to obey Him; and (2) a witness about God to others for a healthy Christian experience.

Jesus is always lovingly knocking at the door of our heart, willing to enter in order to bless us. But if we are too busy, or if there is too much trash that blocks the door, He cannot enter. So, along with meditation and prayer, there should be a daily and complete surrender of our will to His divine leadership.

"When the soul surrenders itself to Christ, a new power takes possession of the new heart. A change is wrought which man can never accomplish for himself. . . . A soul thus kept in possession by the heavenly agencies is impregnable to the assaults of Satan. But unless we do yield ourselves to the control of Christ, we shall be dominated by the wicked one."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 324.

But our Christian experience cannot be complete without a witnessing activity, without sharing with others what Christ has done for us.

"The spirit of unselfish labor for others gives depth, stability, and Christlike loveliness to the character."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 80.

**THINK IT THROUGH
FURTHER STUDY****What do I lack that would deepen my Christian experience?***Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 573-580.

9. Spiritual Manifestations, True and False



“When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:1-4).

The greatest thing that ever happened to the Christian church happened at Pentecost. Jesus had told His disciples that they must wait in Jerusalem until they should be endued with power (Acts 1:4), a power to witness which would accompany the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. When it came, the disciples were able to preach the gospel in such a way that everyone received the message in his own language (Acts 2:6). Such a spiritual manifestation was convincing evidence that what was preached was true.

The church must always have the power of the Holy Spirit in order to carry on its witness. In the world, where there are so many languages and dialects, it is necessary to speak in the language or dialect of every nation, tribe, and people. That is why Bible societies have so many Scripture translations available, and missionaries must learn the languages of the people to whom they go. This facility must be under the direction of the Holy Spirit if it is to accomplish what God has in mind, the widespread propagation of truth.

Unfortunately, the devil is not willing that this should happen. Therefore he seeks to confuse and delay. He institutes a counterfeit

manifestation of the use of tongues. We note in many Christian churches today an emphasis on the “speaking in tongues.” But tongues in many cases are mostly gibberish. In our lesson today we shall try to differentiate between the true and the false. The true must always be a characteristic of the church. The false must always be avoided and condemned.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

- 1. Speaking in Tongues**
(1 Cor. 12:28)
- 2. A False Priority**
(1 Cor. 14:1)
- 3. Testing the Spirits**
(1 John 4:1)
- 4. Noting the Fruits**
(Matt. 7:20)
- 5. Deceptive Appearances**
(Matt. 7:15)
- 6. The Spirit-filled Life**
(Matt. 3:11)

Part 1
SPEAKING
IN TONGUES

In what context does the apostle Paul place the gift of tongues?

“God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues” (1 Cor. 12:28).

The ability to speak more than one language is obviously one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Not all have facility with language. Some have great difficulty in expressing themselves even in one language! But the ability to transmit accurately and explain clearly is a gift of inestimable value, especially in expounding the Word of God.

What is the main purpose of having the gift of tongues? Acts 1:8.

The tongue is a very important member of the human body. James likens it to a fire (James 3:6). When it is used in evangelism, thousands can be converted in a day. But when it is used to gossip or propagate evil, it can do untold harm.

What two experiences are recorded in Acts that tell us of the manifestation of the gift of tongues in the early church? Acts 10:45, 46; 19:5, 6.

The early Christian church had obvious examples of the gift of tongues in the experiences of Peter and of Paul. In the case of certain Gentiles whom Peter visited they “glorified God.” In the case of Paul his converts “prophesied.” In each case the tongue was used in an acceptable manner.

Ellen White, in referring to the speech of the disciples after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, says that from that time forth “the language of the disciples was pure, simple, and accurate, whether they spoke in their native tongue or in a foreign language.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 40. Here is an ideal of the use of language that is placed before every disciple, an ideal that can be reached only with a total surrender to the power of the Holy Spirit.

THINK IT THROUGH

If the gift of tongues is so important for the propagation of the gospel, why is it that this gift is not more manifest in the church today?

The answer to the above question will depend somewhat on our understanding of what is involved in the phenomenon of speaking in tongues. Is the gift of tongues as necessary today as it was on the day of Pentecost?

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 38-41.

Part 2
A FALSE
PRIORITY

“Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy” (1 Cor. 14:1).

The gifts of the Spirit are given to the church for its edification. Not all the gifts are manifested at one time, nor is one gift made to be the indispensable criterion of discipleship. God knows *how* to distribute His gifts and *when* they are needed. It is not for us to demand a gift or to be proud if we have one. Yet it is in this very area that we find a counterfeit manifestation of the gift of tongues. Some churches claim that this is a necessary attribute of discipleship. Others take pride in it.

What problems did Paul face in connection with a manifestation of the phenomenon of speaking in tongues? 1 Cor. 14:2-9.

The one who speaks with an unknown tongue is not helping anyone if his language is not understood. Paul tells us that the object of fellowship in the church is communication and mutual help. If a person wants to speak to God in an unknown tongue, that is his privilege, but he should do so privately and not take up the time and attention of other members who are not able to profit from his talk. In all church activity we must be practical; we must contribute some good.

Paul did not deny the possibility that someone in Corinth spoke with tongues through the influence of the Holy Spirit. But he did suggest that there are other gifts that can do much more good. The Christian must not be selfish or boastful when it comes to gifts he or she may have. Every gift must contribute to the welfare of the church as a whole, and only if it does so can it be manifested in public.

What was Paul's attitude to the gift of tongues? 1 Cor. 14: 18, 19.

Many churches today are excited about glossolalia. We must make certain that we are not deceived by an outward manifestation that could very well be the working of Satan to deceive some gullible Christians into thinking that they are being motivated by the Holy Spirit when in fact they are being used by Satan for his nefarious purposes.

THINK IT THROUGH

On what basis can I differentiate the true and the false manifestations of the gift of tongues in the church?

The counterfeit is often so nearly like the true that it can deceive many. We must be so well schooled in the true that we can detect error immediately. This is the challenge that faces every Christian today.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 1, pp. 412, 414, 419.

Part 3
TESTING
THE SPIRITS

What is the wise counsel given by the apostle John?

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

In John’s day there were false spirits and false prophets as there have been such manifestations ever since Satan has been abroad to deceive men. We must not be surprised if we meet such phenomena today; in fact, it is likely that Satan will increase his efforts to deceive man as he sees the end of the world approaching. (See 1 Peter 5:8.) It is a Christian duty to differentiate between the true and the false.

How can we recognize the true Spirit? John 16:13, 14.

The true Spirit guides into *all* truth. If we find a spirit teaching any doctrine that is different from the teaching of the Scriptures, then we must know that this cannot be a true spirit. Jesus said that He is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). He also said that God’s Word is truth (John 17:17). There can be no contradiction between the life and teachings of Jesus and the lives and conduct of those who claim to represent Him through spiritual manifestations.

Some think that when they have spoken in tongues they have reached the highest goal of Christian achievement. In their pride they have forgotten that there must be a correct interpretation of Scripture, a balance in the Christian life, and that its fruit is obedience to the commandments of God.

What does Paul say about the distribution of gifts? 1 Cor. 12:8-11.

To suggest, as some do, that everyone must speak in tongues as a manifestation of conversion is not a teaching of Scripture.

THINK IT THROUGH

Why is it dangerous to depend on feelings and unusual manifestations to prove whether we are right or wrong?

God has given us a mind to reason with, a body of truth to grasp and understand. To depend wholly on emotion is to neglect an important part of our being, a part that makes us truly the children of God, created in His image. Emotion has its part to play in human life, and we must not deprive ourselves of the joys that come from achievement and understanding, but neither must we neglect the use of the intellect which ties up everything into an integrated whole. Blessed is the man who has a balanced view of life and the part he has to play in it.

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 348; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 396, 397.

Part 4
NOTING
THE FRUITS

What sound principle did Jesus propound to indicate the difference between the true and the false?

"By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7:20).

Nature gives us an object lesson that cannot be controverted: a good tree brings forth good fruit, and a bad tree cannot help but bring forth bad fruit. The lesson is just as simple in the spiritual world as in the natural.

It is interesting to note that Satan cannot deny his nature. He may try to conceal his intentions; his followers may show some admirable attributes. But somehow, somewhere, the truth will out, and it will be manifest that the works are basically evil and the results of his activity are always unfortunate. God's Spirit leads to life, joy, and happiness. The spirits in league with Satan lead to frustration, confusion, and death.

What warning did Paul give regarding events in the last days? 1 Tim. 4:1, 2.

These words are straightforward. *The New English Bible* translates: "The Spirit says expressly that in after times some will desert from the faith and give their minds to subversive doctrines inspired by devils, through the specious falsehoods of men whose own conscience is branded with the devil's sign."

What good advice does Paul give Timothy and all of us who desire to do what is right? 1 Tim. 6:11.

There is a battle to be fought, a race to be run, a victory to be gained. Especially as we live in the last days, we must flee from all that is destructive and false. There is "science falsely so called," and there are "profane and vain babblings" which we must avoid (1 Tim. 6:20).

What simple distinction does John make between the true and the false? 1 John 3:7-10.

Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil (verse 8) because these works lead to death. How then can Christians who claim to follow in the footsteps of Jesus ever follow those whose activities are subversive of the truth?

THINK IT THROUGH

What are some of the spiritual manifestations that you have witnessed that you are sure stem from the evil one, and what is the evidence of your conclusion?

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 2, pp. 24-29.

Part 5
DECEPTIVE
APPEARANCES

What imagery did Jesus use to indicate the existence of deceptive appearances?

“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Matt. 7:15).

All that glitters is not gold. We must learn not to let the eyes deceive us. When it comes to the difference between truth and error, we must not be satisfied with a superficial look. We must examine a movement or manifestation thoroughly so as to see its inner motives, its guiding principles. It is not sufficient that it seems to have worthy objectives. It must be examined as to its source and principles of operation.

What counsel is given the Laodicean church regarding the eyes? Rev. 3:18.

The loss of eyesight is a terrible calamity, but the loss of spiritual eyesight, the ability to see the reality beyond the outward appearances, is an even greater calamity.

Note the following description of a situation that will exist in the last days:

“Before the final visitation of God’s judgments upon the earth there will be among the people of the Lord such a revival of primitive godliness as has not been witnessed since apostolic times. The Spirit and power of God will be poured out upon His children. . . . The enemy of souls desires to hinder this work; and before the time for such a movement shall come, he will endeavor to prevent it by introducing a counterfeit. In those churches which he can bring under his deceptive power he will make it appear that God’s special blessing is poured out; there will be manifest what is thought to be great religious interest. Multitudes will exult that God is working marvelously for them, when the work is that of another spirit. . . .

“ . . . There is an emotional excitement, a mingling of the true with the false, that is well adapted to mislead.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 464.

THINK IT THROUGH

Why is it that a movement that appears spiritual is more likely to deceive a Christian than a movement that is blatantly evil?

Men react openly and quickly against anything that is patently evil. But when a movement has some good qualities, it is not easy to reject it. In fact, it is usual to condone the evil for the sake of the good. Thus a compromise is made with evil, and this leads inevitably to further compromise and eventually outright espousal of sin.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 2, pp. 594-597.

Part 6
THE SPIRIT-
FILLED LIFE

How did John differentiate between his baptism and the baptism of the One who should come after him?

“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I . . . : He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire” (Matt. 3:11).

Every Christian has the privilege of being baptized with the Holy Spirit. What does this mean? The following aspects of the work of the Holy Spirit are important:

1. The Holy Spirit convicts of sin (John 16:8).
2. The Holy Spirit is an ever-present power in the life of the Christian (John 14:16). The Holy Spirit guides into all truth, and as the Christian follows in the way that is pointed out to him, he is transformed and brings forth the fruits of the Spirit.
3. The Holy Spirit enables the Christian to give an effective witness (Acts 1:8). His words and his life give the same message, that Jesus is the Saviour from sin, the only hope of eternal life.
4. The Holy Spirit will be poured out in the last days in special measure so that young and old will experience the phenomena of prophecy, visions, and dreams (Acts 2:17). This last overwhelming event is one that Satan would like to prevent, and therefore he uses his counterfeit movements to try to divert the Christian from the real to the false. It is this danger that every Christian must avoid if he is to be saved in the kingdom.

What relationship does Jesus say He wants to enjoy with every Christian? Rev. 3:20.

The symbol of Jesus standing at the door and knocking is a very striking one. It shows how anxious Jesus is to commune with the Christian. It also shows that the responsibility of opening the door is wholly on the part of the individual. Finally, the symbol of eating together at the same table brings out the close relationship that can exist between the Lord and ourselves, so that we can enjoy a fellowship in which no secrets are withheld and where there can be mutual understanding and love.

THINK IT THROUGH

In view of the clear promises of God to His church, why is it that the church does not seem to have taken full advantage of its privileges? What changes do you think ought to be made in your personal life so that the latter rain may be poured out?

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 53-56.

10. The Battle of Armageddon



“I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True. . . . And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses. . . . And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron” (Rev. 19:11-15).

A study of last-day events is incomplete without examining the subject of Armageddon. However, to study Armageddon presents problems because Seventh-day Adventists have for over a hundred years held to one or another of two main interpretations of this prophecy.

“According to the first interpretation ‘the great river Euphrates’ represents the Ottoman Empire; the drying up of its waters, the gradual dissolution of that empire; the ‘kings of the east,’ the nations of the Orient; and Armageddon, the literal valley of Megiddo in northern Palestine. Thus, the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire is seen as preparing the way for Oriental nations to join battle with those of the West in the valley of Megiddo.

“According to the second interpretation the Euphrates represents the people over whom mystical Babylon holds sway; the drying up of its waters, the withdrawal of their support from Babylon; the ‘kings of the east,’ Christ and those accompanying Him; and Armageddon, the last battle of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, fought out on the battlefield of this earth. Thus, the withdrawal of human support from mystical Babylon is seen as the removal of the last barrier to her ultimate defeat and punishment.

“According to the first view the battle of Armageddon begins as

essentially a political conflict and comes to a climax with the appearance of Christ and the armies of heaven. According to the second view the battle of Armageddon begins when the united religious and political powers of earth open their final attack on God’s remnant people.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 842.

The first view has been presented by Uriah Smith in *The Prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation* (1944), pp. 691-701. (First published in one volume in 1897.)

The second view has been presented by James White in the *Review and Herald*, January 21, 1862, p. 61.

Which of these views should be presented in the Sabbath School lessons? The author of the lessons favors the second view. Thus we will present his view in this week’s lesson without any claim that it is to be preferred above the first view.

The prophecy of Armageddon is still unfulfilled, and it behooves us not to be dogmatic about the manner of its fulfillment.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **The Time and Setting of Armageddon (Rev. 16:12)**
2. **What Armageddon Is—I (Rev. 16:13, 14)**
3. **What Armageddon Is—II (Rev. 19:11-16)**
4. **Despair of the Wicked (Isa. 26:21; Zech. 14:12)**
5. **The Glorious Outcome (Rev. 16:17-19)**
6. **Now Is the Time! (Rev. 16:15)**

Part 1
THE TIME AND
SETTING OF
ARMAGEDDON

At what particular time does Armageddon occur?

“The sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared” (Rev. 16:12).

The preparation for Armageddon comes under the sixth plague and the battle itself under the seventh. (See also Rev. 19:11-21.) It comes after the close of probation and is the final major event before the coming of Jesus.

What is a possible interpretation of the drying up of the Euphrates?

For those looking for a possible interpretation of this part of the prophecy, we mention the following, which is just one among several. (Let us remember, though, that the main features of the conflict of Armageddon stay always the same and are not affected by any one of the different interpretations advanced for this specific verse.)

Euphrates is the literal river of the literal Babylon. But Babylon in Revelation is symbolic of a religious power. It is logical then to regard the Euphrates River as also symbolic. Waters are peoples (Rev. 17:15). So the drying up of the Euphrates may represent the withdrawal of support for symbolic Babylon by the people who formerly upheld it.

The kings of the East may point to Christ and the armies of heaven that come to fight against the wicked nations in order to liberate the children of God.

What is one of the most important meanings of Armageddon?

At the climax of the struggle between the people of God and the persecuting powers, when the saints will be under the soon-to-be-executed death decree, the events of Armageddon will be a sign of encouragement to the faithful that the great liberation is coming in a short time.

THINK IT THROUGH

God never leaves us without hope. “Man’s extremity is God’s opportunity” to show His power.

This is the promise: “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13).

This promise applies to any individual or group, either now or during the time of trouble.

FURTHER STUDY

Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 982, 983.

Part 2
WHAT
ARMAGEDDON
IS—I

What are the main features of the Battle of Armageddon?

“I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty” (Rev. 16:13, 14).

We have already studied these three great powers and their identification in lesson 4. The dragon is spiritualism and paganism; the beast, Romanism; and the false prophet, apostate Protestantism. These are the three forces that will ally themselves under the leadership of Satan to fight against God, the saints, and the truth.

The word “Armageddon” is used just once in the Scriptures, in Revelation 16:16. Some have claimed that Armageddon is Megiddo, but others see no relationship between the two names except that they sound alike. This word (Armageddon) could be taken as a symbolic expression used by the Scriptures to refer to a worldwide battle in the great day of God.

A comparison of Revelation 16:13, 14 with other Scripture passages and with pertinent paragraphs from the spirit of prophecy leads to the following conclusions about Armageddon:

1. It is a battle between truth and error.
2. It is a conflict between Christ and Satan.
3. The fallen angels will be aligned with their leader, Satan.
4. The struggle will be directed against the children of God and will bring about a great persecution.
5. The three apostate powers will participate actively in it.
6. These three powers, allied under the prince of darkness, will level their attack at God and Christ in the person of His faithful children. They will require all to receive the mark of the beast (Rev. 13:16) and will rely on the aid of kings (governments) to enforce their decrees (Rev. 16:14).
7. The forces of evil will be destroyed in the lake of fire and the children of God will be liberated.

Armageddon is one of the final episodes in the conflict between good and evil, between truth and error, between Christ and Satan with their respective followings of angels and men.

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I developing now the spiritual strength I need in order to keep true to Christ in persecution and threat of death?

FURTHER STUDY

Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 982, 983.

Part 3
WHAT
ARMAGEDDON
IS—II

What figure does John use in Revelation 19 to describe the same conflict and the powers engaged in it?

"I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. . . . And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean" (Rev. 19:11-14).

Read this complete Bible paragraph (Rev. 19:11-16). Note the description of Christ and the armies of heaven making war against the kings of the earth, their armies, and the beast and the false prophet. (See verses 18, 19.)

The contending forces in the conflict will be formed, therefore, of the following: (1) Those arrayed against God; namely, Satan, the demons, the three politicoreligious persecuting powers, the kings of the earth, and the nations (wicked men). (2) Those allied with God; namely, Christ and His angels and the righteous of earth who uphold truth and profess loyalty to the Creator and His law.

"The last great conflict between truth and error is but the final struggle of the long-standing controversy concerning the law of God."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 582.

"We need to study the pouring out of the seventh vial. The powers of evil will not yield up the conflict without a struggle. But Providence has a part to act in the battle of Armageddon. When the earth is lighted with the glory of the angel of Revelation eighteen, the religious elements, good and evil, will awake from slumber, and the armies of the living God will take the field."—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 983.

"A terrible conflict is before us. We are nearing the battle of the great day of God Almighty. That which has been held in control is to be let loose. . . . The earth is to be the battlefield—the scene of the final contest and the final victory. Here, where for so long Satan has led men against God, rebellion is to be forever suppressed."—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, May 13, 1902.

THINK IT THROUGH

Where shall Armageddon find me and my family? There shall be no neutral place in that day. Am I wholeheartedly enrolled under the banner of Emmanuel, or by my lukewarm attitude have I divided interests? (See Matt. 12:30.)

Part 4
DESPAIR OF
THE WICKED

What relation do you see between Armageddon and the following Old Testament passages?

"The Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain" (Isa. 26:21).

"This shall be the plague wherewith the Lord will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem" (Zech. 14:12).

(Read the remainder of verse 12 and verse 13.)

What are some of the feelings of the impenitent when they see the result of their decisions? "Many of the wicked were greatly enraged as they suffered the effects of the plagues. It was a scene of fearful agony. Parents were bitterly reproaching their children, and children their parents, brothers their sisters, and sisters their brothers. Loud, wailing cries were heard in every direction, 'It was you who kept me from receiving the truth which would have saved me from this awful hour.' The people turned upon their ministers with bitter hate and reproached them, saying, 'You have not warned us. You told us that all the world was to be converted, and cried, Peace, peace, to quiet every fear that was aroused. You have not told us of this hour; and those who warned us of it you declared to be fanatics and evil men, who would ruin us.' But I saw that the ministers did not escape the wrath of God. Their suffering was tenfold greater than that of their people."—*Early Writings*, p. 282.

"The people see that they have been deluded. They accuse one another of having led them to destruction; but all unite in heaping their bitterest condemnation upon the ministers. Unfaithful pastors have prophesied smooth things; they have led their hearers to make void the law of God and to persecute those who would keep it holy. Now, in their despair, these teachers confess before the world their work of deception. The multitudes are filled with fury. 'We are lost!' they cry, 'and you are the cause of our ruin;' and they turn upon the false shepherds. The very ones that once admired them most will pronounce the most dreadful curses upon them. The very hands that once crowned them with laurels will be raised for their destruction. The swords which were to slay God's people are now employed to destroy their enemies. Everywhere there is strife and bloodshed."—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 655, 656.

THINK IT THROUGH

"When the voice of God turns the captivity of His people, there is a terrible awakening of those who have lost all in the great conflict of life. . . . The result is, their lives are a failure; their pleasures are now turned to gail, their treasures to corruption. The gain of a lifetime is swept away in a moment."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 654.

Part 5
THE GLORIOUS
OUTCOME

Study the description of the seventh plague.

"The seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth. . . . And great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath" (Rev. 16:17-19).

(Read carefully verses 17 through 21.)

The great earthquake is not only a literal one, but also a symbolic cataclysm that destroys spiritual Babylon. "The great city [Babylon] was divided into three parts" (verse 19). Why? Because that huge structure of error and deception was composed of the threefold union of the great powers—the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet.

But now, under the seventh plague, this unholy alliance loses its coherence and is broken, and the three religious and political forces begin to fight against each other.

What symbols are used in Revelation 19:11-16 to describe the fierce battle between Christ and the world? What do they mean?

What will be the outcome of Armageddon? Rev. 19:17-21.

An angel calls the fowls of heaven together in order to eat the flesh of kings, captains, and mighty men. And John sees the beast and the false prophet thrown into a lake of fire. This is not the lake of fire that appears at the end of the millennium. He sees the rest slain by the sword of the One that sat on the white horse.

As for the dragon, Satan himself and his devils will remain for 1000 more years on this devastated and solitary planet. They will see the final results of their rebellion.

The victory of Jesus in the battle of Armageddon is absolute, complete, and eternal. The liberation of the saints is final.

THINK IT THROUGH

Why has God waited so long to bring an end to sin? Why will He delay 1000 years more in destroying Satan and the evil spirits?

With this awful experience of sin, sorrow, and death, with the complete development of the principles and plans of Satan, the whole universe will have been effectively vaccinated against sin. The wonderful love and justice of God will have been vindicated forever, and the curse of sin will not arise the second time.

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 653-661; *Early Writings*, p. 290.

**Part 6
NOW IS
THE TIME!**

What solemn admonition does Jesus give in connection with the events of Armageddon?

“Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame” (Rev. 16:15).

The only way to withstand the hour of God's judgment, the Battle of Armageddon, is to acquire the garments of heaven. The time to buy the white raiment to cover our spiritual nakedness is now. When Armageddon comes, probation will have closed.

To watch and keep on the garments of the righteousness of Christ—both forgiveness and victory, both justification and sanctification—requires a constant faith in Jesus. He is the only One who can give us this beautiful robe. He is the only One who can cleanse us from all unrighteousness through faith in Him that includes confession of sin. Only He can transfer to us His perfect character.

What did Jesus teach about the relationship between Himself and the believer? John 15:4, 5.

The branch has life in it and retains the possibility of having flowers and bearing fruit as long as it continues to be a part of the vine. As soon as it is cut off the vine, it dies. The same happens with the child of God. The only possibility of having a fruitful life is to abide in Christ, to be vitally united with Him, and to depend upon Him every moment.

“Many have an idea that they must do some part of the work alone. They have trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of sin, but now they seek by their own efforts to live aright. But every such effort must fail. Jesus says, ‘Without Me ye can do nothing.’ Our growth in grace, our joy, our usefulness,—all depend upon our union with Christ. It is by communion with Him, daily, hourly,—by abiding in Him,—that we are to grow in grace. He is not only the Author, but the Finisher of our faith. It is Christ first and last and always. He is to be with us, not only at the beginning and the end of our course, but at every step of the way. David says, ‘I have set the Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.’ Psalm 16:8.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 69.

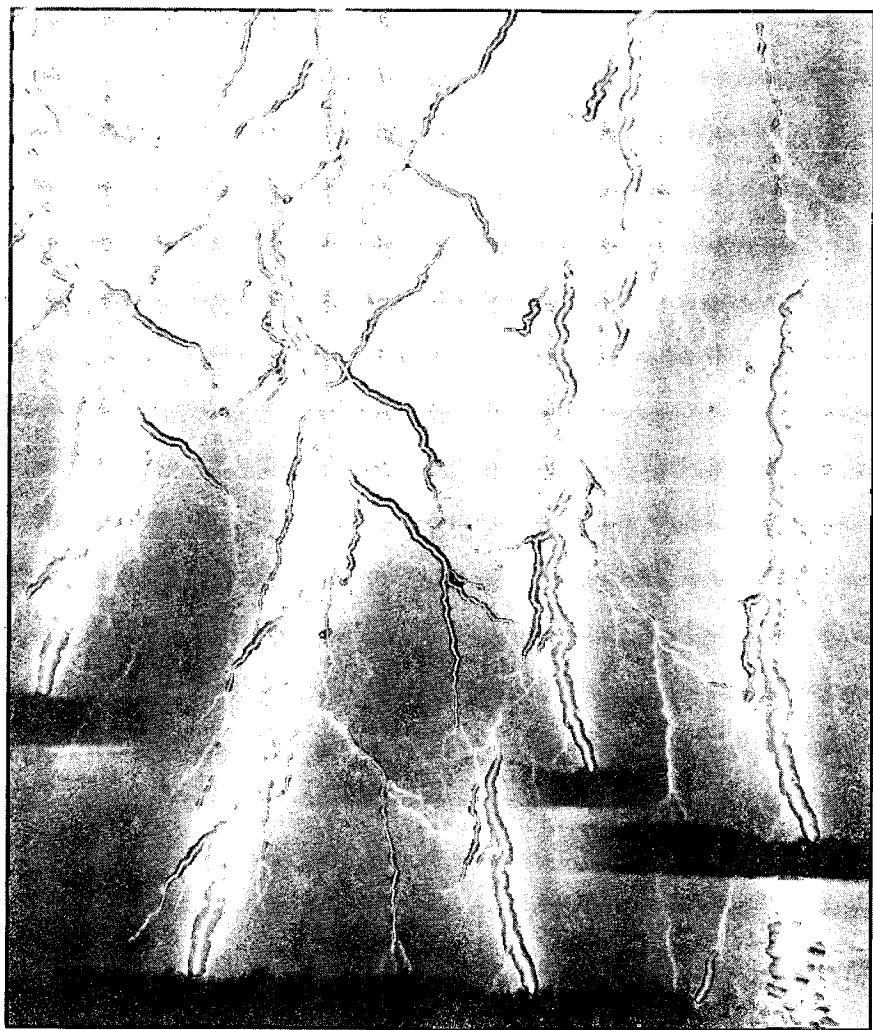
THINK IT THROUGH

What is the specific meaning of abiding in Christ? How do we become united with Christ in a contact as close as the branch and the vine?

FURTHER STUDY

Steps to Christ, “Growing Up Into Christ,” pp. 67-75.

II. Liberation of the Church



“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

It has never been the plan of God that sorrow, pain, and suffering should exist in the universe. When He made man, He made him in His own image. His eternal plan was that the more man lived, the more he would reflect those divine characteristics that bring happiness, joy, and peace. But when sin entered into the picture, the plans of heaven were temporarily disrupted, and the original intention of God had to be postponed.

Sin has spoiled the beauty and happiness the Lord wanted man to enjoy from the very beginning. Nevertheless, God did not give up His plan for a happy, holy human family. For this reason God will intervene in our world to destroy sorrow and sin.

We as the church of God are to cooperate with Him in consummating His wonderful age-long promises. If the individuals in the church had trusted fully in Jesus and proclaimed the gospel of redemption to the world, Jesus long ago could have brought the end of evil. And if we are still in this world, it is because we did not believe strongly enough to cooperate with God in living and witnessing.

In spite of our past failure God's work will be finished. There will come an end to the agony of this planet of rebellious people. The only reason why He seemingly delayed His supernatural intervention is not because He is “slack concerning his promise,” but because He “is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all

should come to repentance.” On the other hand, the Spirit of the Lord “shall not always strive with man.”

In this lesson we will witness the marvelous intervention of God and the final liberation of the saints at the time of the seventh plague. The day of doom and destruction for the impenitent world, hardened in sin, will be the day of joy and happiness for the children of God, who for such a long time suffered for their Master and endured the tempest of persecution but remained loyal.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

- 1. The Seventh Plague**
(Rev. 16:17-21)
- 2. At the Hour of Utmost Extremity**
(Ps. 37:40)
- 3. Cataclysmic Events—I**
(Rev. 16:17-21)
- 4. A Sudden Change in the Scene**
(Rev. 16:17)
- 5. Cataclysmic Events—II**
(Ps. 76:7-9)
- 6. The Advent**
(Rev. 1:7; Jude 14, 15; Matt. 24:30, 31)

Part 1
THE SEVENTH
PLAGUE

In Revelation 16:17-21 seven events are mentioned in connection with the seventh plague:

1. A great voice from heaven proclaims, "It is done." This is the very last hour of turmoil and destruction. It is the hour of the judgment of God on the inhabitants of this world.

2. There were lightnings, voices, and thunders. The mighty elements of nature are used by the Lord to signify His disapproval of the behavior of the unjust who are about to destroy the loyal children of God.

3. A gigantic earthquake, the greatest in human history, shakes the earth.

4. The great city, spiritual Babylon—the alliance of confusion and apostate spiritual powers—is divided into three parts. In other words, the three great powers that up to this point were united in fighting against God, the truth, and the saints—spiritualism, Romanism, and apostate Protestantism—now pull aside from each other and begin fighting against each other, thus producing the destruction of Babylon.

5. The other "cities of the nations" fall. The whole world is in gigantic turmoil.

6. Islands flee, and mountains disappear. The actual physical shape of this planet changes.

7. Hail falls from heaven, each hailstone the weight of a talent, which is about 66 pounds or 30 kilograms.

This is the awesome picture of the hour of the judgments of God in which this world will be destroyed.

But the most important aspect of all this scene is that the children of God will be liberated at the destruction of the impenitent.

THINK IT THROUGH

What will determine whether I will be with the happy people of God, who are liberated during the seventh plague, or with the great majority, that will be destroyed? Is it safe for me to postpone my surrender and my taking full advantage of the grace and mercy of God? (See Ps. 95:7, 8.)

FURTHER STUDY

S.D.A. Bible Commentary, vol. 7, pp. 846-848.

**Part 2
AT THE HOUR
OF UTMOST
EXTREMITY****Read Ps. 37:40.**

It will be midnight, as the death decree becomes effective and the wicked are about to destroy the children of God, when the God of heaven intervenes in an unprecedented way to liberate the saints. At the "hour of utmost extremity" God will protect His own and will destroy the sinners.

"The Lord is doing His work. All heaven is astir. The Judge of all the earth is soon to arise and vindicate His insulted authority. The mark of deliverance will be set upon the men who keep God's commandments, who revere His law, and who refuse the mark of the beast or of his image."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 451, 452.

"When the defiance of the law of Jehovah shall be almost universal, when his people shall be pressed in affliction by their fellow men, God will interpose. The fervent prayers of his people will be answered."—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, June 15, 1897.

"The people of God—some in prison cells, some hidden in solitary retreats in the forests and the mountains—still plead for divine protection, while in every quarter companies of armed men, urged on by hosts of evil angels, are preparing for the work of death. It is now, in the hour of utmost extremity, that the God of Israel will interpose for the deliverance of His chosen."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 635.

"Then all the saints cried out with anguish of spirit, and were delivered by the voice of God. The 144,000 triumphed. Their faces were lighted up with the glory of God."—*Early Writings*, p. 37.

"Satan's host and wicked men will surround them, and exult over them, because there will seem to be no way of escape for them. But in the midst of their revelry and triumph, there is heard peal upon peal of the loudest thunder. The heavens have gathered blackness, and are only illuminated by the blazing light and terrible glory from heaven, as God utters His voice from His holy habitation.

"The foundations of the earth shake; buildings totter and fall with a terrible crash. The sea boils like a pot, and the whole earth is in terrible commotion. The captivity of the righteous is turned, and with sweet and solemn whisperings they say to one another: 'We are delivered. It is the voice of God.'"—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 354.

THINK IT THROUGH

God also can intervene in a merciful and miraculous way in our own personal life, at the hour of utmost extremity, to solve our biggest problems if we trust Him and depend on Him.

FURTHER STUDY

Early Writings, pp. 33, 34.

Part 3
CATACLYSMIC
EVENTS—I

Five of the seven events that we have noted in Revelation 16:17-21 are happenings in nature. Read this passage again. These events lead up to the coming of Jesus.

Compare the events named in Revelation 16:17-21 with those given in Revelation 6:14-17. It is during these events that the faithful believers are liberated.

Ellen White makes these further comments on the events in nature under the seventh plague:

"With shouts of triumph, jeering, and imprecation, throngs of evil men are about to rush upon their prey, when, lo, a dense blackness, deeper than the darkness of the night, falls upon the earth. Then a rainbow, shining with the glory from the throne of God, spans the heavens and seems to encircle each praying company. The angry multitudes are suddenly arrested. Their mocking cries die away. The objects of their murderous rage are forgotten. With fearful forebodings they gaze upon the symbol of God's covenant and long to be shielded from its overpowering brightness."—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 635, 636.

"Then the sun, moon, and stars will be moved out of their places. They will not pass away, but be shaken by the voice of God."—*Early Writings*, p. 41.

"Signs and wonders followed in quick succession. Everything seemed turned out of its natural course. The streams ceased to flow. Dark, heavy clouds came up and clashed against each other."—*Early Writings*, p. 285.

But through all of these catastrophes the redeemed will be protected. "Christ has spoken: 'Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity.' Isaiah 26:20, 21. Glorious will be the deliverance of those who have patiently waited for His coming and whose names are written in the book of life."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 634.

THINK IT THROUGH

By the grace of God I choose to be among God's redeemed people.

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 635-637.

**Part 4
A SUDDEN
CHANGE IN
THE SCENE****During the seventh plague, what proclamation proceeds from God's throne?****"There came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done" (Rev. 16:17).**

The declaration "It is done" will be spoken at the midnight manifestation of God's power in nature. Amid the confusion there will come a moment of assurance to God's people. Ellen White describes it thus:

"By the people of God a voice, clear and melodious, is heard, saying, 'Look up,' and lifting their eyes to the heavens, they behold the bow of promise. The black, angry clouds that covered the firmament are parted, and like Stephen they look up steadfastly into heaven and see the glory of God and the Son of man seated upon His throne. In His divine form they discern the marks of His humiliation; and from His lips they hear the request presented before His Father and the holy angels: 'I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am.' John 17:24. Again a voice, musical and triumphant, is heard, saying: 'They come! they come! holy, harmless, and undefiled. They have kept the word of My patience; they shall walk among the angels;' and the pale, quivering lips of those who have held fast their faith utter a shout of victory."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 636.

"The Israel of God stood with their eyes fixed upward, listening to the words as they came from the mouth of Jehovah and rolled through the earth like peals of loudest thunder. It was awfully solemn. At the end of every sentence the saints shouted, 'Glory! Hallelujah!' Their countenances were lighted up with the glory of God, and they shone with glory as did the face of Moses when he came down from Sinai. The wicked could not look upon them for the glory. And when the never-ending blessing was pronounced on those who had honored God in keeping His Sabbath holy, there was a mighty shout of victory over the beast and over his image."—*The Story of Redemption*, pp. 409, 410.

THINK IT THROUGH

Do I have the anticipation for Jesus' return reflected in the words of Isaiah: "It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us; this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Isa. 25:9)?

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 638-640.

**Part 5
CATACLYSMIC
EVENTS—II****What assurance can we gain today from the experience mentioned in Psalm 76?****“Thou, even thou, art to be feared: and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry? Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven; the earth feared, and was still, when God arose to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth” (Ps. 76:7-9).**

After the declaration “It is done,” the convulsion of nature will continue.

“That voice [the voice of the Lord saying, “It is done”] shakes the heavens and the earth. There is a mighty earthquake, ‘such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.’ Verses 17, 18. The firmament appears to open and shut. The glory from the throne of God seems flashing through. The mountains shake like a reed in the wind, and ragged rocks are scattered on every side. There is a roar as of a coming tempest. The sea is lashed into fury. There is heard the shriek of a hurricane like the voice of demons upon a mission of destruction. The whole earth heaves and swells like the waves of the sea. Its surface is breaking up. Its very foundations seem to be giving way. Mountain chains are sinking. Inhabited islands disappear. The seaports that have become like Sodom for wickedness are swallowed up by the angry waters. Babylon the great has come in remembrance before God, ‘to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath.’ Great hailstones, every one ‘about the weight of a talent,’ are doing their work of destruction. Verses 19, 21. The proudest cities of the earth are laid low. The lordly palaces, upon which the world’s great men have lavished their wealth in order to glorify themselves, are crumbling to ruin before their eyes. Prison walls are rent asunder, and God’s people, who have been held in bondage for their faith, are set free.”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 636, 637.

THINK IT THROUGH**God is as interested in helping and delivering each one of us now in our day-to-day problems and trials as He will be at the final hour of history.****FURTHER STUDY***The Great Controversy*, pp. 641-643.

**Part 6
THE ADVENT**

The events that we have studied thus far this week precede the coming of Jesus by only a very short time. The actual coming of Jesus is described in several Bible passages. These will be familiar to most who study this lesson, but a review of them can make them even more familiar and call our attention again to the one great event to which we look forward.

What is known about Jesus' coming? Rev. 1:7

What further information do you find in Jude 14, 15?

Read Matthew 24:30, 31. What do the angels do?

Can you find two other texts that give details about Jesus' return?

"Christ will come in His own glory, in the glory of His Father, and the glory of the holy angels. Ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands of angels, the beautiful and triumphant sons of God, possessing surpassing loveliness and glory, will escort Him on His way. Then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all nations. Then every eye shall see Him, and they also that pierced Him. In the place of a crown of thorns, He will wear a crown of glory,—a crown within a crown. In place of that old purple kingly robe, He will be clothed in raiment of whitest white, 'so as no fuller on earth can white them.' Mark 9:3. And on His vesture and on His thigh a name will be written, 'King of kings, and Lord of lords.' Rev. 19:16."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 739.

"All heaven will be emptied of the angels. The waiting saints will be looking for Him, and gazing into heaven, as were the 'men of Galilee' when He ascended from the Mount of Olivet. Then, those only who are holy, those who have followed fully the meek Pattern will, with rapturous joy, exclaim as they behold Him, 'Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us.' And they will be changed 'in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump,' that wakes the sleeping saints, and calls them forth from their dusty beds, clothed with glorious immortality, shouting Victory! Victory! over death and the grave. The changed saints are caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air, never more to be separated from the object of their love."—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 360.

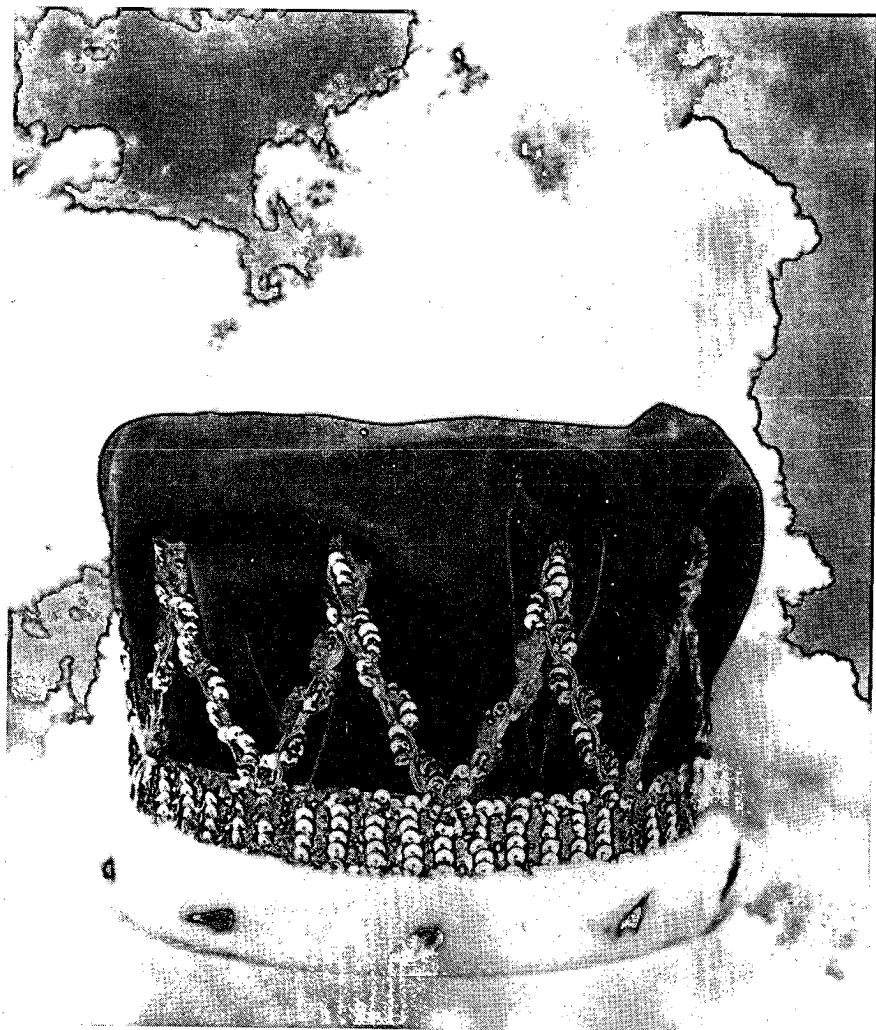
THINK IT THROUGH

Christians count any present so-called sacrifice worthwhile in order for them to be counted among the blessed company of the people of God in that wonderful day.

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 644-652.

12. The Second Coming



“Ye shall have a song, as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of the Lord, to the mighty One of Israel. And the Lord shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall shew the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of his anger, and with the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, and tempest, and hailstones” (Isa. 30:29, 30).

As a climax to the supernatural intervention of heaven in the affairs of this sinful world, the King of kings and Lord of lords appears in His glorious second coming.

In this lesson we will review some of the dramatic events that take place immediately before the second coming of Jesus.

The reason for this study is, naturally, to have as exact an idea as possible of the magnitude and the sequence of these phenomena, as appear evident from the analysis of the Bible texts and of the spirit of prophecy writings. And let us say, by the way, that we have tried to include this week as many quotations from Ellen G. White's writings as possible, since the servant of the Lord saw all those appalling scenes and was overwhelmed by a clear vision of the reality. This is why she was in a position to write with accuracy and knowledge, enlarging on the brief statements and descriptions that we find in the Word of God.

What we really need, though, is not only a theoretical knowledge of these majestic happenings, but a reassurance of the absolute certainty of the prophecies and promises of God for this great hour. We need to develop and strengthen our faith

during these times of comparative calm and serenity so that when the great day of God comes, we may keep our confidence in the One who never fails and is exceedingly powerful and capable of giving us much more than we can ask or think.

When by the grace of God we shall see Jesus riding on clouds of glory and accompanied by all His holy angels, all our past afflictions will look insignificant. When we approach the pearly gates of the New Jerusalem, led by the great Captain of our salvation, we will praise Him who is our victory. We will give Him all the honor and the glory, because with His inspiring life and His vicarious death He saved us, forgiving our sins and transforming our character for heaven.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

- 1. A Partial Resurrection**
(Dan. 12:2; Rev. 1:7)
- 2. Two Groups**
(Ps. 46:1-3)
- 3. The Glorious Second Coming**
(Matt. 24:27)
- 4. Four Great Events**
(Isa. 25:8, 9)
- 5. Toward the Pearly Gates**
(Rev. 1:5, 6)
- 6. How to Make Sure of Our Participation** (Rev. 12:11)

Part 1
A PARTIAL
RESURRECTION

What points in the following verses indicate a partial resurrection of the wicked at the second advent?

“Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan. 12:2).

“Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him” (Rev. 1:7).

“Graves are opened, and ‘many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth . . . awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.’ Daniel 12:2. All who have died in the faith of the third angel’s message come forth from the tomb glorified, to hear God’s covenant of peace with those who have kept His law. ‘They also which pierced Him’ (Revelation 1:7), those that mocked and derided Christ’s dying agonies, and the most violent opposers of His truth and His people, are raised to behold Him in His glory and to see the honor placed upon the loyal and obedient.

“Thick clouds still cover the sky; yet the sun now and then breaks through, appearing like the avenging eye of Jehovah. Fierce lightnings leap from the heavens, enveloping the earth in a sheet of flame. Above the terrific roar of thunder, voices, mysterious and awful, declare the doom of the wicked. The words spoken are not comprehended by all; but they are distinctly understood by the false teachers. Those who a little before were so reckless, so boastful and defiant, so exultant in their cruelty to God’s commandment-keeping people, are now overwhelmed with consternation and shuddering in fear. Their wails are heard above the sound of the elements. Demons acknowledge the deity of Christ and tremble before His power, while men are supplicating for mercy and groveling in abject terror.”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 637, 638.

What descriptions from Isaiah 2:10-12, 20, 21, written for Judah, are also applicable to the second advent?

Many people have exalted their own opinions and ideas above the law of God, and in their defiance they have persecuted the righteous and have made preparation to kill them. Too late they discover the result of their stubbornness, and with great terror they cry to the mountains and to the rocks to fall on them and hide them from the presence of Christ.

THINK IT THROUGH

To what extent am I taking advantage of the opportunities and privileges God gives me today so that, whether I live until the advent or I die under the faith of the third angel’s message, I may be in the redeemed throng?

FURTHER STUDY

Selected Messages, bk. 2, pp. 263, 264.

Part 2 **What is the comforting and encouraging promise that will be**
TWO GROUPS **fulfilled in the great day of the Lord?**

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof" (Ps. 46:1-3).

What will be the clear contrast between the two classes of people?

The world at that time will be divided into two classes of people. They will stand in bold contrast to each other because of the principle each holds. Ellen White wrote this description:

"Through a rift in the clouds there beams a star whose brilliancy is increased fourfold in contrast with the darkness. It speaks hope and joy to the faithful, but severity and wrath to the transgressors of God's law. Those who have sacrificed all for Christ are now secure, hidden as in the secret of the Lord's pavilion. . . .

"... The clouds sweep back, and the starry heavens are seen, unspeakably glorious in contrast with the black and angry firmament on either side. The glory of the celestial city streams from the gates ajar. Then there appears against the sky a hand holding two tables of stone folded together. Says the prophet: 'The heavens shall declare His righteousness: for God is judge Himself.' Psalm 50:6. That holy law, God's righteousness, that amid thunder and flame was proclaimed from Sinai as the guide of life, is now revealed to men as the rule of judgment. The hand opens the tables, and there are seen the precepts of the Decalogue, traced as with a pen of fire."—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 638, 639.

"The Lord here [in the story of Enoch] teaches a lesson of the greatest importance by the translation of Enoch, a descendant of fallen Adam, that all would be rewarded, who by faith would rely upon the promised Sacrifice and faithfully obey His commandments. Two classes are here again represented which were to exist until the second coming of Christ—the righteous and the wicked, the rebellious and the loyal. God will remember the righteous, who fear Him. On account of His dear Son He will respect and honor them and give them everlasting life. But the wicked, who trample upon His authority, He will cut off and destroy from the earth, and they will be as though they had not been."—*The Story of Redemption*, pp. 59, 60.

THINK IT THROUGH

The same star that appears in the darkened heavens and speaks hope and joy to the faithful conveys the wrath of God and destruction to the unfaithful. How does this same principle apply to God's revelation today?

Part 3
THE GLORIOUS
SECOND COMING

What illustration did Jesus use to describe His second coming?

“As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (Matt. 24:27).

What will the voice of God proclaim very shortly before Christ’s actual coming?

“The voice of God is heard from heaven, declaring the day and hour of Jesus’ coming, and delivering the everlasting covenant to His people. Like peals of loudest thunder His words roll through the earth. The Israel of God stand listening, with their eyes fixed upward. Their countenances are lighted up with His glory, and shine as did the face of Moses when he came down from Sinai. The wicked cannot look upon them. And when the blessing is pronounced on those who have honored God by keeping His Sabbath holy, there is a mighty shout of victory.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 640.

How is the approach of the King of kings described?

“Soon there appears in the east a small black cloud, about half the size of a man’s hand. It is the cloud which surrounds the Saviour and which seems in the distance to be shrouded in darkness. The people of God know this to be the sign of the Son of man. In solemn silence they gaze upon it as it draws nearer the earth, becoming lighter and more glorious, until it is a great white cloud, its base a glory like consuming fire, and above it the rainbow of the covenant. Jesus rides forth as a mighty conqueror. Not now a ‘Man of Sorrows,’ to drink the bitter cup of shame and woe, He comes, victor in heaven and earth, to judge the living and the dead. . . . With anthems of celestial melody the holy angels, a vast, unnumbered throng, attend Him on His way. The firmament seems filled with radiant forms—‘ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.’ No human pen can portray the scene; no mortal mind is adequate to conceive its splendor. . . . As the living cloud comes still nearer, every eye beholds the Prince of life. No crown of thorns now mars that sacred head; but a diadem of glory rests on His holy brow. His countenance outshines the dazzling brightness of the noonday sun. ‘And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, *King of kings, and Lord of lords.*’ Revelation 19:16.”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 640, 641.

What will be the attitude of the wicked toward the advent? Rev. 6:15-17.

**Part 4
FOUR GREAT
EVENTS**

What will be the joyous exclamation of the children of God when death is swallowed up in victory at the advent?

"He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Isa. 25:8, 9).

What are the great events that will take place at the time of Jesus' coming?

1. General resurrection of the righteous (1 Thess. 4:15-17). This is the general resurrection of the saved after the partial one that occurred earlier.
2. Glorification of the living saints (1 Cor. 15:51, 52).
3. Both groups are caught up to meet the Lord (1 Thess. 4:17).
4. The wicked living are destroyed (2 Thess. 2:8).

This is how the pen of inspiration describes these events:
"Amid the reeling of the earth, the flash of lightning, and the roar of thunder, the voice of the Son of God calls forth the sleeping saints. He looks upon the graves of the righteous, then, raising His hands to heaven, He cries: 'Awake, awake, awake, ye that sleep in the dust, and arise!' Throughout the length and breadth of the earth the dead shall hear that voice, and they that hear shall live. And the whole earth shall ring with the tread of the exceeding great army of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. . . .

"The living righteous are changed 'in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.' At the voice of God they were glorified; now they are made immortal and with the risen saints are caught up to meet their Lord in the air. Angels 'gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.' Little children are borne by holy angels to their mothers' arms. Friends long separated by death are united, nevermore to part, and with songs of gladness ascend together to the City of God."—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 644, 645.

THINK IT THROUGH

Have I ever really stopped to think about myself being caught up in the clouds in heaven, following Jesus to the celestial city? Did I ever imagine myself being in this real and most happy situation? What kind of feelings did it arouse in me toward God and Jesus?

FURTHER STUDY

Early Writings, pp. 288, 289.

Part 5
TOWARD THE
PEARLY GATES

What is the reason the redeemed can be part of Christ's kingdom?

"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever" (Rev. 1:5, 6).

What does the Saviour bestow upon His followers before entering the city of God?

"On each side of the cloudy chariot are wings, and beneath it are living wheels; and as the chariot rolls upward, the wheels cry, 'Holy,' and the wings, as they move, cry, 'Holy,' and the retinue of angels cry, 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.' And the redeemed shout, 'Alleluia!' as the chariot moves onward toward the New Jerusalem.

"Before entering the City of God, the Saviour bestows upon His followers the emblems of victory and invests them with the insignia of their royal state. The glittering ranks are drawn up in the form of a hollow square about their King, whose form rises in majesty high above saint and angel, whose countenance beams upon them full of benignant love. Throughout the unnumbered host of the redeemed every glance is fixed upon Him, every eye beholds His glory whose 'visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men.' Upon the heads of the overcomers, Jesus with His own right hand places the crown of glory. For each there is a crown, bearing his own 'new name' (Revelation 2:17), and the inscription, 'Holiness to the Lord.' . . .

"Before the ransomed throng is the Holy City. Jesus opens wide the pearly gates, and the nations that have kept the truth enter in. There they behold the Paradise of God, the home of Adam in his innocence. Then that voice, richer than any music that ever fell on mortal ear, is heard, saying: 'Your conflict is ended.' 'Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'"—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 645, 646.

"Jesus raised His mighty, glorious arm, laid hold of the pearly gate, swung it back on its glittering hinges, and said to us, 'You have washed your robes in My blood, stood stiffly for My truth, enter in.' We all marched in and felt that we had a perfect right in the city."—*Early Writings*, p. 17.

THINK IT THROUGH

What do I learn from the fact that on the crown that Christ gives to every victor there is written a new name and the inscription: "Holiness to the Lord"? How can I acquire this new name?

Part 6
HOW TO MAKE
SURE OF OUR
PARTICIPATION

What is the only way of making sure of our participation in the glorious meeting with Christ and all the saints in the city of God?

"They overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Rev. 12:11).

God never asks us to do anything for which He has not made ample provision. God is far above our enemy, and He has provided for our complete success.

But a constant fight is going on. The devil does not give up easily. As long as we live, we have to behave as good soldiers of Jesus; we must be valiant and take full advantage of the means of grace that God has put at our disposal.

What is the human part in the plan of salvation? James 4:7, last part.

"Sanctification is not the work of a moment, an hour, a day, but a lifetime. It is not gained by a happy flight of feeling, but is the result of constantly dying to sin, and constantly living for Christ. Wrongs cannot be righted nor reformations wrought in the character by feeble, intermittent efforts. It is only by long, persevering effort, sore discipline, and stern conflict, that we shall overcome."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 560.

What must accompany the resisting of the devil? James 4:7, first part.

Submission, surrender to God is the human part. It is impossible to defeat the devil with our own efforts. Christ has to do it for us, but He needs our cooperation.

On the other hand, in light of the last part of John 15:5, what should we beware of?

"The Lord does nothing without our cooperation. When Christ prayed, Father, keep them in Thy name, He did not mean that we should neglect to keep ourselves in the love and faith of God. Alive unto God, through a living union with Christ, we trust in the promises, constantly gaining greater strength by beholding Jesus."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 236.

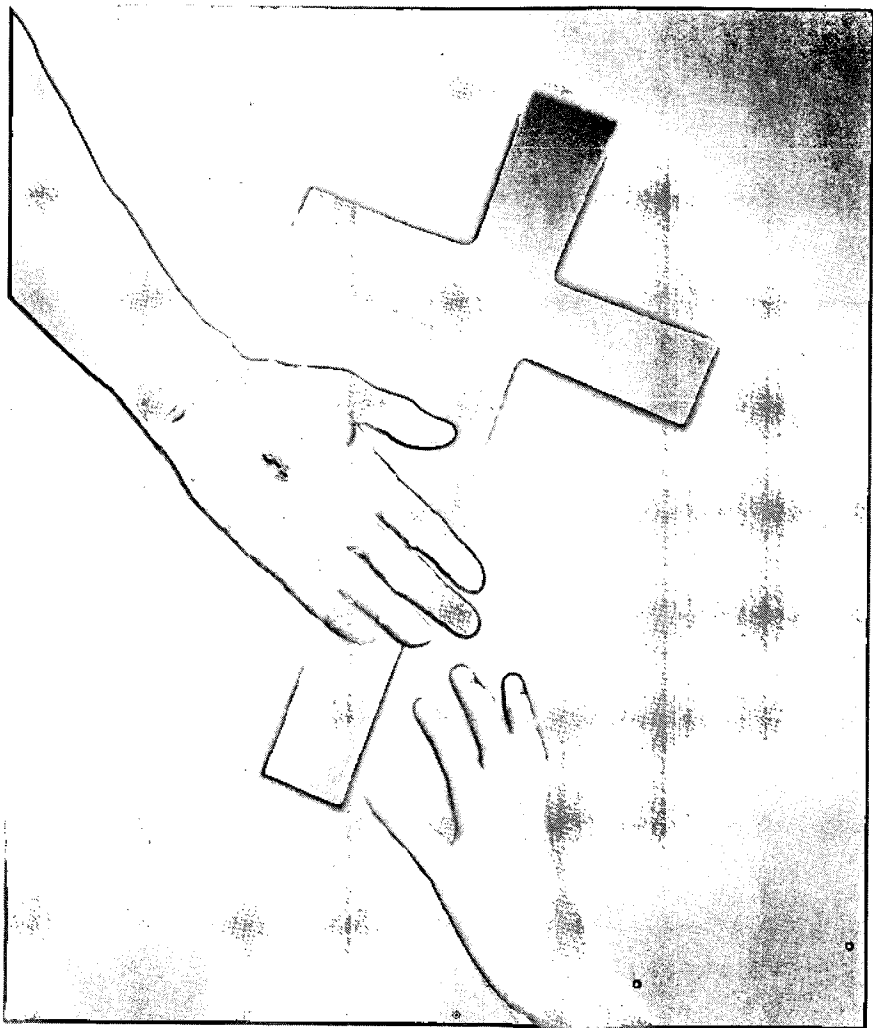
THINK IT THROUGH

How completely do I depend on the power of God and on the work of the Holy Spirit in my life? Have I learned how, by a living faith in Jesus, to avail myself of His promise of making me a partaker of the divine nature?

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 560-567.

13. Christ, Our Victory



“Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel” (Amos 4:12).

A mere knowledge of all the tremendous events that, in these last days of human history, are going to shake the world and also the church in a mighty way is undoubtedly of great importance. Nevertheless, knowledge will not do us much good if it does not lead us to a thorough spiritual preparation that would enable us to stand in the great day of God and finally meet the Lord with peace and joy.

The church of God at large is going to be victorious one of these days. But the plan of God is that every one of us should achieve victory in his own life, so that he may be identified with the triumphant people of God.

The tendency now is to be deceived regarding ourselves, to be lulled by a deadly stupor. This is the natural condition of Laodicea. But God wants every one of us to get rid of this lethal condition, similar to a physical state of coma. The end is very near. “The ‘time of trouble, such as never was,’ ” writes the servant of God, “is soon to open upon us; and we shall need an experience which we do not now possess and which many are too indolent to obtain.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 622.

Our only hope of obtaining an experience that may allow us to triumph is Christ. He is the great secret. He is the only way.

In this lesson we want to specify how we can take advantage of the wonderful spiritual means with which God has supplied us in order to let Jesus prepare us and give us the victory that will put us in the necessary condition to meet the Lord in His great day.

We will review what the specific

elements are that will enable us to be under the protection of our heavenly Father and to be continually in close contact with Him, fully covered and sheltered from every material and spiritual danger and fully prepared for His second coming.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **An Experiential Knowledge (John 17:3)**
2. **A Personal Relationship (Col. 1:26, 27)**
3. **Christ’s Rulership of Our Life (Gal. 2:20)**
4. **The Role of the Will—Surrender (Rev. 3:20)**
5. **The Great Source of Life (John 6:63)**
6. **Prayer and Watchfulness (Matt. 26:41)**

Part 1
AN EXPERIENTIAL
KNOWLEDGE

What is the vital importance and necessity of having a knowledge of God and of Christ?

"This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

Having a theoretical knowledge of the Word of God without feeling its tremendous effect on one's character is not enough for salvation. Understanding the doctrines without allowing the truth to act upon the life in order to transform it will not do much good either. The only thing that brings eternal life is a direct, personal, and experiential knowledge of God as our loving Father and of Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour and Friend.

With many Christians religion seems to be participation in a series of formal activities and acceptance of a set of doctrines. Unfortunately, even in our church there are many members who go through the forms and who comply with the external acts of worship. But they have not yet attained a firsthand knowledge of and a loving, personal, daily relationship with God and with Christ His Son. This knowledge and this relationship are sorely needed.

What does the Lord say is to be the reason for glorying? Jer. 9:23, 24.

"This knowledge [of the loving-kindness and righteousness of God] is the foundation of all true education and of all true service. It is the only real safeguard against temptation; and it is this alone that can make one like God in character. Through the knowledge of God and of His Son Jesus Christ, are given to the believer 'all things that pertain unto life and godliness.' . . .

". . . Scarcely can the human mind comprehend the breadth and depth and height of the spiritual attainments of him who gains this knowledge."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 530, 531.

THINK IT THROUGH

In what ways do I have a superficial spiritual experience? How can I experience a closer relationship with Christ?

"The experimental knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ whom He has sent, transforms man into the image of God. It gives to man the mastery of himself, bringing every impulse and passion of the lower nature under the control of the higher powers of the mind. It makes its possessor a son of God and an heir of heaven. It brings him into communion with the mind of the Infinite, and opens to him the rich treasures of the universe."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 114.

FURTHER STUDY

Christ's Object Lessons, "The Reward of Grace," pp. 400, 401.

**Part 2
A PERSONAL
RELATIONSHIP**

What is the real essence of the gospel of Jesus and the plan of salvation?

“Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:26, 27).

“Christ in you” is a very simple and wonderful formula for attaining the highest spiritual stature. When He is in us, filling our mind, living in our heart, He will be manifesting His character, speaking His words, thinking His thoughts, living His life in us. No human science, no psychology can explain it. It is a mystery. Nevertheless, when we allow Christ to be in us, and when we are in Him, the miracle begins to happen. And it keeps on happening as long as this real union between the heart and God exists.

With what appropriate and simple natural fact did Christ try to illustrate this same great truth? John 15:4, 5.

In order for the branch to bear fruit, it has to grow on the vine. It must be a part of the vine. As soon as the branch is severed from the vine, the branch dies. The same happens to us if our union with Christ, the true Vine, is severed.

“Will we put forth most earnest efforts to form this alliance with Christ, through which alone these blessings are attained? Will we break off our sins by righteousness and our iniquities by turning unto the Lord? Skepticism and infidelity are widespread. Christ asked the question: ‘When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?’ We must cherish a living, active faith. The permanence of our faith is the condition of our union.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 231.

In what other illustration did Jesus emphasize our need of being constantly in close relationship with Him to attain victory in our Christian life? John 6:33, 35, 48.

When bread is eaten, it becomes part of the body, providing nourishment to sustain a person’s life. It is likewise with Christ. When He is received in human life and abides there, He gives spiritual life and strength.

THINK IT THROUGH

Since this Bread that came down from heaven is available to every person, why is it that so many do not receive any benefit from it?

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 476, 477.

**Part 3
CHRIST'S
RULERSHIP
OF OUR LIFE**

To what extent is Jesus to take over the life of the believer?

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20, RSV).

One of the great deceptions of Satan is to induce us to struggle, by our own efforts, to overcome sin in our life. But our only hope is Christ. When we let Him take over in our life, He brings victory to our sin-sick souls.

"Each one will have a close struggle to overcome sin in his own heart. This is at times a very painful and discouraging work; because, as we see the deformities in our character, we keep looking at them, when we should look to Jesus and put on the robe of His righteousness. Everyone who enters the pearly gates of the city of God will enter there as a conqueror, and his greatest conquest will have been the conquest of self."—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, pp. 182, 183.

"As long as Satan reigns we shall have self to subdue, besetments to overcome, and there is no stopping place."—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 947.

The apostle says: "I have been crucified with Christ." Self has died. The throne of my heart has been vacated. The self has been denied. "It is no longer I who live," he adds, "but Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20; RSV). Once I have vacated the throne of my heart and surrendered completely to Him, pleading with Him to be the Ruler of my life, then He comes and lives in me. What a wonderful transfer of rulership! He brings along with Him His love, His joy, His peace, His patience, His long-suffering, His gentleness, His goodness, His faith, His meekness, His self-control, and my life changes completely. It becomes a real, happy, and peaceful life; it becomes a godly life; it becomes a victorious life.

The final statement of the verse is: "And the life I now live in the flesh [my daily, practical, everyday life], I live by faith in the Son of God." By faith I appropriate the victory. (See 1 John 5:4). I do not look into myself, into my weaknesses and deformities. I look to Jesus, and by faith I accept the character of Jesus, which actually is incorporated into my being, changing my whole behavior—my feelings, my thoughts, my intentions. Christ now lives His life in me.

THINK IT THROUGH

How would this change of rulership in my own life affect the church as a whole? How would a spiritual renewal of this kind affect fellow members of the family of God?

FURTHER STUDY

The Ministry of Healing, p. 487.

Part 4
THE ROLE OF
THE WILL—
SURRENDER

What is the experience symbolized in Revelation 3:20?

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20).

God has made man a free moral entity, in His own image. Man is responsible for his own acts. He is free because he has the right and the ability to choose. God never forces the will. He will never save us unless we desire to be saved. This is the opposite of the way used by Satan.

How do other scriptures emphasize the vital role of the will? Deut. 30:19; Matt. 16:24.

"Choose life." The only one who can choose for me is myself. God has given me this freedom of choice; and, if it is rightly used, no one has the right to deprive me of it.

"Let him deny himself" and decide to turn to Jesus. This is really the only part the human being has in his own salvation.

The will, in the biblical sense, is not the power of changing our own habits and our life, but the power of choice.

The spirit of prophecy explains the role of the human will in conversion and the plan of salvation thus:

"Many are inquiring, 'How am I to make the surrender of myself to God?' You desire to give yourself to Him, but you are weak in moral power, in slavery to doubt, and controlled by the habits of your life of sin. Your promises and resolutions are like ropes of sand. You cannot control your thoughts, your impulses, your affections. The knowledge of your broken promises and forfeited pledges weakens your confidence in your own sincerity, and causes you to feel that God cannot accept you; but you need not despair. What you need to understand is the true force of the will. This is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or of choice. Everything depends on the right action of the will. The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise. You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but you can *choose* to serve Him. You can give Him your will; He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ; your affections will be centered upon Him, your thoughts will be in harmony with Him."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 47.

THINK IT THROUGH

What can I do to strengthen my surrender to God, letting Christ take over the rulership of my life?

FURTHER STUDY

Christ's Object Lessons, "Talents" (Mental Faculties), p. 333.

**Part 5
THE GREAT
SOURCE OF LIFE**

According to Jesus' words, what is the great source of spiritual life for the child of God?

"It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life" (John 6:63, RSV).

Jesus had spoken of Himself as the bread of life (John 6:33, 35, 50, 51) in order to convey the idea that He is the only way of salvation and life eternal. And then, to emphasize this thought, He said: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life" (verse 54, RSV). But when some of the disciples did not understand what He meant and began to take offense, He hastened to explain it further: "It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh, is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life."

A close contact with Jesus through the words He spoke has the power to give spiritual life and produce Christian growth and maturity. When we open the Bible or the spirit of prophecy with an open heart—reading and meditating on them, trying to apply the messages to our own individual life—the Holy Spirit makes a deep impression on our minds. He shows us more clearly our spiritual needs. He makes more real the unfailing promises of God. He strengthens our faith. He arouses in us the desire to be like our blessed Master and prepares us to pray more meaningfully and fervently. A spiritual hunger and thirst, produced by the active power of the Holy Spirit, adds more strength and power to our prayers.

In what other way does Jesus illustrate the tremendous effect of the study and meditation of His Word? John 15:7.

Jesus had talked about the need for human beings to abide in Him and He in them. This is the only way we can bear fruit. Then He goes on to clarify that statement with verse 7: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you."

The way for Jesus to abide in our hearts is by letting His words enter our hearts. While we spend precious moments with the open Word of God or with the testimonies of His Spirit, we are communicating with Heaven. We have our hearts open to the influence of the Spirit, since the Word is "the sword of the Spirit."

There is no way of knowing God or His Son in a personal way aside from the study of the Word and meditation on it. This Word speaks to our hearts with heavenly power. It conveys to us the knowledge of God and of Christ; it nourishes our soul and gives us the actual life of Christ.

THINK IT THROUGH

How can I find more time for the study of the Bible?

FURTHER STUDY

Steps to Christ, "A Knowledge of God," pp. 85-91.

**Part 6
PRAYER AND
WATCHFULNESS**

Why is the believer to watch and pray?

“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matt. 26:41).

No spiritual house of a child of God could be devoid of the garden of prayer. No day of a victorious Christian could possibly begin without a quiet visit to that wonderful garden, where the soul meets with God.

There, in the quiet morning hour, we open our hearts to God. We praise His name and let our feelings of gratitude pour forth in a simple way. We thank Him for the many blessings He bestows upon us, and especially for the wonderful gift of His Son. We ask forgiveness for our sins, and by faith we receive right there the cleansing from sin, and we are clothed in the white robes of Christ's imputed righteousness.

There we acknowledge our spiritual deformities, our weaknesses, and our defects of character. Longing to receive in our life the power of the indwelling Christ, we ask for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, in order for Him to cleanse our life, soften our mood, purify our thoughts, and fill us with love, patience, goodness, gentleness, and meekness.

There, at the foot of the cross, praying with faith, looking to our wonderful Saviour and trusting in His promises, we receive grace enough to live the Christian life that day. We receive by faith the imparted righteousness of Christ.

There we make intercession for our loved ones, for our fellow workers, for our neighbors, for the leaders of our cause, and for the people for whom we are working. There we again commit ourselves to God; we surrender our hearts to Him; and we leave our helpless souls in His tender care.

A day begun with an hour of personal study of the Word and of quiet and intimate talking with God will be a day of strength.

“By prayer, by the study of His word, by faith in His abiding presence, the weakest of human beings may live in contact with the living Christ, and He will hold them by a hand that will never let go.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 182.

“Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work. Let your prayer be, ‘Take me, O Lord, as wholly Thine. I lay my plans at Thy feet. Use me today in Thy service. Abide with me, and let all my work be wrought in Thee. . . . Thus day by day you may be giving your life into the hands of God, and thus your life will be molded more and more after the life of Christ.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 70.

THINK IT THROUGH

How much time tomorrow will I dedicate to study and prayer?

FURTHER STUDY

Steps to Christ, “The Privilege of Prayer,” pp. 93-104.

Lessons for 3rd Quarter / 1979

Sabbath School members who have not received a copy of the Adult Lessons for the third quarter of 1979 will be helped by the following outline in studying the first two lessons. The title of the series is BE READY!

First Lesson

THE PRESENT CONDITION OF THE CHURCH

Memory Text, Isa. 64:6.

1. *A Message of Love (Rev. 3:14, 15)*
2. *Lukewarmness (Rev. 3:15, 16)*
3. *Inspid Christians (Rev. 3:16)*
4. *Spiritual Self-satisfaction (Rev. 3:17-19)*
5. *Christ at the Door (Rev. 3:20)*
6. *Our Response (Rev. 3:22)*

Second Lesson

THE HEART OF THE LAODICEAN MESSAGE

Memory Text, Rev. 3:18.

1. *"I counsel thee to buy of me" (Rev. 3:18)*
2. *"Gold tried in the fire" (Rev. 3:18)*
3. *"White raiment" (Rev. 3:18)*
4. *"Eyesalve" (Rev. 3:18)*
5. *"I rebuke and chasten" (Rev. 3:19)*
6. *"Be zealous . . . , and repent" (Rev. 3:19)*

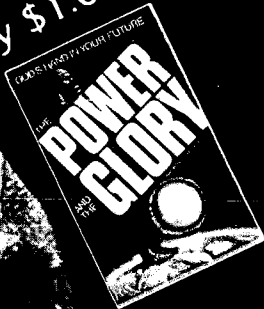
Lessons in Braille

The regular Adult Sabbath School Lessons are available free each month in Braille and 16²/₃ rpm records to blind and physically handicapped persons who cannot read normal inkprint. This includes individuals who because of arthritis, multiple sclerosis, paralysis, accidents, old age, and so forth, cannot hold or focus on normal inkprint publications. Contact the Christian Record Braille Foundation, Box 6097, Lincoln, Nebraska 68506.

Does the Bible Have a Message for Today?

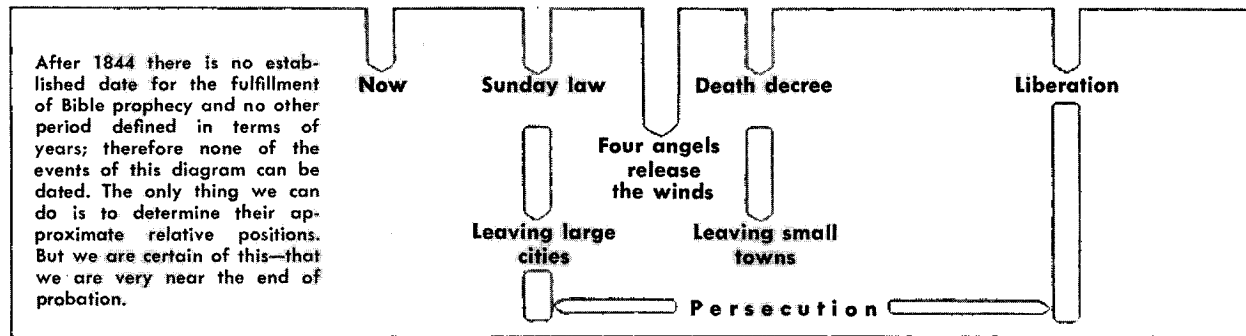
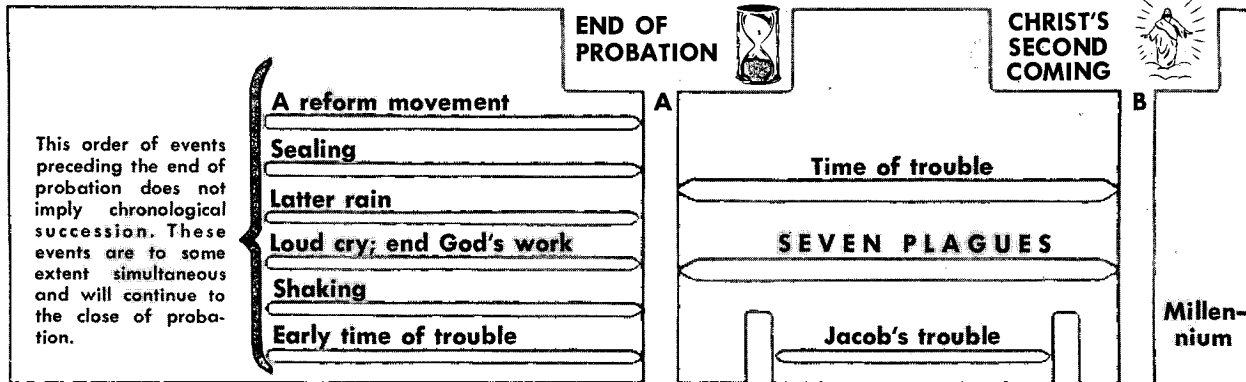
Indeed it does—and for tomorrow, too! THE POWER AND THE GLORY, the Missionary Book of the Year for 1979, paints with broad strokes the role God plays in this earth's destiny. This very readable, easily understood look into the Biblical books of Daniel and the Revelation was simply written so your friends who are unacquainted with the Bible can grasp its message. Discover where you fit into God's plans for the future, then spread the word around!

THE POWER AND THE GLORY
by Raymond Woolsey
1979 Missionary
Book of the Year
Only \$1.00



Order from your local Adventist Book Center
or ABC Mailing Service, P.O. Box 27485,
Omaha, Nebraska 68137. In Canada, Box 208,
Oshawa, Ontario L1H 7L5. Please include State
sales tax where necessary, and add 7 percent
of a minimum charge of 50 cents for mailing.
Prices slightly higher in Canada.





A CHRISTIAN LIFE MEANS SHARING YOUR FAITH

Five little books to help you and your neighbors.

Your Adventist Neighbors

by Richard Utt.

Who are Seventh-day Adventists? You can't give the answer in just a few words or in just a few minutes. This little book tells what Adventists believe and why, along with an invitation to join us. \$.75

Through the Bible in 55 Minutes

by H. M. S. Richards, Jr.

For the unbeliever this little book will whet his appetite and hopefully will lead him to the full truths and acceptance of Heaven's most gracious provisions for eternal life. It gives the reader an overall view of the 66 books of the Bible in one sitting. \$.75

The Mightiest Lover of All

by Lawrence Maxwell.

This is one of the favorite Bible stories of young and old alike — that of Samson, one whom God loved though unlovely. If God loved Samson, with all his faults and failures, there is certainly hope for you and me. This story was written to tell us about God and His great love for each one of us. \$.50

Pass It On: In Praise of Sharing Talents
by Carol Amen.

A unique little book which describes real experiences showing the value and rewards of helping other people. The author clearly shows how you can help people in many ways by sharing your talents. \$.50

Hurling

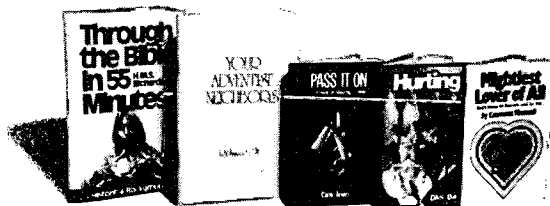
by Dan Day.

The book deals with the common problem of how to overcome emotional hurt. The author discusses several "things to do": 1. Leave the person who hurt you in God's hands. 2. Don't become self-righteous. 3. Recognize that good people sometimes do bad things. 4. Forgive. 5. Discover the place of healing at the foot of the cross. \$.50

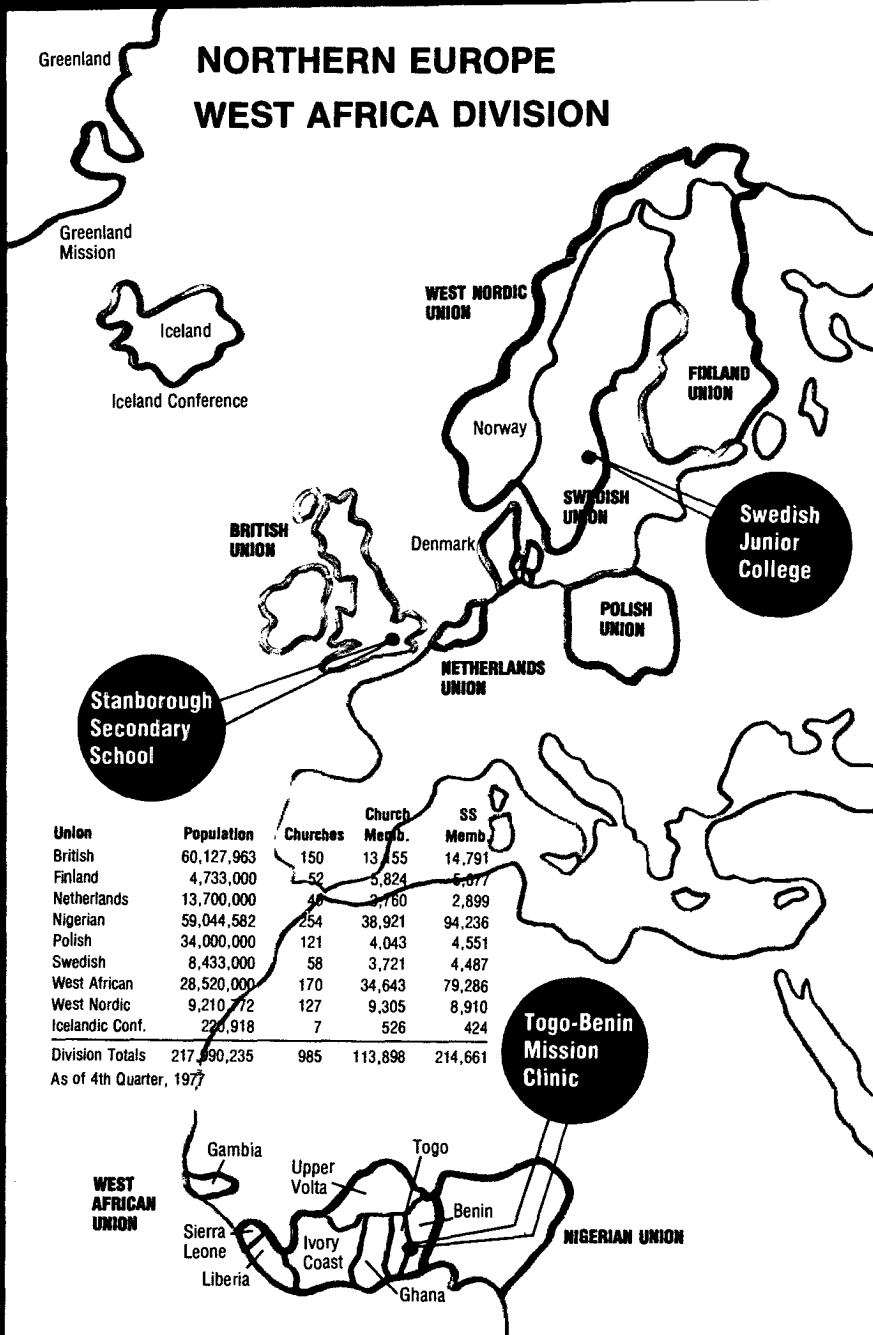
These books are available at your local Adventist Book Center. Prices in U.S. currency.



Brought to you by Pacific Press



NORTHERN EUROPE WEST AFRICA DIVISION



Union	Population	Churches	Church Memb.	SS Memb.
British	60,127,963	150	13,455	14,791
Finland	4,733,000	52	5,824	5,077
Netherlands	13,700,000	46	3,760	2,899
Nigerian	59,044,582	254	38,921	94,236
Polish	34,000,000	121	4,043	4,551
Swedish	8,433,000	58	3,721	4,487
West African	28,520,000	170	34,643	79,286
West Nordic	9,210,772	127	9,305	8,910
Icelandic Conf.	220,918	7	526	424
Division Totals	217,990,235	985	113,898	214,661

As of 4th Quarter, 1977