

Adult Sabbath School Lessons

The Christian in the World

JULY-SEPTEMBER 1982

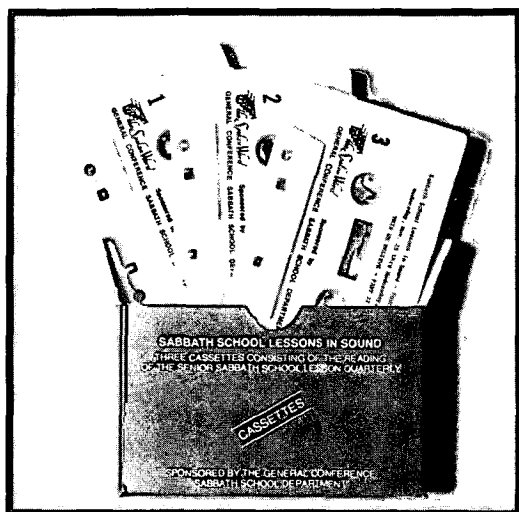


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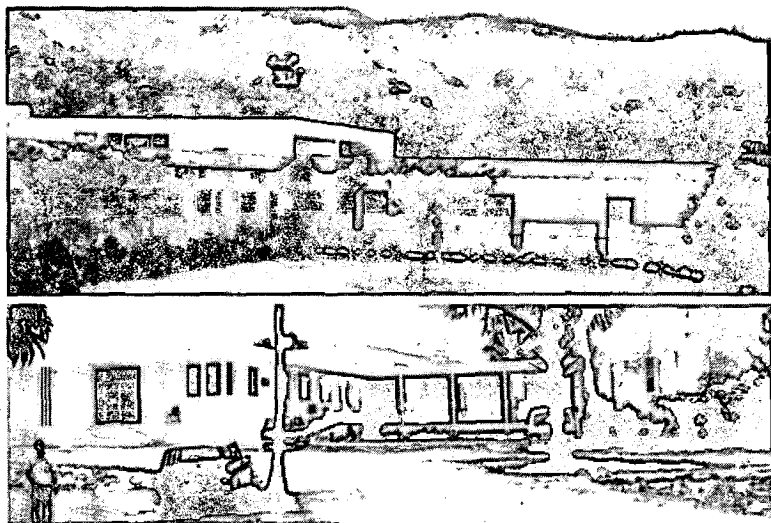
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The Lord has richly blessed the efforts of enthusiastic laymen in Inter-America. Church growth is better described as mushrooming or exploding. Let us do our part to support their efforts in September 25.

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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.

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Art and Design: Pacific Press

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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., \$2.40; single copy 60 cents. One year subscription to countries outside U.S.A., \$3.40; single copy, 85 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.

Editions in Braille and for the deaf available. See page 97.

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Adult Sabbath School Lesson (USPS 702-480)/No. 349 / July-September, 1982

INTRODUCTION

The Christian in the World

Ever since Christ called His church into existence, Christians have been struggling with the problem of how to be *in* the world without being *of* the world. Though it is an old theme, every generation of believers must find the answers to that question for itself. And each unit of believers must seek its own forms of relating to the world in the particular setting in which it is called to witness for Christ.

The reason for this is clear. Our world is constantly changing. New challenges are thereby arising to the life of the church, its mission, and to the believers' growth in grace and in Christian maturity. Solutions from the past do not always fit the way in which we live today. Moreover, our world is made of vastly different cultures and societies, of religions and ideologies, of political and social orders, of values and patterns of thinking. That means that the relationship between the Christian and the world cannot, and *should* not, take exactly the same forms everywhere. For instance, what appears to be an acceptable form of Christian behavior in one culture—say dress, music, or social patterns between male and female—may not be appropriate in another. The same applies to the relationship of the Christian to government, the economic order, or social institutions. Though the varying and ever changing circumstances in the world may demand different *forms* of relating to the world, all these forms must be firmly based on sound biblical principles. To discover the biblical principles that deal with the relationship between the Christian and the world is the primary purpose of this series of lessons.

Our Adventist pioneers lived in the expectation of the immediate coming of our Lord and Saviour. Their whole life and mission had such an urgency that they considered everything and every activity in the world which did not contribute directly to the advance of their cause as waste, if not actually sinful. After nearly 140 years the believers have, in some places, lost much of that urgency. This is greatly affecting the attitude of the Christian toward the world and the things that are of this world. We realize, as Ellen White stated, that as long as they are in the world, God's people have to do with the things of the world. (See *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 459.) However, believers who take their calling seriously must know that their first citizenship is in the kingdom of God. Its goals and principles, therefore, should be our first concern. At the same time we must become more aware of the fact that these goals and principles are to be realized *in this* world. To that end Christ sent us into the world so that all people may have opportunity to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. (See 1 Tim. 2:4.) The Christian must therefore constantly ask himself: In what ways can I best represent Christ in the world, at work, in my daily activities, among neighbors and friends? And by what attitudes, life-style, and behavior can I best make the kingdom of God a present reality as well as a hope for the future?

A Biblical View of the World

“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” (John 3:16, 17).

In most languages the term “world” has a variety of meanings. That is also true for the languages in which the Bible was written—Hebrew and Greek. There is no one word in Hebrew that corresponds to our term “world.” But there are a large number of equivalents, such as “heaven and earth,” the “all,” “age” (era), and the “habitable earth.” In Greek the words most frequently used for “world” (*kosmos* and *aion*) have at least six major meanings and many different shades of meaning. Which meaning intended in the text can be determined only by the context in which the word occurs. For instance, the apostle John urges us not to love the world, for, if anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. (See 1 John 2:15-17). Yet, is not the very heart of the gospel the assurance that God loves this world? (See John 3:16, 17.) In 1 Corinthians 1:20-31 and 3:19 the apostle Paul mentions that the wisdom of this world is foolishness in the eyes of God. Yet, Jesus Himself, in Luke 16:8, commends the sons of this world for being wiser in their generation than the sons of light. Scripture indicates that this world stands condemned in the eyes of God, and—because of Christ’s work—has already been judged. (See John 5:24-30; 12:31.) At the same time we hear God say that in Christ He has reconciled the world unto Himself and that Christ had not come to judge the world. (See 2 Cor. 5:19; John 3:17; 12:47.) All these statements would appear contradictory if we did not realize that in each instance the term “world” has a different meaning.

This insight is also important with regard to our attitude toward the world. Often our attitude has been shaped by one or two texts or by one or two different meanings only. We must learn, however, to listen to the whole biblical message concerning the world, in which each meaning is complemented and rounded out by the others.

Part 1 MADE BY GOD

“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” (Heb. 11:3).

Science has given us tremendous insights regarding the physical world, its processes and workings, its laws and its nature. For an understanding of the origin of our world, its purpose and goal, however, we must turn to divine revelation. The world itself does not show us its origin, its purpose, its future.

What does Scripture tell us about the origin and purpose of our world? Gen. 1:1; 2:4; Job 38:1-4; Ps. 19:1-4; Isa. 45:18; Col. 1:16.

A number of important insights emerge from these and other passages of Scripture:

1. Our world came into existence by the word of God (Ps. 33:6).

2. It was made for God's own glory (Ps. 8:1; 148:13).

3. Our world has beauty and orderliness; it bears the stamp of its Maker, and speaks of His eternal power and deity (Rom. 1:20).

4. Our world belongs to God (Ps. 24:1).

5. It continues only by the gracious will of God, who cares for it and who sustains its processes and workings (Acts 14:15-17).

For whom did God create the world? Gen. 1:26; Ps. 8:5, 6.

The more we penetrate outer space, the more we realize how unique our world is: the air we breathe, the climate surrounding us, the land and the water, the vegetation and the animal world. The Bible indicates that this whole world was prepared as a habitat for human beings. Each time that God completed a part of it, He “saw that it was good.” This means that it was well suited for the particular purpose for which God had prepared it. “On every leaf of the forest or stone of the mountains, in every shining star, in earth and air and sky, God's name was written.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 51. From the way the Creation account is given, it may be concluded further that each step was meant as a preparation for the next. Last in the creation of the world came man, made in the image of God, for whom it all was called into existence.

Where in the created universe do you see reflected the glory of God and His eternal power and deity?

Further Study: Psalm 104 and 148; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 44-47.

Part 2 OWNED BY GOD

“The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein” (Ps. 24:1).

In a beautiful example of Hebrew poetry whereby the second half of a verse parallels, balances, and enlarges the thought of the first half, this song of David stresses that everything on earth belongs to God—its resources and energies, its food supplies and its wealth, our homes and our factories, even we ourselves who live and work in it. “All that we have is from God. He lays His hand upon our possessions, saying: ‘I am the rightful owner of the whole universe; these are My goods.’ ”—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 245.

The basis for God’s ownership of the world and its contents is that He has made it all. He also gives us life and breath and everything. (See Acts 17:25.) “In him we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

In Psalm 24:1 we see that the environment and man both belong to God. This suggests the close tie between human beings and what surrounds them. What does that say to us concerning our relationship to the natural world?

What commission has God given to humanity in regard to the world? Gen. 1:26-28; 2:15, 18-20; Rev. 14:6, 7.

At least four points stand out clearly: (1) Human beings were made to glorify God (Isa. 43:7; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20). (2) They were made for each other: to love and to strengthen each other, to challenge and to complement each other. (See Luke 10:27; 1 John 4:7-12.) (3) They were commissioned to be fruitful and to fill the earth. (Today, the world population numbers almost 5000 million people!) (4) God put them in charge of His world, as His stewards, to explore its riches and resources and to develop the world and to preserve it, under God.

What difference do you see between man’s way of glorifying God and the way the rest of creation glorifies Him? (See John 15:8; Matt. 5:16; Rom. 15:5, 6.)

In all of God’s earthly creation only we humans have the ability to acknowledge God as the Creator. The rest of the world does so unawares, not by its own choice or volition. Only we can consciously respond to our Creator and in freedom fulfill the task for which we were placed here.

What does our stewardship of God’s world entail?

Further Study: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 50, 51.

**Part 3
THE WORLD
AS PEOPLE**

“That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not” (John 1:9, 10).

The very core of the biblical meaning of the term “world” includes *people*—human beings, as individuals or groups, such as families, language groups, races, societies, nations (Mark 16:15; Luke 2:1; John 6:33; Rom. 1:8). The world also means the things with which people are involved—human work, cultures, and organizations (Matt. 16:26). It can also mean the theater of human history. All this is what the psalmist calls the world and its fullness. (See Ps. 50:12; 89:11; etc.)

What is God’s attitude toward this world of nations, kindreds, tongues, and people? John 3:16, 17; 1 John 4:9; Luke 11:9-13; Eph. 4:6.

God loves this world! That message ought to be proclaimed from every rooftop in every corner of earth to every person. God is our Father, the One who really cares about His creatures, whatever their situation in life or their cultural, political, or ethnic background. And God loves this world and cares for it simply because He *is* love (1 John 4:8). Because God is love, He created this world. He commissioned us to explore the earth and to develop it, to build it and to shape it, because He is love. And even though we humans have largely failed to recognize God as our Father, and have ignored, even rejected, His love, God has remained the same in His attitude toward the world which He has created. He is unchanging (James 1:17). He “keeps faith forever” (Ps. 146:6, RSV). Even “if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself” (2 Tim. 2:13, RSV).

In what ways is God’s faithfulness toward His creation experienced in the world? Matt. 5:45.

The world, as God’s creation, retains some goodness, happiness, beauty, and joy. There is friendship and love, wisdom, ingenuity, and strength. Man still is crowned with some honor and glory; his work still reflects his divine commission (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:15). In spite of all the effects of sin on human life, thought, and activity, this world of man still reflects something of the goodness, glory, and power of its Maker.

In light of God’s own attitude toward the world, how should we relate to the people of this world and their activities?

Further Study: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 48-51.

**Part 4
THE WORLD
IS EVIL**

“We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness” (1 John 5:19).

Because of Adam’s sin the whole world came under the spell of evil. People, created for the glory of God, turned away from Him (Rom. 3:9-19). The result is that relations between people became broken, their activities became self-seeking, and their mental and physical strengths declined. In fact, sin has so much penetrated every nook and cranny of our life that our whole earthly existence, from our conception onward (Ps. 51:5), is evil. Even nature itself, the physical world, is suffering from this bondage to evil (Rom. 8:18-23). In the Bible the term “world” therefore has the connotations of lawlessness, greed, vainglory, hatred, selfishness, oppression, foolishness, revolt, and sin.

How has sin affected the relationship between God and the world? James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17.

God and the world have become opposites! There is a wide gulf between them, characterized by hatred, enmity, and hostility of the world toward God. People must choose whether they want to become citizens of the kingdom of God—which is not of this world—or to remain subject to Satan, the prince of this world (John 14:30); for these two kingdoms have nothing in common. They are opposites. The one represents life, purity, love, and goodness; the other—the world—stands for death, corruption, hatred, and evil.

What therefore should be the Christian’s attitude toward the world? 1 Cor. 2:12; James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17; 5:4, 5; Rev. 18:4.

The only safeguard for a Christian lies in his separation from the world. “Do not be conformed to this world,” the apostle Paul urges us, “but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom. 12:2, RSV). (See also John 18:36 and Matt. 13:22.)

How would you define the terms “worldly” and “worldliness”? (See Titus 2:11-14; 1 John 2:16.)

“The rebuke of the Lord is upon His people for their pride and unbelief. He will not restore unto them the joys of His salvation while they are departing from the instructions of His word and His Spirit.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 190.

Further Study: *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 188-191.

Part 5 RECONCILED TO GOD

“God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:19).

The message of Scripture is that God has, in Christ, reconciled the world unto Himself. Jesus, the Lamb of God, has taken away the sin of the world (John 1:29). God has not ignored the world in its state of wickedness or left it completely under the power of the evil one. He has sent His Son into the world to save it (John 3:17).

What is the meaning of the term “reconciliation”? Rom. 5:1, 8-11; 2 Cor. 5:18, 19; Eph. 2:12-18.

There are clearly two aspects to the work of reconciliation. The first refers to the new relationship of peace brought about between God and man. The previous relationship of enmity and hostility has been changed to friendliness and close communion. Before, we were strangers to God; now we have become God’s children and members of His household (Eph. 1:4, 5). The wide gulf between God and the world has been removed! Man can have free access to the Father.

The second aspect points to the key to this new relationship—forgiveness and taking away of our sins. This is an act of cleansing. Jesus has taken away the sin of the world. He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; with His stripes we were healed (Isa. 53:4-9). The power of evil in the world has been broken. The prince of this world has been judged (John 16:11). A whole new relationship has been brought about between God and the world. This was accomplished at the cross.

Besides reconciliation, what was the effect of the death of Christ upon the world? John 3:18-21; Rom. 13:11-14.

With the death and resurrection of Christ the world has entered upon its last stage of history. A new era has begun—the era in which a separation is being made between those who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and those who are rejecting Him. In the first group is being fulfilled God’s promise of a new creation, a new world, which will be fully realized at the end of time when the restoration of all things will take place. The second group—the world of evil—is being condemned for its pride, greed, selfishness, and sin, and prepared for its total destruction. With God’s act of reconciliation came also the judgment of the world (John 9:39; 12:31).

To which group in the world do I belong?

Further Study: *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 649-651.

Part 6 IN THE WORLD BUT . . .

“I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil” (John 17:15).

Six different aspects of the biblical term “world” stand out clearly: (1) God’s good creation, in its physical as well as its social, cultural, and historical aspects; (2) people and their activities, ideas, thoughts, and work; (3) fallen humanity as the object of God’s love; (4) people who have rejected Christ, or who hate Him and His disciples; (5) those who have accepted Christ, God’s new creation, which is the beginning of a new world; (6) the millions of people who have never even heard of Christ.

In the New Testament, these six constitute one unit—a totality. It is impossible to separate one aspect from the other. God’s good creation is thoroughly infected by sin, but in all the evil of the world, God’s goodness and love still triumph. In fact, it is because of God’s patience and grace that this evil world of ours still exists. (See 2 Peter 3:3-10.)

In the New Testament evil and sin are not tied to particular things, actions, people, or places. Separation from the world does not mean, therefore, isolation from people and their activities, but rather from all vainglory, selfishness, and greed. There is much in this world that is good and beautiful and given for our happiness and enjoyment. But if we use it for our own advancement and selfish ambitions, then even the best of our thoughts and actions will reflect the evil spirit of this world. Religion is no exception!

For what purpose has God placed us in this world? Isa 43:7; Mark 16:15; John 17:18; Rom. 12:1, 2.

It may all be summed up in these words: to glorify God (Rev. 14:7), to serve our neighbor, and to act as stewards of the world which God has created for us. The Christian attitude toward the world, therefore, is on the one hand positive, an affirmation of the purpose for which God has placed us here. On the other hand it must also be a rejection of all evil thoughts and actions.

What does it really mean to be in the world without being of the world?

In this time of mass communications the child of God has a greater struggle to be not of the world than has been true since the days of Sodom. At the same time he has never been kept so instantly in touch with the events and needs of the world that are flashed everywhere. How earnestly must this call, to be in but not of the world, be considered today!

Further Study: *Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 129-133.

The Church in the World?

“We who first hoped in Christ have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory” (Eph. 1:12, RSV).

Last week’s lesson ended with the question: “What does it really mean to be in the world without being of the world?” Christians generally agree that God has placed them in the world. Great disagreement exists, however, over the question of *how* to be in the world.

Basically, Christians hold to two views with regard to the church’s relationship to the world. Both views are thoroughly biblical and rooted in Old and New Testament imagery. But, whereas in Scripture these two views hold each other in balance, and correct and complement each other, in the history of Christian thought and practice these views have generally become isolated from each other. Each of these views gave rise to different, even opposite, concepts of mission and evangelism, different forms of church life and church organization, even different interpretations of Scripture and of the church’s calling and destiny.

One view holds that the church in its relationship to the world is “Christ’s fortress in a revolted world.”—*Medical Ministry*, p. 89. In this view, the church and the world are opposites: the one holy and good, the other corrupt and evil. These two are engaged in a fierce battle, a great controversy.

The other view, also thoroughly biblical, emphasizes that Christians should not isolate themselves from the world nor deny themselves the riches of the world, which, in the words of the apostle Paul, God has furnished us to enjoy. (See 1 Tim. 6:17.)

The answer to the question about how to be in the world does not lie in a compromise between these two views. Rather, it lies in the proper balance between the two. We must emphasize, more than ever before, the radical difference between believers and unbelievers, between the church and the world—in life-style, in thoughts, and in behavior. On the other hand, we should also stress that the church does not exist for itself, but for the sake of the world. Like salt, Christians must mingle with the people of the world and penetrate its whole life with the savor of the gospel. That was Christ’s way. And His way is the only true way.

Part 1 THE CHURCH A FORTRESS

“O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!” (Isa. 40:9).

In Old Testament times Israel was frequently described under the symbol of Zion, the hill upon which the old city of David was situated. (See 2 Sam. 5:7; 1 Kings 8:1.) It was a symbol of the place—and its people—where God dwelt, His church on earth. The same applied also to Jerusalem, the city of God. In New Testament times it became the symbol of the true church where people would find refuge, peace, and redemption.

What other images does the New Testament use to describe the church's difference and separation from the world? Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:5; 3:20, 21.

The ark of Noah, tossed about by storm and flood, is a fitting symbol of the church in the world. Outside is death and destruction, evil, and danger. Inside is safety, life, and redemption. Some have therefore seen in the boat stories in the Gospels an allusion to the church in the world. Water and winds were considered symbols of evil. Only in the boat is safety. (See Matt. 8:23-27; 14:22-27.) A person has to come out of the world and remain separated from it in order to be saved.

The image of the building suggests the same: safety and security lie in coming out of the world and into the building. The church is such a “spiritual house.”

The illustrations of an ark and of a building both suggest the visibility of the church in the world, its status and strength. But whereas the boat is a finished product, the building is not completed. It is in the process of construction. Only the Foundation and the Cornerstone are laid forever, and made known to the believers through prophets and apostles.

How does the image of a building affect the life and conduct of the believer? Eph. 2:19-23; 1 Peter 2:5.

The believer identifies himself with the family of the house. He shares in the full rights of the home, but he also must loyally fulfill his duties of service to strengthen the fellowship, to build up the house, and to protect it against its enemies.

What do the images of the church as a fortress, a walled city, or an ark suggest as to the organization of the church?

Further Study: *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 599-601.

Part 2 THE CHURCH AS SALT

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

Salt serves three positive purposes—to season, to preserve, and to purify. These may be applied to the functions of the church. Thus the church is called to season the world, to preserve it, and to purify it.

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

What is the greatest danger to the church as salt? Luke 14:34.

Salt is not used in large amounts to season food, but is sprinkled on it. Even so the church is as single grains spread in the world to which it has been added. The greatest danger is that it becomes so absorbed by its environment that it loses its saltiness. Then it can no longer function; it is worthless. What does that say about the danger of living in the world?

In addition to being a sign of the covenant of God, salt had several meanings in Old Testament symbolism. Salt was added to every sacrifice in the Old Testament ritual services (Lev. 2:13). Without salt the sacrifices were unacceptable. Here the salt stands for the righteousness of Christ. “Referring to this practice, Jesus said, ‘Every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.’ ‘Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another.’ All who would present themselves ‘a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God’ (Rom. 12:1), must receive the saving salt, the righteousness of our Saviour. Then they become ‘the salt of the earth,’ restraining evil among men, as salt preserves from corruption. Matt. 5:13. But if the salt has lost its savor; if there is only a profession of godliness, without the love of Christ, there is no power for good. The life can exert no saving influence upon the world. Your energy and efficiency in the upbuilding of My kingdom, Jesus says, depend upon your receiving of My Spirit. You must be partakers of My grace, in order to be a savor of life unto life.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 439.

How would the aim and methods in the mission of the church as salt differ from those of the church as a fortress?

Further Study: *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 231-234.

Part 3 A HOLY NATION

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

The term “holy nation” suggests a great difference between the church and the world. But whereas the images of the church as fortress, ark, building, or city stress the difference in form and place; holiness is a difference of being. It should be noted immediately, however, that this holiness is not the result of man’s own choice or work, but a divine gift. Our Lord Jesus Christ “gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word” (Eph. 5:25-27, RSV).

What Bible meanings for the terms “holy” or “sanctified” could be applied to the church? See Gen. 2:3; Lev. 11:44, 45; John 17:17; Heb. 13:12.

The first meaning is that the church is set apart from all ordinary things or thoughts or activities in the world. It is the opposite of secular or profane or worldly. Second, it means that the church did not come into existence by its own choice, but by the will of God, who has called it. They are His people! A third meaning is that the church—that is, the members of the church, the living stones of this holy temple—are made pure of mind and perfect of character. Whereas the spirit of the world is characterized by selfishness, greed, quarreling, pride, hatred, envy, and corruption, saints do not defraud one another or take each other to court; they are loving, humble, tolerant, patient, peaceful, and compassionate. “Against such there is no law” (Gal. 5:23).

What is the purpose of the church’s election as a holy nation? 1 Peter 2:9.

As with Israel of Old Testament times (Ex. 19:5, 6), the church was not elected for its own self but for the whole world. Divine election, either of an individual or of a whole group, is always for the sake of others. “The church is God’s appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. From the beginning it has been God’s plan that through His church shall be reflected to the world His fullness and His sufficiency. The members of the church, those whom He has called out of darkness into His marvelous light, are to show forth His glory.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 9.

How can individual believers best grow in holiness? in isolation from the world, or by involvement with the world?

Part 4 YEAST

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

It is a characteristic of yeast that it works quietly; yet it influences the whole lump of dough and supports the shape of the whole loaf. Yeast becomes one with the lump. Yeast represents the way the Holy Spirit works in the human life and also teaches us how believers ought to relate to their culture and society, influencing them by their spirit, and changing them from within, rather than from without.

In what ways does the picture of the church as yeast complement and correct that of the church as fortress or building? How does that in turn need to be broadened by the view of the church as a holy nation? (See Matt. 13:33; Eph. 2:19-22.)

The image of the building and of the fortress emphasizes not only the visibility of the church in the world but also its firmness and commitment to principles and truth. The apostle Paul, in his letters to Timothy, specifically mentions this aspect of the church as the pillar and bulwark of the truth. (See 1 Tim. 3:15.) The same image of upright support is used in Colossians 1:23 as an appeal to firm faith and unshakable hope. A similar message is found in Revelation 3:12.

The church as yeast becomes part of the world to influence it from within. Principles of freedom and human dignity, concern for the poor and the oppressed, even science and technology are some aspects of modern society which have been shaped by the Christian “yeast.” But such elements of modern life as equality between male and female, justice for minority groups, concepts of work, of marriage, sex, and family, need the constant influence of the Christian yeast, and a whole lot of it! To accomplish that function of influencing society and culture from within, the yeast needs constantly to be complemented by the view of the church as a holy nation and as a fortress.

What forms of mission and ministry best reflect this view of the church as yeast?

“The followers of Christ are to be separate from the world in principles and interests, but they are not to isolate themselves from the world. The Saviour mingled constantly with men, not to encourage them in anything that was not in accordance with God’s will, but to uplift and ennoble them.”—*Counsels to Teachers*, p. 323.

Further Study: *Testimonies*, vol. 9, pp. 19-23.

Part 5
ALIENS
AND EXILES

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

Some may feel that the image of the church as aliens and exiles runs counter to the view of the church as citizens of secular society (Rom. 13:1-7). How can the same church be composed of those who are no longer strangers and pilgrims, and yet at the same time consist of aliens and exiles? The answer is quite simple, though full of tensions: Christians must be both! As members of the church they are citizens of the kingdom of heaven. Therefore they do not fit in with the kingdom of darkness, where evil lusts are in control (1 Peter 2:11). As members of society they are one with the people among whom they live and work as Christ came into continual contact with the world, its ambitions, activities, and desires. But in these matters they must remain “strangers.” Finally, as the records of the men of faith testify in Hebrews 11, Christians should never become settled on this earth. To be a Christian in the world means to be a pilgrim. And that means that, except for time spent in training centers, Christians should not colonize together but constantly live dispersed among the people of the world. (See, for example, James 1:1; 1 Peter 1:1.)

How are believers actually exiles and aliens in their own world?
Heb. 11:8-16.

Everyone who is a member of the household of God thereby becomes a stranger in his own culture and country for all of his life (1 Peter 2:11).

What did Jesus say that indicates the risk of living as aliens and strangers in the world? Matt. 10:16-18, 22; 24:9, 10.

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

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

Further Study: *Steps to Christ*, “Rejoicing in the Lord,” pp. 125, 126.

Part 6 AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST

“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:20).

In this week’s lesson, so far, it has been pointed out that there are two ways in which the church must relate to the world. On the one hand there’s the demand to come out of the world and to be separate from it. On the other hand we are plainly told that the essence of being the church in the world is to become one with the people of the world in taking an interest in their needs, interests, work, and ambitions. Since both views are clearly biblical, we now must give consideration to the question: How are these two views related? And how can they both be implemented? Let there be no misunderstanding about it: The church must be both wholly different from the world—in its life-style, thought patterns, and conduct—and at the same time be part of the world and identify with its needs and activities. It cannot be denied that there is an inherent tension here. But we must learn to live with that tension and make it fruitful in our lives.

Describe the role of an ambassador for Christ. Eph. 6:20; 2 Cor. 5:17-20.

We are called to represent Christ in and to the world. And at the same time we are called to bring the world to Christ. In order to do so we must be both a member of the household of Christ and a child of this world in the same way that Christ Himself was both the Son of God and the Son of man. Christian life in the world is characterized by a pendulum movement. We are called out of the world and sent back in; we are gathered and dispersed. This pendulum movement has at least three aspects. First, there is the weekly rhythm of coming out of the world where we live and work to worship and fellowship together on God’s holy day. As we worship and fellowship together, we realize that we are not doing it for our own selves, but to the glory of God and for the sake of the world. Each worship service, therefore, should be a preparation for our dispersion into the world, for whom the church exists. Second, there is our daily involvement in the world’s secular affairs and our coming out of the world to be with Christ in our daily devotions. Third, we participate in the ambassadorial role of the church as missionaries, serving, proclaiming, and returning with the fruit of our labor.

Why must we balance these two views of the church?

Further Study: *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 9-12.

“So Send I You”

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

The incarnation is at the heart of the gospel. It teaches us clearly what God’s objectives are for His church on earth today: (1) In Christ the work of salvation has been accomplished. In Him God has reconciled the world unto Himself. The kingdom has come! This message of redemption, freedom, and peace, however, needs to be proclaimed in all the world. To that end has Christ sent us into the world. (2) The message of the New Testament is that, with the first coming of Christ, the kingdom of God has become a reality on earth. (See Matt. 4:17; 12:28.) This kingdom, however, does not consist of words, but of deeds. (See Luke 6:46-49.) It is a lived reality, embodied in flesh and blood, in conduct, and in relations between people. (See verse 21.) (3) Christ came into this world to bring healing to the sick, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to feed the hungry, to help the poor, to strengthen those who are weak. (See, for example, Luke 4:18-21.) In obedience to our Master and in imitation of His own example, we must make Christ’s goals our own! (See Isa. 58:6-10; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 369.) (4) Jesus came into this world to unmask the devil and to show the true nature of evil and sin (1 John 3:8). Said Jesus Himself: “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” (Luke 10:18, RSV). And immediately He then added, “I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy” (verse 19, RSV). (5) Jesus said that for judgment He had come into the world (John 9:39). This work of judgment is also being accomplished through His church. By putting their trust in God and accepting the light which shines into the world through the proclamation, service, and fellowship of the church, people will be saved. But those who choose darkness over light are thereby condemned already (John 3:18, 19). The commission to preach the gospel of salvation is therefore at the same time a warning of the judgment. All this is accomplished by participating in the work of Christ from the heavenly sanctuary through the power of His Spirit.

**Part 1
TO SAVE
THE LOST**

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

When man fell into sin, a plan began to unfold immediately whereby God’s wayward children could be saved and His kingdom could be restored. At first God had talked to man face to face; but after Adam and Eve had sinned, God could reach them only through intermediaries. No man can see God and live (Ex. 33:20). So God sent to man His angels, His Spirit, His help, and redemption (Ps. 20:2; 111:9)—sometimes also the plague and the sword (Jeremiah 27 and 29). He has sent prophets and other people with special messages of hope. At one time God even called a whole nation into existence and placed it at the crossroads of the world with the goal of bringing an end to all suffering, quarreling, and oppression in the world. But none of these agencies could accomplish what God has accomplished in Jesus Christ, His own Son; namely, “to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons” (Gal. 4:5, RSV), and to restore the kingdom of God.

**What has been the effect of Christ’s saving ministry in the world?
Rom. 3:24-26; 5:1-11; 6:4, 9-11; Gal. 3:24-29; Col. 1:20-23; 2:6, 7.**

“Jesus came to restore in man the image of his Maker. None but Christ can fashion anew the character that has been ruined by sin. He came to expel the demons that had controlled the will. He came to lift us up from the dust, to reshape the marred character after the pattern of His divine character, and to make it beautiful with His own glory.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 37, 38.

In what way are Christians called to participate in Christ’s ministry of salvation? Mark 16:15; Matt. 28:19, 20; 2 Cor. 5:20.

The Saviour’s commission to the disciples included all the believers. It includes all believers in Christ to the end of time. It is a fatal mistake to suppose that the work of saving souls depends alone on the ordained minister. All to whom the heavenly inspiration has come are put in trust with the gospel. All who receive the life of Christ are ordained to work for the salvation of their fellow men. For this work the church was established, and all who take upon themselves its sacred vows are thereby pledged to be co-workers with Christ.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 822.

Who are the people in your part of the world who have not yet heard the gospel? In what ways could you best be involved in the work of reaching them?

Further Study: *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 825-828.

**Part 2
TO RESTORE
THE KINGDOM**

“This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come” (Matt. 24:14).

With the coming of Christ the kingdom of God has become established. The great pillars of that kingdom are love, freedom, humility, and obedience. At one time the whole universe was based on these principles. But then pride arose in the mind of Lucifer. He perverted the freedom which God had granted to His creatures; and, moved by selfish ambition, he led many to revolt against the King of the universe, first the angels, then also man. Not only was the harmony in the universe broken and God’s authority put in question, but Satan also claimed the earth as his and styled himself the prince of this world. And indeed, through his control of men, he held dominion over the world. But in Christ, God’s sovereignty over the world has been restored; the way is open for man to be set free from the power of the devil. The dominion Adam had lost through sin has been recovered by Jesus. The principles of God’s kingdom have been proved true and right, and man can be restored to the image of his Maker.

What evidence did Jesus give that the kingdom of God was restored? Matt. 11:4-6; 13:19, 24, 31, 44, 45, 47.

The coming of the kingdom of God is the central theme of Jesus’ life and work. It is the fundamental message of His parables, and is supported by His miracles. That evidence, however, rests on our acceptance of His Word. If we fail to see who Jesus really is—namely, the Messiah—then even His miracles are no evidence that the kingdom has come. But to those who repent of their sins, and accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour, these miracles are clear signs that the kingdom of God has indeed been established in Christ.

In what ways are Christ’s followers today called to restore and to build the kingdom of God? Matt. 24:14; 28:19, 20; Rev. 14:6, 7; 18:1-3.

The kingdom is brought about by God Himself, but He uses human instrumentality to implement it. Christ has called His church to set up the kingdom of God in the world. (See *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 16.) And, though that kingdom of God is not of this world, it does express itself in earthly realities such as relationships between people, human conduct, work, art, and culture.

Further Study: *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 13-16.

**Part 3
TO HELP
THE POOR**

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18, 19).

Bible commentators generally agree that “the acceptable year of the Lord” refers to the year of jubilee; that is, every fiftieth year, when the slaves were freed, debts were canceled, property was returned to its original owner, and provisions were made for the poor. (See Leviticus 25 and 27.) The work of Christ had this effect too. “Explaining the words He had read, He spoke of the Messiah as a reliever of the oppressed, a liberator of captives, a healer of the afflicted, restoring sight to the blind, and revealing to the world the light of truth.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 237.

How has this work of the Messiah been fulfilled in Jesus’ life and work? Matt. 11:4-6; 14:14-21.

It is important to stress here that Jesus was not sent to reform society or to create a new economic order. Yet the implementation of the principles of the kingdom of God had that effect! The poor found a new dignity and the oppressed a new equality. The hungry were filled with good things, and the rich were sent away empty. (See Luke 1:53.) And wherever the gospel of the kingdom is preached with power, people are transformed and—as a result—societies are changed!

In what ways should the followers of Christ today follow the direction of Jesus and the example of His apostles? Matt. 10:5-8; Gal. 2:9, 10.

At the time of writing this lesson, over 60 percent of the world population is undernourished; some 20,000 people are starving to death every day. In many areas of the world, poverty has reached such a deplorable state that it is robbing people of their human dignity. Millions of people lack the most basic form of human freedom; large groups of people are being oppressed. What should the church’s mission be in these conditions? (See *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 637, 640.)

What part are we as Sabbath School members having in the various channels of outreach to the world’s physical needs? Through community services, Seventh-day Adventist World Services, and other agencies than our own, we can help. Fellowship in serving brings us near to the heart of Christ.

Further Study: *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 637-641.

**Part 4
TO UNMASK
THE DEVIL**

“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8).

Jesus came into this world to unmask the devil and to show the true nature of evil and sin. The devil conceals his real purpose and hides behind a “screen of light” so that he can lead us astray. But he is a liar! (See John 8:44.) Jesus came to make that very clear. Christ also explained to His hearers that evil often appears in the disguise of respected social and religious leaders and in the form of accepted institutions, rules, and regulations. Jesus warned the people of “the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees” (Matt. 16:6, 11). By revealing to the world the real source of evil and the different forms it takes in life, Jesus actually destroyed the work of the devil. He bids us to follow His example.

In light of the following passages, why do you think it was important for Christ to reveal the true nature of the devil and sin? Rev. 12:7-11; Heb. 2:14, 15; 1 Thess. 5:22; 1 Peter 3:10-12.

It is imperative for us to understand the true nature of sin and the forms and disguises in which evil operates in this world. How else would we be able to “resist the devil” (James 4:7)? How would we be able to overcome evil unless we know what and where it is? (See Rom. 12:21; 1 John 2:13, 14.)

But there is another reason still. Our world is a spectacle to the whole universe. Even the angels who have remained loyal to God did not quite comprehend the nature of sin and of Lucifer’s rebellion. For the good of the universe, therefore, it has become imperative that the true character of the devil and his workings be clearly understood. In the life and death of Christ, this work has been accomplished.

How should the followers of Christ participate in this work of unmasking the devil and of revealing the true nature of evil in the world? Matt. 10:1, 7.

A church that takes seriously its mission in the world will proclaim and practice principles of truth that will clearly contrast with the evil that keeps millions of people in physical, mental, spiritual, or social bondage and threatens the growth of the believers.

Should Christians publicly denounce evil in society if certain practices, habits, and institutions clearly defy the principles of the kingdom of God? (See *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 509, 510.)

Further Study; *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 138-142.

**Part 5
TO JUDGE
THE WORLD**

“Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind” (John 9:39).

It is on the basis of the sacrifice of Christ at the cross and the work of the Holy Spirit on hearts that have never heard the actual gospel story that the world will be judged. A man without a knowledge of what constitutes sin is not held accountable for his sinful deeds. After a person has learned by the law what sin is and has been offered pardon through the blood of Jesus Christ, he becomes responsible for his deeds. When he continues living in sin and remains separated from God, he is guilty and stands condemned before God. This is what divides the spiritually seeing from the spiritually blind. The proclamation of the gospel, therefore, always carries with it a warning of the impending judgment. Jesus Himself explains it this way: If a person accepts the light and lives by it, he does not fall under the judgment. But if a person rejects the light of life and chooses to remain in darkness, he stands already condemned before God. (See John 3:16-20.)

How are Christians called to participate in this work of judgment today? Matt. 18:15-18; 1 Cor. 6:1-5; Gal. 6:1.

It is through the life and work of the church that God is bringing about the judgment. Christ sends us as light into darkness, in the same way as He Himself came as the light of the world. (See John 8:12; 9:4, 5; Matt. 5:14-16.) If people refuse to live by the light and choose darkness, they are thereby condemned.

This raises the question: Do we represent Christ so that people who have seen and heard us have seen and heard Christ? The world will be judged by its attitude toward Christ. But if they have never heard or seen Him clearly in the lives and words of the church, then how can they be held responsible? The call to mission is an awesome responsibility.

When will a final judgment take place? John 12:31; Heb. 9:27; Jude 6; Rev. 20:4.

In a sense, the judgment began with the first coming of Christ. However, the Bible speaks of a certain day at the end of time when the living and the dead will be judged. In preparation for that great day, Christ has called into existence a movement which He has sent into all the world to warn it of impending judgment.

Are we really preparing the world for this great day of judgment? What does this work imply?

Further Study: *The Great Controversy*, pp. 603-612.

**Part 6
TO TAKE
PART IN
JUDGMENT**

“Of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not men” (Heb. 8:1, 2).

Christ’s mission did not end at the cross. After His ascension He was seated at the right hand of God (Eph. 1:20-23) where He continued His work. An understanding of Christ’s continuing work in the heavenly sanctuary is needed in order for the church to understand fully its mission in the world today. The church has no other mission but to participate in the continuing work of Christ.

What is Christ’s work in the heavenly sanctuary, in which He has called us to participate? Eph. 1:19-23; Heb. 4:14-16; 9:24; 2 Cor. 5:10.

This work of Christ is threefold: He is Lord and Ruler of all things; He serves as man’s Mediator and High Priest; He is Judge of all.

First, it is because Christ has been given full authority and all power in heaven and on earth that His mission on earth continues. It was on the basis of that power and authority that Christ has sent us into all the world as His ambassadors (Matt. 28:18-20). Mark says that when the Lord sat down at the right hand of God, His disciples went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that attended it (Mark 16:15-20). And beyond that, Christ is ruling over this world in the affairs of nations and in the activities of men. The book of Revelation gives us a powerful description of Christ’s ruling activities in the world, in which the church is called to participate through obedience, faithful witness, humble service, and love.

Second is Christ’s ministry of reconciliation. He lives continually to make intercession for us (Heb. 7:25); He is drawing people to Himself (John 12:32) and is making applications of His atoning sacrifice at the cross (Heb. 10:19-22). This intercessory work is just as essential to accomplish His mission of restoration and reconciliation as was His death upon the cross.

Finally, Christ is at work as Judge. Since 1844, this work, which the Father had entrusted to the Son (John 5:22), has been in its final stage. Those who have received Christ and His Word will be separated from the ones who rejected Him. Now is the time in which this separation will be final, and the saints will inherit the kingdom which the Lord has prepared for them.

Further Study: *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 802-808.

Christ Our Example

“I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them” (John 13:15-17).

In Christ’s mission to the world His followers find the purpose and direction of their own mission. The direction is toward the millions of people on earth in their needs, interests, and activities. The purpose is that all these people be saved and the kingdom of God be restored. And since we are living in the last days of this world’s history, this mission of reconciliation, warning, and restoration has an immense urgency. Jesus said that as the Father had sent Him into the world, so He sent the disciples into the world. (See John 17:18; 20:21.) This thought was the theme of last week’s lesson study, but it has another dimension still. It tells us about our Sender and the purpose of our mission in the world. It speaks about the kind of work we are called to do, but it also emphasizes what kind of life the followers of Christ should live and how their mission in the world can be achieved.

Some will say now that the life and the work of Christ in the world were so particular, and therefore so different from ours, that they cannot be the model for us. In a way, of course, that observation is correct. After all, He was the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:13-16).

Yet the Bible also tells us that Jesus was verily man. He is called the Son of man, an expression used more than 80 times in the Gospels to indicate that “as Jesus was in human nature, so God means His followers to be.”—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 21. Found in the likeness of man, Jesus became as one of us. (See Rom. 8:3; Phil. 2:8; Heb. 2:10-17.) He was subject to our infirmities and weaknesses; He identified with our needs, frailties, and failings. He also subjected Himself to all the humbling conditions of man in this world and was in everything tempted as we are (Heb. 2:14-18), all with one exception: Jesus did not sin (Heb. 4:15).

From His Sonship and His divine origin we may learn the purpose of our life and mission in the world. In His humanity, Jesus has shown us how to live in this world, and how we can fulfill the purpose and mission of our lives.

**Part 1
TO GLORIFY
GOD**

“I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do” (John 17:4).

These words truly characterize the whole person and life of Jesus Christ: “I have glorified thee on the earth.” He did not seek His own glory (John 8:50), but the glory of Him who sent Him (7:18). His whole life and thought centered in God. And because of that total surrender of His will and His whole self to God who sent Him, Jesus could be the person He was and accomplish His mission in the world.

Give some clear examples of how Jesus glorified God in His life. Matt. 4:1-10; John 4:34; Luke 5:23-26; 18:18, 19.

From the very beginning of His life to the very end Jesus lived for God, glorifying Him and doing His will only. As a child, Jesus explained to His earthly parents: “Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” (Luke 2:49, RSV). His love for His heavenly Father came first. Faced with temptation, Jesus found in His surrender to God His power and strength to overcome the evil one. And because of that attitude, the devil left Him. Whereas the first Adam failed because of his desire to be equal with God, the second Adam, though of divine origin Himself, “did not think to snatch at equality with God, but made himself nothing. . . . He humbled himself. . . . Therefore God raised him to the heights” (Phil. 2:6-9, NEB).

At the end of His life, when He was wrestling in the garden, Jesus cried out: “Not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). He would rather die, in obedience to God, than to seek a way out that was not according to God’s will. Is not the hallmark of Jesus’ life in this world contained in His words: “My food is to do the will of him who sent me” (John 4:34, RSV).

What was the effect of this attitude of Jesus on the people who heard Him and saw Him? John 8:37-43.

To His believing followers, Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I go to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son; if you ask anything in my name, I will do it” (John 14:12-14, RSV).

What detracts me in this world from really following Christ’s example to glorify God in my life?

Further Study: *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 114-123.

**Part 2
DOING
HIS WILL**

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

Seventh-day Adventists have found in this message of the first angel of Revelation 14 the foundation of their work and mission in the world. All too little attention has been given, however, to the question of how these nations, kindreds, tongues, and people could be persuaded to give glory to God and to honor Him. From Jesus' own example we may have to learn that people believe what they see in others. When our lives are, by the grace of Christ, a reflection of God's character, and thus a praise to His name, the world will better know what it means to give glory to God.

What are some of the ways in which we are called to glorify God?
John 15:8; Rom. 15:5-9; 1 Cor. 6:20; 10:31.

“Love for God, zeal for His glory, and love for fallen humanity, brought Jesus to earth to suffer and to die. This was the controlling power in His life. This principle He bids us adopt.”
—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 330.

The kingdom of God and its righteousness should be first and uppermost in our minds and hearts, ambitions and desires (Matt. 6:33). We must learn to pray again “Thy will be done” (Matt. 6:10) and then, as true servants of Christ, do the will of God from the heart (Eph. 6:6).

What will be the result when believers glorify God in their life and work? **Matt. 5:16; Rom. 15:9.**

The effect of our life and work will be the same as Christ's: people will glorify God and put their faith in Him. There will also be others who will be annoyed and reject Christ, thinking it foolish to attribute their life and health and everything else to God. (See Acts 17:25, 28; Rom. 1:20-23.) But the result of that rejection of God will be that they will be “filled with all manner of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice” (Rom. 1:29, RSV). When this separation between those who glorify God and those who boast in their own achievements beomes complete, the Lord will return. The call to honor and glorify God is a work to which God has called His church in these last days. (See Rev. 14:6, 7.)

In which ways do I glorify God in my life and thought and work?
(Read Rom. 6:11-14.)

Further Study: *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 328-332.

Part 3
A LIFE
OF SERVICE

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

Jesus' life on earth centered in glorifying God and in serving His neighbor. In fact, these two are inseparable. He who loves God also loves his brother. And we serve God by serving our neighbor. (See 1 John 4:13-21; Matt. 25:31-46.)

What do the following passages teach us about the purpose of Jesus' life? Matt. 4:23-25; Luke 8:1-3. (See also Acts 10:38.)

Christ found His fulfillment in life, not in being served, but in serving others. His fellow human beings came first in His life! So much so that He took upon Himself our griefs and our sorrows; He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities (Isa. 53:4-6); He bore the penalty of our wrongdoings. Yes, He took upon Himself our diseases so that we might be healed; He chose death so that we might find life (Isa. 53:7-9; John 17:1-3). The cross, that great sign of His absolute surrender to the will of God, is at the same time the most powerful evidence of His love for His fellowmen. Christ's every thought and act showed that He lived for others. He even died for us. (See 2 Cor. 5:15; 1 Thess. 5:10.)

In what ways is Christ's ministry in the world an example for every believer? John 13:12-17; Phil. 2:5-11.

Christ's acts of service can never be equaled by us. But we must develop the same attitude. At one time Jesus called a child and put it before His disciples, saying, Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 18:1-4). On another occasion Jesus compared the way of the world with the principles of His kingdom. In the world the greatest are those with authority, power, and position. But not so among the believers. There the greatest is the one who serves the most. (See Luke 22:24-27; Matt. 23:11, 12.)

Think of people in the world today who would need your service most. Are you ready to serve them? In what ways? What is actually hindering you from serving them?

“In His life and lessons, Christ has given a perfect exemplification of the unselfish ministry which has its origin in God. God does not live for Himself. By creating the world, and by upholding all things, He is constantly ministering for others.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 649.

Further Study: *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 649-651.

**Part 4
LOVING MY
NEIGHBOR**

“He answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live” (Luke 10:27, 28).

Love to God and to our neighbor is closely intertwined. We show our love to God by loving our neighbor. If a person says he loves God but hates his brother, he is a liar. (See 1 John 4:20, 21.)

By what means do we express our love for our neighbor? Luke 10:29-37; James 2:1-9; Matt. 25:31-46.

“In the story of the good Samaritan, Christ illustrates the nature of true religion. He shows that it consists not in systems, creeds, or rites, but in the performance of loving deeds, in bringing the greatest good to others, in genuine goodness.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 497.

What should be the basis of our life of service in the world? 2 Cor. 5:14-18; 1 John 4:19-21.

Christian service, though it may outwardly at times resemble the work of other service agencies, is rooted in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. His love leaves us no other choice. But without that love as the motivating factor all our service is of little value. “If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing” (1 Cor. 13:3, RSV). In a message that carries symbolic significance, the Lord spoke of the many good works of the believers of the church at Ephesus. But He rebuked them for having lost the love they had at first. So God warned them to repent and do the same works, but now rooted in love. (See Rev. 2:1-5.)

What is the relationship between the proclamation of the gospel and Christian service? Can the one bear fruit without the other?

“The work of gathering in the needy, the oppressed, the suffering, the destitute, is the very work which every church that believes the truth for this time should long since have been doing. We are to show the tender sympathy of the Samaritan in supplying physical necessities, feeding the hungry, bringing the poor that are cast out to our homes, gathering from God every day grace and strength that will enable us to reach to the very depths of human misery and help those who cannot possibly help themselves.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 276.

Further Study: *Christian Service*, pp. 186-193.

Part 5
IN THE POWER
OF GOD

“Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!” (Matt. 8:26, 27).

Indeed, what sort of man is this? It is important to stress here that Jesus did not calm the waves and quiet the winds in the power of His innate divinity. He had laid that aside. Jesus' power in the world—whether of nature or of man—was the power of God in response to His request as a man. It is a power, therefore, which God may entrust to any believer who puts his whole trust in God as Jesus did. “It was not as the ‘Master of earth and sea and sky’ that He reposed in quiet. That power He had laid down, and He says, ‘I can of Mine own self do nothing.’ John 5:30. He trusted in the Father’s might. It was in faith—faith in God’s love and care—that Jesus rested, and the power of that word which stilled the storm was the power of God.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 336.

What promise is there that believers may have the kind of power that Jesus had in His day? Mark 16:16-20; Matt. 17:14-21.

The question is important for a number of reasons. If we would, we could indeed become reflections of what Jesus was in human flesh. By the aid of the Spirit, we could overcome even our hereditary tendencies. (See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 671; *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 175.) Instead of their controlling us, we could keep them under control and change them. (See Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1138; vol. 6, p. 1101; *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 315; *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 259.) If we would, the effect of our collective lives in this world could have a much wider extent even than Jesus' own work, as He said it would. (See John 14:12; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 664.)

Scripture affirms that we could indeed have the power to resist evil. (See 1 John 3:9, 10.) *But if we fail to do so, it is because we do not exercise the gift of faith.* (See Matt. 17:14-20.) As Ellen White once wrote so powerfully, “He (Christ) came to the world to display the glory of God, that man might be uplifted by its restoring power. God was manifested in Him that He might be manifested in them. Jesus revealed no qualities, and exercised no powers, that men may not have through faith in Him. His perfect humanity is that which all His followers may possess, if they will be in subjection to God as He was.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 664.

By what means and to what extent may we exercise the power that Christ revealed?

Further Study: *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 662-670.

Part 6 MISSION AS INCARNATION

“But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:7, 8).

Christ came to reveal to the world the true nature of God as our Father. He came to bring about reconciliation and restoration and to make an end to sin, death, and the devil. And He did so by taking the form of a human being, by becoming one with the people whom He was seeking to save, by identifying with the world, and by participating in its life and activities. From Christ’s example we learn, therefore, that all mission must continue by His followers’ becoming one with those to whom they have been sent, identifying with their deepest needs, and participating in their daily activities in order to claim them for Christ. The “missionary identification” has always a double aspect: (1) Christ living in us (Gal. 2:20), for without Him we can do nothing (John 15:4-6); and (2) we become one with the people to whom we have been sent as His representatives.

In what ways did the apostle Paul relate to people in order to reach them with the gospel? 1 Cor. 9:19-23.

Our world is a mosaic of different cultures and societies, races and religions, economic and political ideologies, classes and communities. And all of them are constantly changing. Would this mean, then, that different methods of labor and a variety of forms of communicating the message should be devised, which must also constantly change? Yes! We must “realize the necessity of adapting . . . to circumstances, and meeting the people where they are.” —*Gospel Workers*, p. 381.

By the parable of the four kinds of soil, Jesus illustrated the need to make a careful study of the world into which we are sent with the gospel in order to plan and prepare for a rich harvest of souls. Read Matt. 13:3-9, 18-23.

In what ways does the need to identify with people of different cultures, times, societies affect the way we preach the message?

The church has always faced the challenge of adapting its message to the changing times and places in which it has worked. One great difficulty is to adapt the message without basically changing the message. Nearly every major step that has diluted the authority of the Bible has started out as an attempt to make it mean more to a particular time or people.

Further Study: *Gospel Workers*, pp. 330-333, 406, 480.

The Gospel and Culture

“After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands” (Rev. 7:9).

Our world is composed of vastly different cultures. At the second coming of Christ people from these diverse cultures will bless their Lord, shouting, “Salvation to our God” (Rev. 7:10). Christians are both a channel and a reflection of this experience of unity in diversity.

To accomplish this experience to its fullest extent, the church needs to understand the meaning of culture, the relationship of culture to the life of the church and the spread of the gospel. The last part of last week’s lesson made us aware of the fact that, in order to reach people with the gospel of Christ, methods of labor and ways of communication must be developed which will meet this great diversity of cultures in the world. Second, we learned that the message itself should be shaped to meet the particular needs and circumstances in which people find themselves (*Gospel Workers*, p. 330). This does not mean, of course, that there is no absolute truth. There most certainly is. But much of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus comes to us in the particular forms and expressions of human cultures. This week’s lesson is exploring this issue further: What is culture? How does it affect a person’s life and religious experience? In which ways does culture shape the church’s message and mission? What effects does culture change have on the church? How can the church maintain unity amidst the diversity of cultures represented by its believers around the world?

Before we turn to the Word of God for some answers and guidelines on these questions, we need first to settle on the following comprehensive definition of culture: Culture is the way a particular group of people thinks, feels, expresses itself, behaves, and arranges its whole life and existence. Culture is people’s design for living. Culture is what makes us the persons we are in human society. It is the framework, also, in which the gospel reaches us—in which it must express itself and bear fruit. It is a source both of strength and of conflict, a vehicle and an obstacle to the gospel and the believer’s growth in truth and in Christian maturity.

**Part 1
MAN, A
CULTURAL
BEING**

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let him have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth” (Gen. 1:26).

What is there in man that enables him to control the world and to create his own environment? He has tamed wild beasts and domesticated wild plants. He has made dry land where there was water and turned deserts into green valleys. He has left his footprints on the moon and probed the secrets of distant planets. What is there in man that enables him to accomplish such feats? In physical strength he is not nearly so powerful as the animals he tames. His body is not nearly so well adapted to the extremes of heat and cold as are those of certain animals. Exposed to the burning sun or to severe cold, he has no natural protection. The human infant is among the most helpless beings among the mammals, incapable of survival by itself. The answer to this question lies in the biblical account of the creation of man “in the image of God.” Man has been endowed by God with powers akin to His own. (See *Education*, p. 17.) This endowment is seen in his capacity to think, to contemplate, and to communicate his thoughts through speech, writing, gestures, art, and symbols. It is seen in his ability to remember his experiences and to project them into the future, to imagine and to invent, to respond to his environment and to change it, to build and to explore, and to organize and to develop.

Why was man’s right to control the earth and to shape it lost after the Fall? Eccl. 7:29; Gen. 6:5, 6; Mark 7:21-23.

Since the Fall all human work, thought, action, and behavior is permeated with evil. The image of God in man has been distorted, but it has not been destroyed. Man still has the power to control the earth and to make his own environment. That control is now marred, however, by harshness and selfishness. His social, economic, and physical environment is corrupted and polluted. Man is still—and always will be—a cultural being, that is, the creator of culture and a product of it.

What mandate is given to man in Genesis 2:15? (See also Isa. 65:21-23.)

How does culture shape our whole life and thought, and influence who and what we are?

Further Study: *Education*, pp. 13-19.

Part 2
MESSAGE
AND CULTURE

“And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground” (Ex. 3:5).

Man was made to glorify God (Isa. 43:7; Col. 1:16) and to worship Him (Rev. 14:7). The ways in which we express awe in worship are very much determined by our culture. In large parts of the Near and Far East taking off one’s shoes is the most appropriate way of expressing awe before God. In other cultures, however, it is expressed by bowing the head, folding the hands, covering the head, kneeling, closing the eyes, or lifting up the hands.

What biblical modes of expressing awe, joy, praise, or fellowship can you think of which differ from those in your own culture? (For examples, see 1 Cor. 16:20; 1 Thess. 5:26; 1 Peter 5:14; 1 Sam. 18:6; 2 Sam. 6:12-14; Ps. 150:4, 5; Eccl. 3:4.)

Why don’t we express our praises and gratitude to God by dancing? Why can we not? Or why do we not greet each other in our churches with a holy kiss? Let us first consider that both the dance and the kiss have particular meanings and connotations in many modern cultures which differ from those in Bible times.

In this light, what would be the meaning of 1 Corinthians 11:4-16 and 14:33-35? (Compare 1 Tim. 2:11, 12.)

As was the case with Moses whom God told to take off his shoes, so also with Paul’s injunctions to women to cover their head and to be silent in the churches—these must be understood in the context of the particular culture of those days. Does this mean, then, that God’s Word comes to us in the forms, expressions, and customs of particular cultures? Definitely so! For in order to be understood by men, God’s Word must be expressed in human forms and symbols that belong to the particular culture in which people live. There are several consequences of this insight: (1) When God’s Word is communicated to people of other cultures, it must be “translated” into forms and expressions which are meaningful to them. (2) Certain passages of the biblical message must find different applications in different cultures. (3) When cultures change, not the principle, but the application of the biblical message may also have to change.

Give some examples of expressions or applications of the biblical message that have changed in your own culture.

Further Study: *The Great Controversy*, “Introduction,” pp. v-vii.

Part 3 MISSION AND CULTURE

“Certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1).

Religious practices and beliefs are part of the culture in which they arose and developed. Religion itself is not a product of culture, for God is above culture. At the same time, however, the expressions of our religious beliefs and experience are very much formed and shaped by our social, physical, and intellectual environment. In the same way as the Bible came to us in human dress, so also religion reflects the culture in which it arose and developed. Circumcision, for example, was not practiced by Israel only. God gave it special meaning for them. When a church—which, like its Head and Founder, has clearly a human and a divine aspect—moves across its own cultural boundaries, the question arises: Which part of its beliefs and practices are cultural, and need not be—or should not be—required of people of other cultures? and which part constitutes the absolute in the divine revelation and is essential to people of all cultures?

How was the Antioch problem resolved relating to circumcision? Acts 15:1, 2, 22-31. (Compare with Gal. 2:11-14.)

The issue in the church in Antioch is as relevant today as it was then. The Seventh-day Adventist Church arose and developed in the context of the North American culture of the nineteenth century. It was God's choice to reveal Himself in that particular context. But, as in earlier times, God's church adopted thereby forms and practices which were peculiar to the American culture of that time. When Adventist missionaries went to Europe, and then to Africa and Australia, to Latin America, Asia, and Oceania, they carried the advent message with them in the particular forms and expressions of their own culture. Unawares, they thereby introduced certain practices and beliefs which were very relevant and meaningful in the context of their own culture but not in the cultures of these other continents. As Ellen White wrote to workers in foreign missions, “The worker in foreign fields will come in contact with all classes of people and all varieties of minds, and he will find that different methods of labor are required to meet the needs of the people.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 468.

By what criteria do we know which part of our religion is cultural—and therefore relative—and which part is absolute and therefore essential to people of all cultures at all times?

Further Study: *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 188-200.

**Part 4
CULTURE
CHANGE**

“Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth” (1 Cor. 8:1).

It is necessary to raise the question here: Why didn't the apostle Paul in his later work stick to the ruling of the Council of Jerusalem? One of the demands of that Council to the Gentiles was “to abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols” (Acts 15:29, RSV). Although retaining brotherly love and respect for the scruples of others, the apostle clearly permits the Corinthians to deviate from that “holy requirement” and suggests that it was all right to eat meat which had been offered to idols. For these idols, he argues, are nothing (1 Cor. 8:4). The same argument is used also in 1 Corinthians 10:18-33, where the apostle Paul suggests: “Eat whatever is sold in the meat market” (verse 25). Why this change?

Although principles are changeless and always require respect, new circumstances had arisen, a new social situation and a different cultural context had developed which modified the application of the council's requirements. It was no longer applied in the same way to people living in this new situation. That demand of the council was still truth! Truth is not fixed by culture or circumstance. But it was no longer present truth, that is, relevant to the particular social and cultural situation in which the recipients of Paul's letter found themselves. This means that certain practices of the church may be changed when the church moves across cultural boundaries or finds itself in a situation which (radically) differs from the church in previous generations. The church is not “subject to forms and rituals as expressive of its nature. . . . The true nature of Christianity is not in forms and ceremonies. The genius of Christianity is its spirituality, its worshiping of God in spirit and in truth. It was intended that Christianity should be freed as far as possible from forms and ceremonies.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 320.

Since conflicts and tensions over changes in form, ceremony, and religious requirement in the church are unavoidable, what biblical principle in the following passages can guide us to solve, or to live with, that tension? Rom. 14:10-13; 1 Cor. 8:9-13; Phil. 3:15, 16.

Christian behavior should be governed by the principle to glorify God and to care for our neighbor. Certain practices may appear to be good; but if they hurt our neighbor and become a stumbling block to his faith and relationship with God, they become evil.

Further Study: *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 547-551.

**Part 5
CONVERSION
AND CULTURE**

There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord overall is rich unto all that call upon him" (Rom. 10:12).

It has often been contended that once people are converted, cultural distinctions between them cease to exist and that they are all members of one family, characterized by one and the same culture. In a sense that is true; for the same principles of the kingdom of God govern believers in Africa, Asia, the Americas, Europe, and Oceania. The early Christians spoke of themselves, therefore, as constituting "a third culture," that is, neither Jew nor Greek, but adhering to a way of life and thought (culture) that was different from both—namely, a Christian culture.

On the other hand, however, we ought to recognize that cultures are essential to human life, thought, and organization. They are the design whereby people live and are part of God's good creation as well as a gift of His grace after the Flood. Bible passages indicate the following: (1) Our God is a universal God. He has no favorite culture; but people from all walks of life, ethnic origin, nationality, religion, and ideology share equally in His love, grace, and righteousness (Rom. 3:22; 10:12; Gal. 3:26-28). (2) These cultural distinctions cease to be divisive among God's people. The distinctions themselves remain, and remain very meaningful. (See Galatians 3:28 where the distinction between male and female is put on the same line as that between Jew and Greek, employer and employee.) Among church members these distinctions are accepted and used to enrich each other and to build each other, to strengthen and correct each other.

From the following Bible passages, what would you conclude is the relationship between culture and conversion? Matt. 28:19, 20; Luke 3:10-14; 1 John 3:15-17; John 4:7-9.

Though the gospel remains the same, people's response must take on different forms and their commitment different expressions, according to the culture in which they live. In every culture there are elements that strengthen the demands of the gospel and help people to live a Christian life. But in every culture there are also elements that are in conflict with the gospel and the principles of the kingdom of God. Such elements must be given up and overcome. We might say that Christ, though above culture, is in every culture, and at the same time against every culture. In every culture, therefore, conversion takes different forms and bears different "fruit."

In what ways is the church part of my culture? What elements in my culture contradict the principles of the kingdom of God?

Further Study: *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 823-825.

Part 6
UNITY IN
DIVERSITY

“By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many” (1 Cor. 12:13, 14).

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is established in some 195 countries of the world. It embraces people of many different nations, kindreds, tongues, and cultures. What should be the relationship between these Adventist churches in the diversity of cultures? From the biblical view of the church as one body, four important aspects emerge: (1) The church is not one culture, but many. (See Rom. 12:4, 5; 1 Cor. 12:13, 14.) Each has its own strengths and its own weaknesses. We ought to thank God for this cultural diversity in the church—for our own cultural heritage, as well as for that of other believers. (2) Each of these cultural traditions is equal before God. None is favored by Him over the other. They are all precious in His sight. Each is also full of sin and evil, and in need of change. (3) People of different cultures need each other to correct, to help, to build, and to strengthen each other. (4) Though members of the church are different because of their cultural heritage and different functions, in Christ they are all one. No church can claim to be “the” church. Only in their togetherness do these member churches constitute the one holy, universal, and apostolic church.

What does the illustration of the vine teach about oneness and diversity in Christ’s church? John 15:1-11.

“The connection of the branches with one another and with the Vine constitute them a unity, but this does not mean uniformity in everything. Unity in diversity is a principle that pervades the whole creation. . . . Christian unity consists in the branches being in the same parent stock, the vitalizing power of the center supporting the grafts that have united to the Vine. In thoughts and desires, in words and actions, there must be an identity with Christ, a constant partaking of His spiritual life.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1143.

In what ways can the church best stimulate unity among the rich cultural diversity of its believers?

“God has designed the web, and all are the individual threads to compose the pattern. The Creator is one, and He reveals Himself as the great Reservoir of all that is essential for each separate life.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1143.

Further Study: *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 674-680.

Social Issues Confronting the Church

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17).

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a world-wide communion of faith. The social issues with which it is confronted differ from area to area. But, even though the issues chosen for this week’s lesson are of greater significance in some areas than in others, they do remind congregations everywhere that social issues confronting the church should be taken seriously and be dealt with in the light of the Word of God.

The first issue, *abortion*, is a social problem in some countries, but much less in others. In quite a number of countries in the world, abortion is legal, free for all women who want it, and in some cases, even required by law. In other countries it is still illegal, or partly so. Adventists, and Adventist women in particular, should not be guided in this issue merely by whether it is legal or not. The greater question is whether it is moral and acceptable in the eyes of God!

Gambling, the second issue chosen for this week’s lesson, takes many different forms and shapes, from betting to bingo. Sometimes it is connected with sports, sometimes with purely charitable institutions. The issue is not the races or the places, but the act of gambling itself.

Race relations have created problems in societies everywhere, from ancient times until the present. They are also very much an issue in the church itself. It is imperative, however, that from the very start of our study we apply the principles involved to all relations between people of different origin or background, whether of nation, caste, class, or race. In human society race relations are never determined by biological factors alone, but also by economic status and cultural background. Prejudice has a wider connotation than merely racial prejudice.

Finally, *the status of women in society and the relations between male and female* are issues that affect the life and the work of the church in many ways. May these lessons help us to become more one—one in Christ and one with each other—so that the world may believe (John 17:20-23).

**Part 1
ABORTION**

**“Thou didst form my inward parts,
thou didst knit me together in my mother’s womb.”
“Thy eyes beheld my unformed substance;
in thy book were written, every one of them,
the days that were formed for me,
when as yet there was none of them” (Ps. 139:13, 16, RSV).**

Children are a gift from the Lord (Ps. 127:3). He gives to every new person life and all of its necessities (Acts 17:25) from the moment of conception. Life is a divine gift. The Bible often speaks of the conception of a child as a revelation of God’s power and grace. (See Gen. 15:1-4; 25:21; 1 Sam. 1:11.) God said to Jeremiah, “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations” (Jer. 1:5). Very powerfully is this expressed also in the biblical story of the conception of John the Baptist (Luke 1:13-17). One should not look upon these examples of prenatal dignity and calling as exceptions. They teach us that God Himself is the Giver of life and of human personhood, which should therefore be held sacred and treated with awe and respect.

In this light, how should the believer view abortion?

The Bible does not give any direct counsel in regard to abortion. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has, as yet, taken no formal theological position on the subject. The Adventist Christian, then, must seek out and apply any principles that the Bible gives about the sacredness of human life and decide upon a view of abortion in harmony with those principles. This is the same way that Christians conclude that it is wrong to smoke tobacco or use heroine. Early Christian writers considered abortion to be homicide. This was a general attitude in the world until the twentieth century, when the development of medicine and changing laws in some places and countries made abortion quite easily available to many.

In some countries it is the overpopulation which threatens many with hunger and a lowering of the living standard; in other areas, great emphasis is laid upon the protection of a woman’s freedom and on her personal right to decide whether to carry the child or not. Another reason why some favor legalizing abortion is the physical and mental well-being of the mother and child: for example, threat to the mother’s life or potential deformities or mental retardation of the child. Finally, social reasons such as unwanted pregnancy, or when conception has occurred as a result of rape or incest, or when the mother is under a certain age, or unwed, or when the pregnancy or birth might be a burden.

**Part 2
GAMBLING**

**“You who forsake the Lord,
who forget my holy mountain,
who set a table for Fortune
and fill cups of mixed wine for Destiny;
I will destine you to the sword” (Isa. 65:11, 12, RSV).**

The Christian will have a loving concern for fellow beings. In gambling, a person seeks to benefit himself at the expense of another. That is perhaps the main reason why Christians should not gamble. It is unloving and against the principle on which the Ten Commandments are based. Paul wrote: “Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom. 13:10). All other evils connected with gambling are rooted in the failure to love.

What is wrong with gambling? What principles do these texts provide on which to make a decision? Isa. 65:11, 12; Ex. 20:17; 1 Thess. 4:11, 12; 1 Tim. 6:6-10.

Some of the basic elements of gambling are these: *artificial risk* (unlike the natural risks of life); *profit for which one has not worked; gain at somebody else's expense*. What's wrong with gambling? It violates such divine commandments as those found in Exodus 20:17 and Leviticus 19:13. It is the opposite of the biblical counsel to work for one's own living (2 Thess. 3:10, 12 etc.). Gambling is habit-forming; it is as compulsive a power as alcohol and drugs and puts the gambler into bondage. (See 1 Cor. 6:12; Gal. 4:8, 9.) It thereby robs him of peace and honor to say nothing of the harm it can do to his faith, hope, family, home, career and future.

What could the church do to help people—believers and unbelievers—to overcome a habit of gambling?

(1) As a church, avoid organizing raffles, lotteries, bingo, prize packages, and other chance games at all cost. (See *The Great Controversy*, p. 387.) (2) Train counselors to help gamblers to overcome the habit and to win them to Christ. (See *Evangelism*, pp. 267, 268, 288, 289.) (3) Prepare materials to educate people, especially the youth, concerning the dangers of gambling.

Further Study: *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 312.

Part 3
RACE
RELATIONS—1

What does the Bible say concerning the origin of all races?

“Hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation” (Acts 17:26).

The most powerful message of Scripture concerning the diverse groups within mankind speaks of the basic biological relatedness of all human beings (Gen. 3:20; 10:32). Science confirms this with overwhelming evidence: Human beings everywhere are biologically 99.9 percent more alike than they are different. And these differences are biologically the least important. This just shows how far adrift we are in attaching so much value to such minor differences as the color of a person's skin or the texture of his hair. It also points up that when we speak of racial differences in man—and of race relations—we actually are referring to social, economic, and cultural differences more than to biological differences.

We know that differences among people belonging to the same race are sometimes as great as those between people of different races. And there is no definite relationship between the biological and the cultural differences in man. It is not right, therefore, to speak of superior or more intelligent or more industrious races. In origin and in potentiality we are all the same. For all relations between people of different backgrounds, and for the spread of the gospel, this is of utmost importance.

How close does the Bible come to giving any indication of how the biological differences between people may have come into existence? Gen. 11:1-9; Acts 17:26, 27.

For a limited understanding of these biological differences we must turn to science. However, the Bible does have an implied message concerning the problems we face in race relations—(1) racial differences are included in the evidence of God's grace, not in a curse; (2) all races are equal in His sight; (3) each race will bring its honor and glory into the city of God. (See Rev. 21:24, 26.)

Four basic factors have had some part in the development of different racial groups in man: (1) the *isolation* of one group from another; (2) *inbreeding* among people of the same language group; (3) limited *adaptation* to the physical environment; and (4) *cultural selectivity*, whereby some groups of people preferred certain physical characteristics in their marriage partners. Without claiming special insights, we would suggest that God had foreknowledge of the intrusion of sin and the harsh physical environments that would result. He therefore created man with the potential to adapt to these consequences of sin.

What positive value does the Bible attach to the different races?

“They sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth” (Rev. 5:9, 10).

The new earth will be populated by people of different races. And what on this earth may have been experienced as a problem will on the new earth be turned into happiness and honor. For there the glory and honor belonging to each race will be fully recognized and appreciated.

How should we understand Genesis 9:24-27?

The story of the blessing of Shem and Japheth, and the curse pronounced upon Canaan, has been terribly abused in the past. The misinterpretation of these texts had even been used as a theological foundation for the oppression and exploitation of black people by whites—a justification of the horrible slave trade. Some myths and fables created by this misinterpretation are still lingering on, even in the minds of some Christians. **Myth 1:** Ham is the ancestor of the black races. The peoples south of the Sahara are not even mentioned in the table of nations in Genesis 10. And even though there may be some black people among the descendants of Ham, there are also white peoples that can be considered Hamites. **Myth 2:** The Hamites were cursed. The text clearly states that *Canaan* was cursed. Canaan was a son of Ham. His descendants, however, speak a semitic language. And among these descendants are people who are clearly classified among the Caucasoid race! **Myth 3:** All the descendants of an evil father are also evil and must therefore carry the guilt forever. This is the most unbiblical thought of all! Hereditary factors apart, if the Canaanites are punished with servitude and bondage, it is not because of their father's or grandfather's sin, but because of their own. (See Gen. 15:16.) Moreover, in Scripture, grace is always the final word. **Myth 4:** The exploitation and oppression of some people could even be a result of a divine blessing. Can there be a greater sin than attributing to God what is the work of the devil? (See Matt. 12:24-32.) **Myth 5:** Some races would be better than others. All races share equally in God's grace because they also equally share in evil, guilt, and sin. (See Rom. 3:1-18.)

How could we best make up for the harm done to people of other races? How can we overcome our own prejudices?

Further Study: *Testimonies*, vol. 7, pp. 222-230.

What is the Christian answer to the problem of race relations?

“Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:16, 17).

Of all prejudices, racial prejudice seems the most difficult to overcome. Racial prejudice, also, is the most widespread. It occurs among people of all races, from the most ancient times until the present. What is prejudice? What are some of its basic causes? Prejudice is an attitude with an emotional bias. It can also mean jumping to conclusions before considering facts.

Prejudice goes back to two main sources: external and internal. On the one hand we know that prejudice, like all aspects of human culture and behavior, is learned. It is part of our social heritage. Once it is learned at home, in the group with which we associate, it feeds upon selected facts from our social and economic environment to prove that we are right. On the other hand, we are also aware of some internal causes of prejudice: human egotism, fear (including the fear of losing power or position), selfishness, and aggressive tendencies; further, the need to belong and the need for identity, which often express themselves in a rejection of others. (Physical differences make these social differences more clearly identifiable.) There is also the tendency in man to judge others by one or a few characteristics only, and then the worst of them. Stereotyping is overlooking the fact that there are good and bad persons in every race and that each of us has weak and strong points.

What is the biblical way of viewing other people? Phil. 2:1-5; Luke 10:25-37.

Though we have known the example of Christ whom we are called to follow and though we have heard His admonitions to love our neighbors and to respect them, we continue to struggle with our prejudices. What can we do about them? Ministers, teachers, and all other church workers must lead the way in seeking the power of the Spirit for victory over prejudice. Then they can teach the nature of and reasons for prejudice; present the facts concerning people of other races, classes, and cultures; and stimulate interracial fellowship.

Further Study: Lev. 19:33, 34; Deut. 10:19; 24:17; Isa. 56:3, 6; Eze. 47:23; Mal. 3:5; *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 136-142.

**Part 6
MALE AND
FEMALE**

“God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Gen. 1:27).

Man, made in the image of God, was created two persons. Genesis 5:1 and 2, RSV, states the same: “When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them.” And then the inspired writer adds: “And named *them* Man [adam] when they were created.” The Hebrew word *adam* (man) stands for male *and* female, for mankind. (Other words distinguished man from woman.) It is not Adam alone that is man, but in their togetherness, as male *and* female, our first parents were called “man” (adam). The creation of Adam was not complete until he was united with Eve (Gen. 2:18; 1:31; 2:23). In this togetherness, this partnership, this oneness, our humanity is truly fulfilled and realized.

What effect did sin have on this partnership between male and female? Gen. 3:7, 12, 16.

The immediate result of the broken relationship with God was that the partnership between male and female was broken and distorted. Gone were the togetherness, the oneness, the equality, and the reciprocity between the two. In a sense they became strangers to each other. Gone were the communion between them and the mutual trust. The woman’s desire was now to go out toward her husband, who would rule over her. Reflected in this brokenness are the distortions that would characterize all relationships between male and female throughout the generations. Even the best of our love relationships suffer from this horrible distortion as a result of man’s broken relationship with God. Friendship and love still exist. But they tend to find their center in self, not in the other—to love the other because of the self, not *as* the self as Jesus taught us. It is I, my ego, which usually determines the nature of the relationship between male and female, instead of the other way around. The result is that even in our loves and friendships we generally remain strangers.

How is the brokenness in the relationship between male and female reflected in your society? How in your own life? How can the true partnership and equality between male and female be restored according to Galatians 3:25-28?

A restoration of the image of God implies a new level of respect between male and female, in the home, the church, and at work. Physical and psychological differences remain. But the issues of superiority are dissolved.

Further Study: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 44-46.

A Christian View of Work

“Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work” (Ex. 20:9).

Work is essential to human life and to the fulfillment of our divine calling. This biblical view of work differs greatly from that of the non-Christian world. Many regard work merely as a necessity, even a curse. In Scripture, however, work is part of the divine order of the world and a God-given function of human life. “Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening” (Ps. 104:23).

Sometimes we hear it said that work represents the legacy of the curse of Adam. Nothing is farther from the truth. Work was already an integral part of God’s original intention when He created man in His own image and then commissioned him to till the garden and to keep it. (See Gen. 2:15.) After sin entered into the world, work, like everything else in life, was negatively affected. But along with the hardship that resulted from the Fall, work was appointed a blessing, offering man healing, strength, happiness, and relief. (See *Child Guidance*, pp. 342-349.) Work was part of God’s plan for man’s recovery from sin. (See *Counsels to Teachers*, p. 274.) And it will forever be a delightful feature of man’s life on the new earth, when people will build houses and plant vineyards. (See Isa. 65:21-23.)

It is significant to remember that Jesus chose to be born into a working-class family, and that He Himself became an artisan and craftsman. (See Mark 6:3.) Ultimately, all human work is rooted in God’s own activity. (See 2 Peter 1:3, 4.)

In Scripture no distinction—let alone separation—is made between mental work and physical labor. The notion that one aspect of man’s work—or that one kind of work—would be innately higher or better or more important than another is totally foreign to biblical thinking.

Though work is essential to all human life, growth, and development, it is not the whole of it. Neither is it man’s only important activity. As humans were created to share in the joy of their Creator in His work, so were they created to share in His meditation and rest. (See Gen. 2:1-3; Ex. 20:8-11; Heb. 4:4-10.)

Part 1 A WORKING GOD

“Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work” (John 5:17).

Our God is a working God. The whole universe is the work of the Godhead (Ps. 8:3, 6; 19:1, etc.). And after They had finished Their work of creation, the Godhead continued to be creatively at work in the world.

What is the nature of the work of God? Ps. 33:13-19; Phil. 2:13.

The whole Bible describes God as being actively and constantly at work for the sustenance of His creation (Heb. 1:3) and for the good of man and his salvation (Isa. 44:22, 23). He gives us life and breath and everything (Acts 17:25); He directs in the affairs of nations (Acts 17:26; Romans 13), draws men and women to Himself (John 12:32), liberates His people and builds His church (Eph. 2:18-22).

In addition to His creative work, what special work does the Bible ascribe to Christ? Rom. 5:10, 11; Heb. 9:11; John 5:22; Rev. 19:16.

The redemptive work of Jesus may be described under four main headings: His sacrifice, His priesthood (mediatorship), His judgment, and His kingship. All four aspects, of course, belong together and are inextricably intertwined.

What clue might there be to Jesus' vocation in Mark 6:3 and Matthew 13:55, and what could it mean to our view of work?

Jesus learned a trade and worked as a craftsman. Though this aspect of Jesus' work usually receives little attention, His participation in physical work sheds a light on the biblical understanding of work. “By His own example He taught that it is our duty to be industrious, that our work should be performed with exactness and thoroughness, and that such labor is honorable. . . .

“Jesus is our example. There are many who dwell with interest upon the period of His public ministry, while they pass unnoticed the teaching of His early years. . . . He lived to please, honor, and glorify His Father in the common things of life. His work began in consecrating the lowly trade of the craftsmen who toil for their daily bread. He was doing God's service just as much when laboring at the carpenter's bench as when working miracles for the multitude.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 72-74.

In what ways have I been affected by the work of God in Christ?

Further Study: *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 71-74.

Part 2 A DIVINE ORDINANCE

“The Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it” (Gen. 2:15).

Paradise was not a place where our first parents could spend their time in leisure and meditation only. It required work—constant mental and physical labor. This divine ordinance of work would forever remain an essential part of man’s life and calling, a necessary ingredient for his growth and development. Work is a gift from God to man. As the image of God, humans are made in the image of the original Worker. Working men and women share in the nature of God.

What are some of the purposes served by work? Eccl. 5:12. Compare with Ps. 128:2; Prov. 19:15; Eccl. 10:18.

Though work is necessary to satisfy our physical and material needs—such as food and shelter—the Bible asserts that work is essential to our happiness, understanding, and spiritual fulfillment. Without work, we cannot be what God wants us to be. Our whole personhood suffers.

“God appointed labor as a blessing to man, to occupy his mind, to strengthen his body, and to develop his faculties. . . . Our Creator, who understands what is for man’s happiness, appointed Adam his work. The true joy of life is found only by the working men and women.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 50.

In what attitude is work to be done? Col. 3:22-24.

Only that work which is done to the glory of God will, in the end, prosper and bear fruit. Not the quantity of work—nor how it is evaluated by man—will determine its ultimate value, but whether the work was done to the honor of God.

If work really is as essential to human life and to the development of human personhood as the Bible says it is, what can Christians do to extol its virtues?

“The Lord knew what was for man’s happiness when He gave him work to do. The sentence that man must toil for his bread, and the promise of future happiness and glory, came from the same throne. Both are blessings.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 529, 530.

Further Study: *Child Guidance*, pp. 345-349.

**Part 3
THE EFFECT
OF SIN**

“Unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life” (Gen. 3:17).

As soon as our first parents had sinned, work took on a whole new form and significance. First, work became a hardship, a burden, partly because of man's weakened mental and physical strength, partly also because of the resistance offered by nature itself. Man lost his dominion. (See Gen. 1:26-28.) Second, work became self-directed and a goal in itself. It even began to control man, as the presence of many “workaholics” clearly indicates. Third, work—from a means to glorify God—turned into a means for self-aggrandizement and an instrument of human greed and sin. Fourth, for the first time, work became associated with failure, fear, and frustration.

How deeply has sin affected human work? Eccl. 2:22, 23; Isa. 44:13-17.

Every aspect of our work has been affected by sin, even the most beautiful work of art, the deepest thought, the holiest activity. Only God is perfect. (See Ps. 18:30, 31.)

What redeeming effect may work have in the God-fearing family and thus on the community, nation, and race? Prov. 22:29; 31:10-18.

Though the original form of work in Eden has changed as a result of sin, work itself was not a part of the curse. It rather offered man relief from the effects of the curse. Neither was work, even in its harsh form, a punishment. It rather turned into a blessing. “The changed condition of the earth through the curse of sin has brought a change in the conditions of labor; yet though now attended with anxiety, weariness, and pain, it is still a source of happiness and development. And it is a safeguard against temptation. Its discipline places a check on self-indulgence, and promotes industry, purity, and firmness. Thus it becomes a part of God's great plan for our recovery from the Fall.”—*Education*, p. 214.

“The life of toil and care which was henceforth to be man's lot was appointed in love. . . . It was a part of God's great plan for man's recovery from the ruin and degradation of sin.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 60.

How is my work related to my salvation?

Further Study: *Education*, pp. 214-217.

**Part 4
RESPONSIBILITY
AND REWARD**

Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eyeservice, as manpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart." (Eph. 6:5, 6).

In a number of significant passages, the New Testament deals with the relationships between workers (employees) and masters (employers). These instructions to household members (Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22; 4:1; 1 Tim. 6:1, 2; Titus 2:9, 10; and 1 Peter 2:18, 19) emphasize that Christians are characterized by a very particular attitude toward work, based on their relationship to Christ. Thus, Christian employees do their assigned work "as unto Christ." And Christian employers treat their employees justly and fairly, knowing that they have a Master in heaven.

What does the Bible teach about the responsibility of the worker (employee)? Col. 3:22-24; Titus 2:9, 10; 1 Peter 2:18-21.

Although these passages speak about "slaves" and "servants" (*douloi*), one may see some parallels with "workers" or "employees" today. The Christian, by his work, serves not only his employer, but also Christ. Therefore a Christian employee will work conscientiously and honestly, because he is responsible first to Christ. Such labor is in fact an adornment of God our Saviour (Titus 2:9, 10) and preserves the name of God and the truth from blasphemy (1 Tim. 6:1). Even if employers are harsh, they still have to be treated with "godly respect" (1 Peter 2:18). Christ's own suffering at the hand of man is held up as a model for Christian workers to follow. (See 1 Peter 2:21-24.)

How should employers treat their employees? Col. 4:1; Eph. 6:9.

In dealing with their subordinates, Christian employers should realize that they are representing Christ to their workers. "How would Christ have acted?" is a question Christian employers must constantly ask themselves. The emphasis, as with the employee, is not upon their rights, but upon their duties—pay just wages, treat people fairly, don't take advantage of them. (See James 5:4.)

Scripture does not give us any detailed guidelines concerning the often complicated and perplexing labor relations in our modern industrial society. How, then, do these counsels of Scripture apply to the problem of work in the modern world?

Further Study: *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 511-514.

Part 5 WORK AND VOCATION

“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2 Tim. 1:9).

In the New Testament the word “vocation” (Latin: *vocatio*; Greek: *klesis* “calling”; see Eph. 4:1, NIV) does not refer to a profession, a job, or an occupation, but to God’s call to repentance and faith and to a life of fellowship and service in the church. The Scriptures do emphasize, however, that this calling must be reflected in our daily work. Our profession or occupation becomes thereby an instrument and an expression of our calling to worship God, to love our neighbor, and to advance the work of God in all the world. Every believer who takes his calling seriously becomes thereby a co-worker with God, whatever his earthly occupation may be—a teacher, a carpenter, a secretary, a farmer, a minister, or a homemaker.

What is the calling of every believer? 2 Cor. 5:14-20; Matt. 28:19, 20.

“The Saviour’s commission to the disciples included all the believers. It includes all believers in Christ to the end of time. It is a fatal mistake to suppose that the work of saving souls depends alone on the ordained minister. All to whom the heavenly inspiration has come are put in trust with the gospel. All who receive the life of Christ are ordained to work for the salvation of their fellowmen. For this work the church was established, and all who take upon themselves its sacred vows are thereby pledged to be co-workers with Christ.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 822.

In what way has Christ prepared every believer to be a co-worker of His? Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-11.

Each believer, the apostle Paul assures us, has received a special gift—or gifts—of the Spirit. (See also Eph. 4:7-12.) Through these gifts, whether one works as a bricklayer, a schoolteacher, a lawyer, or a nurse, that the mission of God is accomplished and the church is built. As children of God, our first calling is that of a missionary. Our occupation is secondary, though not unimportant; for through our calling it becomes a means in the service of God to establish His kingdom.

In what ways can I serve Christ best in my daily work and occupation?

Further Study: *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 472-474.

Part 6 WORK, WORSHIP, AND REST

“Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates” (Ex. 20:9, 10).

It is of the utmost importance to realize that the divine ordinance of work appears in the Decalogue within the framework of keeping the Sabbath holy. The meaning is clear: (1) Though work is essential for the growth and development of human personhood, it is not the whole of it. In fact, it is not even man's most important activity on earth. Worship is! And the Sabbath reminds us that all our work must find its basis and its goal in glorifying God. (2) By keeping the Sabbath holy, man is in fact saying to God: “By myself I can do nothing. The work I have accomplished this week is not my own achievement; it is the result of Thy power and grace working in me. I am only a steward. My work was not done for my own glory, but as an act of worship to Thee.”

From the following texts, what would you conclude is the relationship between work and worship? Col. 3:17; 1 Cor. 10:31.

To the Christian, work and worship are not opposites—the one centering in man and his daily needs, the other in God and His sovereignty. Rather, every activity, every thought, every deed must be done in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and to the glory of God our Maker. We were made for His glory (Isa. 43:7), and all our work, done to the glory of God, becomes thereby an act of worship.

What example has God given us concerning rest? Gen. 2:2, 3.

Scripture abhors idleness. The hours of daylight were the hours of work for everyone. Poverty, hunger, evil thoughts and deeds, even sickness, were attributed to lack of work and idleness. Yet this “work ethic” was also clearly balanced by the social and religious institution of rest. Every seventh day was a day of rest. And besides the Sabbath, there were many holidays—religious and social festivals—spread through the year. (See Ex. 23:14-17; 34:18-23; Numbers 28 and 29.) The Bible teaches us thereby that our life should be characterized by a rhythm of work and rest. And, like work, so also should our rest be to the glory of God and a foretaste of that eternal rest which the Lord has promised. (See Heb. 4:4-10.)

Further Study: *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 359-363.

God Loves The Cities

“Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare” (Jer. 29:7, RSV).

The world in which we live and work today is an urban world. Some 60 percent of the world population—or 2640 million people—live in cities. With the end near, they must hear an urgent call to repentance and salvation.

How should we as Christians live and work in this urban world of ours? Many believers are of the opinion that the evil of the cities has reached such proportions that Christians should not live there. Others are of the opinion that the cities *need* the presence of true Adventist believers in order to reach these hundreds of millions of people with the gospel of Jesus Christ and to call them to repentance and conversion.

Both views are genuinely biblical and rooted in the equivocal attitude of Scripture toward the world in general, and toward the cities in particular. Cities are clearly seen in Scripture as symbols of evil and of man’s revolt against God. They are centers of human arrogance, pride, and immorality—for example, Sodom and Babylon. On the other hand, the Bible also speaks of cities as symbols of God’s presence and peace, of refuge and salvation. Over against Babylon, a representation of all that is evil, stands Jerusalem, the city of peace and the symbol of God’s church and salvation. What the church needs today is that same open attitude toward the cities in order to win them to Christ. This attitude finds its highest expression in Jesus’ weeping over Jerusalem. He loved the people of the city, as He loves the people of all the cities of the world. But He was pained by its evil and by the people’s unwillingness to hear His word and to receive Him. On the one hand, therefore, we should shun the wickedness of the cities and flee from their evil influence. But on the other hand, the love of Christ compels us to associate with the cities in order to reach people with the gospel. For “in every city, filled though it may be with violence and crime, there are many who with proper teaching may learn to become followers of Jesus.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 277.

**Part 1
OFTEN
CENTERS
OF EVIL**

“And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth” (Gen. 11:4).

The first city mentioned in Scripture is Enoch, built by brother-murderer Cain (Gen. 4:17). It stands as a symbol of human rebellion against God and of man’s attempt to construct his own world in defiance of the will and purpose of God for him. The development of cities after the Flood confirms this view. First there was Babylon, clearly founded on human pride and arrogance, and in direct defiance of God’s will. No wonder that throughout Scripture, Babylon stands as the symbol of confusion, pride, and revolt against God. Next comes Sodom, so wicked that there were not even 10 righteous people for whose sake God could have spared it. (See Genesis 18 and 19.) Though Sodom—along with Gomorrah—was totally annihilated, its name lives on today not only as a general synonym for depravity and perversity but also in a technical term for certain sexual aberrations.

What sins permeated the cities in Bible days? Jer. 1:15, 16; 32:26-29, 34, 35; Eze. 7:23; 9:9; Micah 3:9, 10.

The word “city” appears in Scripture some 1300 times. In addition to these general references to the city, there are hundreds of references to specific cities. Best known among these are the warnings of the prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Isaiah, urging the cities—including Jerusalem—to change their evil ways or else expect total destruction. The prophetic utterances against the city in Scripture find their climax in the description of God’s judgment over Babylon, the most wicked city of all, representing all human pride, greed, immorality, blasphemy, and evil, wherever it is found. (See Rev. 14:8; chapters 17 and 18.)

What counsel to Lot can be applied to life today? Gen. 19:12-14.

“‘Out of the cities, out of the cities!’ . . . This is the message the Lord has been giving me. . . . We are not to establish ourselves in the wicked cities, where the enemy is served in every way, and where God is so often forgotten.”—*Life Sketches*, pp. 409, 410.

Are evil and sinfulness limited to the cities of the world? Is it the place, or is it primarily the evil we have to shun and come away from? What would be a reason for believers to stay in these wicked cities?

Further Study: *Country Living*, pp. 30-32.

**Part 2
SYMBOLS OF
REDEMPTION**

“Command the children of Israel, that they give unto the Levites of the inheritance of their possession cities to dwell in; and ye shall give also unto the Levites suburbs for the cities round about them.”

“And among the cities which ye shall give unto the Levites there shall be six cities of refuge” (Num. 35:2, 6).

The Lord Himself told Moses to prepare 48 cities for the Levites to dwell in (Num. 35:1-8). Among these there were six cities of refuge where persons guilty or accused of manslaughter might flee and be safe until they could get a fair hearing. (See Num. 35:9-15; Deut. 4:41-45; Joshua 20.) These cities were for the Israelites and for foreigners. They were so located, upon the command of God, that nobody needed to travel more than 30 miles in order to reach a city of refuge.

Cities of refuge are not symbols of evil but rather centers of God's mercy and justice. They were not founded upon human arrogance and pride but upon the command of the Lord, who designed that His special people, the Levites, should have these cities in which to live.

What positive aspects of the city are extolled by these scriptures? Ps. 107:4-8; 122:3-7; Eze. 48:35.

The Bible is just as positive about the city as it is negative. On the one hand, cities are described as symbols of evil; but on the other hand, the place where God dwelt was a city, and it was in cities that people were to find refuge and redemption, safety, and salvation. Over against Babylon, the mother of all wickedness and immorality, stands Jerusalem, the city of peace, symbol of God's mercy and righteousness. It is interesting that salvation in Scripture has place for a city—a huge city at that—namely, the New Jerusalem, which, adorned as a bride, will become the center of the new earth. It is, of course, God's perfect city. It will be the center of the new earth where God dwells to receive the glory and honor of the nations. (See Rev. 21:24-26.) The beauty of Eden will be restored also, in the kingdom eternal.

In what ways do our cities today reflect both negative and positive aspects? Therefore, what should be our attitude toward these cities?

Although they intensify the problems of humanity, cities are centers of creativity and culture. In the ferment of the cities modern man developed a sense of need for freedom and equality, and found new impulses for growth and development. In the cities we especially find the roots of religious liberty, social justice, and democracy.

Further Study: *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 250-254.

Part 3
OBJECTS OF
GOD'S LOVE

“The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here” (Luke 11:32, NIV).

The city of Nineveh was doomed (Nahum 3:5-7). And yet, like every other city on earth today, it was also the object of God’s loving patience. The evidence of God’s concern for Nineveh can be seen in the mission of Jonah, who thereby became a symbol of God’s continuous concern for the cities on earth.

What evils did Nahum say were in Nineveh, and what was God’s message to them through Jonah? Nahum 3:1, 4; Jonah 3:1-4.

Nineveh was “an exceeding great city of three days’ journey” (Jonah 3:3), and very old. It was a world metropolis, and ultimately capital of a powerful empire. Many considered it the most beautiful city on earth, famous for its parks and public buildings. Its wealth staggers our imagination, and its military strength made it look impregnable. But Nineveh’s wealth invited divine judgment; for they had been gained by oppression, war, and plunder. The entire political and economic life of the city was based on taking from weaker nations and on slave labor. And besides, Nineveh was the mistress of witchcraft and a capital of vice. Her artistic achievements were fouled by obscenities, her rich culture by idols, and her beauty by violence. The prophet Nahum calls her a city of blood. In this situation, only the clearest prophetic message which revealed in an unmistakable manner the nature of their sin, the time in which they lived, and the judgment of God would shake people and lead them to repentance.

What was Nineveh’s response to Jonah’s preaching? Jonah 3: 5-10.

What particular lessons for our modern urban mission can we learn from Jonah’s mission to Nineveh?

Both the fact that Nineveh repented and the manner of repentance offer significant lessons. The first tells us that God is concerned about the cities, that He wants to see them saved. The second tells us that God accomplishes His work through human instruments whom He sends into the cities as witnesses of His grace and messengers of His judgment. And, as in the days of Jonah, the cities ought to be our first concern; for they are the centers of modern life and culture. That’s where the people are whom God wants to save!

Further Study: *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 265-278.

Part 4
CENTERS OF
MISSION

“Some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord” (Acts 11:20, 21).

Known as “Antioch the beautiful,” this center of commerce, art, and culture, capital of Syria, and third city in the Roman Empire, was a meeting point for many nationalities and ethnic groups. It was also a center of many religious cults in the ancient world and at the same time was full of corruption and immorality.

How did the church in Antioch begin, grow, and develop as a center of missionary outreach? Acts 11:19-30; 13:1-3.

Like most of the churches of the first century, the one in Antioch was founded by laymen. It was a “mixed church,” consisting of different nationalities and races, Jews and non-Jews, lower-class and high-class people. The church was a reflection of the diversity and pluralism of this cosmopolitan city. This, really, became the basis for another important aspect of this big-city church; it became the center of missionary outreach into all the world. Here the apostle Paul received his training and preparation for mission service. Finally, church growth in the city of Antioch centered in “preaching the Lord Jesus” (Acts 11:20).

What lessons can we learn from the methods of church growth in the city of Antioch? (Reexamine Acts 11:22-30; 13:1-3.)

First, the work not only centered in *preaching* the Lord Jesus; the believers also *lived* Jesus Christ. He was the Center of their whole life, thought, actions, and conversation. No wonder that it was in Antioch where the followers of Christ were first called Christians. People hearing and seeing them saw Christ. Second, the church continued as a *lay movement*. The role of apostles and pastors such as Barnabas and Paul was to assist the members in their role as ministers of Jesus Christ in the city (Eph. 4:11,12). Third, ministry was carried out as *teamwork*, with prophets, pastors, teachers, administrators, relief workers, and evangelists working together. Fourth, the believers lived in the city where people could hear and observe them in their daily life and vocation. Even leaders such as Barnabas and Paul joined the believers and lived with them in the city. Fifth, the church was liberal in giving, with a deep concern for people other than their own. Sixth, it was a missionary church, a home base and a training school for missionaries. Finally, all ministry was rooted in the work of the Holy Spirit.

Further Study: *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 159-165.

**Part 5
WORK IN
THE CITIES**

“Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare” (Jer. 29:7, RSV).

The cities of this earth are not our permanent home. We are looking forward to living in that great city “whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10), and therefore we are strangers and sojourners in our own cities. Yet, as long as we shall live on this earth, the Lord calls us to be His special people, sent to the cities to bear witness of His glorious name. To do so we must go into the cities and mingle with the people in their daily life and existence as Christ did, and as the example of the believers in Antioch clearly teaches.

“In every large city there should have been a strong force of workers laboring earnestly to warn the people. Had this been undertaken in humility and faith, Christ would have gone before the humble workers, and the salvation of God would have been revealed.”—*Medical Ministry*, p. 302.

“In every city there should be a city mission, that would be a training school for workers. Many of our brethren must stand condemned in the sight of God because they have not done the very work that God would have them do.”—*Medical Ministry*, p. 303.

What methods of labor should Christians use in the cities today?

Our first mission is to pray for the welfare of the city (Jer. 29:7), much as Abraham prayed for the wicked city of Sodom (Gen. 18:22-33)—prayers of intercession, prayers for peace, prayers that God may take away the evil forces operating in the cities, prayers for protection, prayers that God may open doors and remove obstacles that obstruct His work of mission. Second, since the two greatest diseases of the modern city are loneliness and meaninglessness (confusion), our healing ministry should consist of establishing communions of faith where the lonely can find fellowship and the bewildered can find peace and a new meaning in life. Third, modern cities are marked by conflict—conflict between employers and employees, rich and poor, different ethnic groups, young and older generations. In these conflicts Christians should act as agents of reconciliation (1) by being a model of reconciliation themselves, where high and low, black and white, employers and employees, live, work and worship together; (2) by acting as intermediaries between conflicting groups in the cities. Our fourth mission is to uphold the righteousness of God as the basis of all peace. (See Isa. 32:16-18.)

Further Study: *Testimonies*, vol. 9, pp. 97-120.

**Part 6
OPPORTUNITY
AMID DANGER**

“Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. . . . And there was great joy in that city” (Acts 8:5-8).

The early Christian church was a city movement. It was the cities of the ancient world which accepted Christianity first, not the country. The seven churches in Asia, which became symbols of the church throughout the ages, were all city churches. (See Revelation 2 and 3.) The Reformation, likewise, was a city movement; and so was the developed Millerite movement. In many countries of the world Adventism also (first) developed in the cities (small by comparison with present cities) where people were concerned with social and religious freedom, and where they were more open to change than those in the rural areas. It is precisely the presence of this openness to change, this personal freedom and differentiation of life—besides the intense need for fellowship, meaning, and reconciliation—that offer the church so many wide open doors for an effective ministry within the cities today. (See 1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12.)

What are some of the dangers of living in the cities? Gen. 11:4-6; Dan. 4:28-30; Rev. 18:1-8.

Of all the dangers, from secularism, materialism, immorality, restlessness, pollution, criminality, conflicts, violence, and manipulation, perhaps the greatest is the spirit of arrogance and pride. This spirit lies at the foundation of human city building. (See Gen. 4:17; 11:4.) In the end this will be the cause of their ruin. For this reason Ellen White warned believers to get out of the cities and not to establish themselves in them. (See *Life Sketches*, pp. 409, 410.)

How should the church relate to the challenge of giving the gospel to the millions who live in the cities? Acts 8:40; 13:44.

Jesus included the cities and the countryside around them when He preached the message of the kingdom of God. And so did the apostles. More than any other, the apostle Paul has set an example for all modern missions to the cities of this world—preaching the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, bringing a message of reconciliation, dialoging with people of other faiths and ideologies, calling for conversion, establishing local churches, while living and identifying himself with the people whom he tried to reach. Cities are a significant part of the gospel target. (See Acts 1:8.)

Further Study: *Testimonies*, vol. 9, pp. 121-124.

A Christian View Of Marriage

“For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Eph. 5:31, 32).

Marriage is universal. Never has a society, however advanced or primitive, been discovered that did not know marriage in one form or another. Apparently, marriage is an essential part of our humanity; it seems basic to the development of our personhood and to the formation and continuation of human life and society. That explains why marriage, in spite of all the attacks against this institution, has continued and will continue.

Marriage is a powerful symbol of the relationship of God to His people and of Christ to His church. This meaning of marriage elevates all other meanings, needs, and factors of marriage. This meaning of marriage as a model of God’s love to the world, and as a representation of His relationship to His people, does not make the other meanings and factors superfluous. Neither does it absorb them. It rather gives them a new perspective, which makes Christian marriage so special.

It is important to stress here that this meaning of marriage as a representation of God’s love to man is not just an addition to the economic, social and psychological reasons for marriage. It is the very core of marriage. If that meaning is lost, marriage is threatened with collapse. This may be reflected in the reluctance of youth to wait for the stabilizing elements of marriage before tasting of its intimate joys. It is certainly reflected in the spreading perversions and abuses of marriage itself. The other factors such as economic cooperation and dependence, social status, companionship, and self-fulfillment may still give it some basis of existence and continuity. But it is at best a rather shaky existence, as the collapse of marriage in modern society clearly indicates.

The sanctity and redeeming value of Christian marriage provide through it a happiness and a fulfillment which other marriages do not have. It is the purpose of this week’s lesson to evaluate both the special qualities of marriage and the obligations of the Christian marriage.

Part 1 A DIVINE INSTITUTION

“From the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh” (Mark 10:6-8).

Marriage goes back to the very beginning of time, even before Adam and Eve fell into sin. It was then sanctified and sealed by God as an institution which would last until its purpose and end would have been fulfilled.

For what reasons was marriage instituted by God? Gen. 2:18-24; 1:26-28; 1 Cor. 7:2-5.

A comparison of the parallel passages of Genesis 1 and 2 indicates that the institution of marriage follows immediately after God’s command to the man not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Did God intend that Adam and Eve would help to keep each other loyal to Him and convinced of His love? One overriding aim of marriage is for partners to keep and to build each other in the faith, and to deepen their love experience with God. After man fell into sin, these reasons for marriage became even more urgent than before the Fall.

“The angels had cautioned Eve to beware of separating herself from her husband while occupied in their daily labor in the garden; with him she would be in less danger from temptation than if she were alone.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 53.

Fellowship and companionship were other divine reasons for the institution of marriage. Man was made a social being in God’s image. Marriage is the highest fulfillment of the fellowship, and a model of all other human relations and fellowships. It is this fellowship, this communion, which is spoken of as becoming “one flesh.” It is a oneness of heart, mind, soul, and body—a total union.

This togetherness, in which husband and wife complement each other and enrich each other, is also necessary for the practical functions of marriage. God commissioned them to have dominion over the earth and to keep and dress the garden. (See Gen. 1:26-28; 2:15.) Strong marriages are still built around this cooperation between husbands and wives, which is all too often forgotten.

Finally, marriage was given as the foundation of sexual relationships together with the procreation, care, and education of children.

What are some of the ingredients that make marriages work as they were intended by God? Eph. 5:21-33; Col. 3:18, 19.

Further Study: *The Adventist Home*, pp. 114-120.

Part 2 A SHADOW OF THINGS TO COME?

“I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I” (1 Cor. 7:8).

Single persons are often made to feel inferior, guilty, or even abnormal. It is important to stress here that even though marriage was instituted by God—and is the one fellowship that serves as an illustration of the relation between Christ and the church—it is by no means the only way in which a person can find fulfillment in life.

What are some of the reasons the Bible gives for persons to remain unmarried? 1 Cor. 7:25, 26, 29-35; Matt. 19:10-12.

Three reasons are given: a crisis situation, either personal or involving a larger group of people; the needs of the church in its missionary outreach into all the world; and the realization that the time of the end has come. Of course the apostle Paul is not urging people to remain unmarried, even though he wished that people would follow his example, because to him the single state seemed best for the work he had been called to do. But he exhorts the readers of his letter to consider his counsels carefully and then to select the course which seems best for their life, in their situation.

Why will there be no marriage on the new earth? Matt. 22:30; Mark 12:25.

The question has baffled many believers. They point out that marriage and the Sabbath were both instituted by God and given to man before they fell into sin. We do know that on the new earth people will keep the Sabbath to rest from their labor and to worship God (Isa. 66:22, 23). Then why does not marriage continue? It is the author's view that marriage was given as a temporary institution, much like the ritual of the earthly sanctuary. Both marriage and the earthly sanctuary are copies of a heavenly reality, an image of a divine model. But they are also shadows of realities to come. When the type meets its antitype, the shadow its real substance, they cease to exist. They are no longer needed. Could this be one reason why Jesus never married? We are not ever told in Scripture. But in Him the shadow and the real met. He was the perfect image of God. (See 2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3.) In His life the relationship with God and the partnership and solidarity with His fellow human beings had been fulfilled.

How can we make preparations for that life on the new earth now, as married believers and as unmarried?

**Part 3
AN
INSTRUMENT
OF SALVATION**

“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear” (1 Peter 3:1, 2).

After the Fall marriage took on the added function of being a vehicle of salvation, an instrument of redemption. Says Paul: “The unbelieving husband is consecrated through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is consecrated through her husband” (1 Cor. 7:14, RSV).

In what ways can marriage become an instrument of salvation to unbelievers? 1 Peter 3:1-7; Eph. 5:21-32; Titus 2:4, 5.

“From every Christian home a holy light should shine forth. Love should be revealed in action. It should flow out in all home intercourse, showing itself in thoughtful kindness, in gentle, unselfish courtesy.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 144.

“The best test of the Christianity of a home is the type of character begotten by its influence. Actions speak louder than the most positive profession of godliness.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 579.

Following are three passages that counsel wives to be subject to their husbands. What is the meaning of them? Col. 3:18; 1 Peter 3:1, 5; Eph. 5:22.

Three important aspects of this notion of submission should be noted: (1) Submission in the marriage relationship is a requirement that applies to *both* partners. The apostle Paul says this in Ephesians 5:21, which constitutes the basis of his further counsel to husbands and wives: “Submitting yourselves *one to another* in the fear of God.” (2) Submission on the part of both the husband and the wife is a *voluntary act*, born out of love and respect for the other. It cannot, and it should not, be required by law or as an institution. (3) Every act of submission to the spouse is done “out of reverence for Christ,” “in the fear of God,” “as it is fit in the Lord.”

“It was not the design of God that the husband should have control, as head of the house, when he himself does not submit to Christ. He must be under the rule of Christ that he may represent the relation of Christ to the church. If he is a coarse, rough, boisterous, egotistical, harsh, and overbearing man, let him never utter the word that the husband is the head of the wife, and that she must submit to him.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 117.

Further Study: *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 360-362.

**Part 4
MARRIAGE
AND FAMILY**

“God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it” (Gen. 1:28).

Though clearly distinct from each other, marriage and family are closely linked together. One of the basic reasons for marriage is the procreation of children. Marriage constitutes thereby the basis of the family, where children are reared, habits are acquired, personalities are developed, love is learned, and children grow up to become full-fledged members of their society. Like marriage, the family is essential to human life, to the development of our personhood, and to the existence and continuity of human society.

What function of marriage or the family did Jesus reaffirm in each of the following passages? John 2:1-11; Mark 7:10-13; Luke 11:11-13.

Jesus put the weight of His whole authority behind the institution of marriage and the family. He began His public ministry at a wedding feast and presented His teachings of the kingdom of God often in terms of human family relations. Jesus nowhere considered one form of family life superior even preferable to another; neither do the prophets, the apostles, or the other writers of Scripture. Family forms are intimately related to the social and economic conditions and the cultural traditions in which people find themselves. In Israel, a tribal, agrarian society, the basic family form was the “father’s house,” which consisted of a husband and his wife, their sons families, and their grandchildren. Included in such a family were also the servants, who often called their masters “father.” Besides this basic family unit there were other forms of family groupings, which included a whole village or a group of villages, a quarter of a city, or a whole territory. The term for family was even used loosely for all of Israel, much as we speak of the church as the family of God.

Are the scriptural forms of family life and organization required of people of other cultures and generations? If not, should we consider any form of family life and organization as the pattern for Christians in the whole world?

Two examples may bear upon the above: (1) the *levirate* marriage, the arrangement that a man marry his deceased brother’s wife to raise up offspring for him (Deut. 25:5-10; Gen. 38:6-11), and (2) the *mohar*, a requirement that a man give a marriage present to the father of the bride (Gen. 34:12; Ex. 22:16; 1 Sam. 18:25).

Further Study: *The Adventist Home*, pp. 162-166.

**Part 5
A LIFELONG
UNION**

What did Jesus teach about the indissolubility of the marriage relationship?

“What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. . . . And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery” (Mark 10:9-12).

Jesus repudiated the Old Testament practice of putting away one’s wife. And when the Pharisees defended that right on the part of the man—for the woman did not have such a right!—with the argument that Moses himself had given them the law regarding divorce (see Deut. 24:1-4), Jesus answered: “For your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment” (Mark 10:5, RSV). But from the beginning marriage was intended for keeps (verses 6-9). It must be considered indissoluble until death separates the spouses. (See Rom. 7:1-3.)

Does the Bible recognize exceptions to this rule? Matt. 5:31, 32; 19:3-9; Deut. 24:1-4; 1 Cor. 7:10-16, 39.

Scripture teaches the indissolubility of marriage for all believers. Jesus Himself did so. This message seemed so harsh that His own disciples reacted to it with the words: “If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is not expedient to marry” (Matt. 19:10, RSV). Many disciples of Christ today are reacting the same way. Or they simply ignore the words of Christ. In Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 it seems, however, as if Jesus Himself has given us an exception by which divorce among believers is allowed, though not recommended. Why that exception? And what does it mean?

The word Jesus used to describe the “exception” is *porneia*, which may be translated as fornication or unchastity. Though fornication or unchastity (*porneia*) may include an adulterous relationship, it refers beyond that to continuous acts of sexual aberration and illicit sexual relationships, including homosexuality, pederasty, prostitution, incest, and other forms of sexual immorality. Some interpret Jesus’ words in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 therefore not as an exception to the indissolubility of marriage but rather as an instruction to keep the marriage relationship pure. But, when, because of unchastity, the purity of the marriage relationship has been polluted and defiled (see Heb. 13:4), it may not be possible to continue the relationship.

Why did Jesus—and all the New Testament writers—insist on the indissolubility of marriage?

Further Study: *The Adventist Home*, pp. 340-347.

**Part 6
A NEW
BEGINNING
IN CHRIST**

What counsel does Jesus offer us when the real situation in life differs from the ideal?

“Then came Peter unto him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus said unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven” (Matt. 18:21, 22).

Marriages are held together by love. One of the greatest expressions of this love is forgiveness, as Jesus' own example has shown us. In Him we all have received the forgiveness of our sins. And for that reason we should also forgive one another, be it neglect, harshness, anger, or even adultery. But of course forgiveness does imply (on the part of the one to be forgiven) an attitude of contrition, a recognition of fault (guilt), and the intention to improve or make amends (to sin no more). When all of these are absent, the partner stands also before God as an “unbeliever.” If such an “unbelieving” spouse wants to break up the marriage relationship, the apostle Paul says, “Let it be so; in such a case the brother or sister is not bound. For God has called us to peace” (1 Cor. 7:15, RSV). But we should all the time remember Jesus' words, “until seventy times seven,” and those of the apostle Paul: “Wife, how do you know whether you will save your husband? Husband, how do you know whether you will save your wife?” (1 Cor. 7:16, RSV).

How do these principles apply to believers who have been divorced and remarried for other than biblical grounds and then seek readmission to the church? 2 Cor. 2:5-11; Col. 3:12, 13.

The love of Christ for the individual and the church knows no bounds. As the Lord has forgiven us, so we must also forgive. With regard to a different problem, Christ forgave the adulterous woman and told her to sin no more. But there was no condemnation for her! But the problem being considered here is more complex and enduring. (See John 8:3-11.) The nature of love does not change. At the same time, the love of Christ in the heart will give to Christian marriage a unique strength and stability. The church thus has an image and reputation to uphold. However, let us keep in mind that adultery or divorce and remarriage for other than biblical grounds, while grievous sins, are not in themselves the unpardonable sin. Gossip or slander may cause cruel heartache. But the undoubtedly better answer to all such problems would lie in better preparation for marriage in the first place.

How could local churches help strengthen the marriage relationships of the believers? How could they help those who have (had) difficulties in their marriage to find healing?

The Church and Human Needs

“As ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give” (Matt. 10:7, 8).

Our world is ill, terribly ill. The symptoms of this illness are all about us. About 65 percent of the world population is undernourished. Some 20,000 people are starving to death daily. Many millions of people are so malnourished that they are threatened with irreparable brain damage. Poverty is robbing people of their dignity as human beings. Oppression is rampant in many forms. There is terrible fear and frustration. Because of political stress, wars, and economic hardships many millions of people have been forced to leave their own country to live as aliens and refugees in foreign lands, often under the most deplorable conditions. What does all this have to do with being sent into all the world to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ? Everything! All mission is participation in the work of Jesus Christ. We have no mission of our own. We imitate and continue the mission of our Lord, who announced the aim of His mission as preaching “good news to the poor” and proclaiming “release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed” (Luke 4:18, RSV). Moved by compassion, Jesus set out to heal the sick, to feed the hungry, to comfort the bereaved, to give new dignity to the poor and the social outcasts. And though many of these acts were done as an evidence that the kingdom of God had come and the dominion of the devil had been broken, they were also plain works of compassion.

Christ has sent His church into the world for exactly the same two reasons: to preach the coming of the kingdom of God which is at hand, and to do the works of compassion. These two are inextricably intertwined. Proclamation with all prophetic powers and the deepest understanding of truth means nothing without works of love and compassion. (See 1 Cor. 13:1-3.) The reverse is true also, however. Works of compassion, assistance in human needs, must be accompanied by the clear message of the kingdom of God. It is a false concept of mission to think that works of compassion alone can bring about the restoration of the kingdom of God. True mission always includes a call to repent, to receive Christ as Lord and Saviour and to be joined to Him and to His church. But we should heed the apostle Paul’s words: “Speak the truth in love.”

Part 1 COMPASSION

What was Jesus' attitude toward those who were in need?

“When he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd” (Matt. 9:36).

Our God is a compassionate God (Ex. 22:27; Ps. 116:5). When we suffer, He suffers with us. This is most dramatically expressed in the incarnation: He became as one of us, to suffer with us. And because He Himself has suffered, He is able to help those who are suffering (Heb. 2:14-18), whether from sickness or oppression, from hunger or loneliness, from weakness or poverty. Do we need to give any examples? Christ's whole life was characterized by compassion from the moment He saved a bridegroom from embarrassment for not having enough wine at the wedding (John 2:1-11) to the moment that He prayed in Gethsemane, “Not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42).

Why is it important for the followers of Christ to be compassionate? Matt. 25:31-46; 18:33; Ps. 112:5.

Jesus Himself has made compassion His standard of judgment. Can there be anything more important in life? Note the words of the apostle John: “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But if any one has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against Him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:16-18, RSV).

What relationship is there between faith and compassionate action that reflects the character of God? James 2:14-17; Luke 6:36.

There are two dangers the followers of Christ ought to avoid with regard to the relationship between faith and works of compassion. The first is that one can exist without the other. As faith in Jesus is dead without works of love, so are also works of compassion meaningless without a faith in Jesus Christ. It is His love which moves us (2 Cor. 5:14). The second danger to avoid is to be selectively compassionate; that is, to do good to “our kind of people only,” be they of the same church, kinship, class, or race. God's love knows no favorites! It embraces the whole world without distinction.

Is it possible to cultivate compassion? Where does true compassion have its origin?

Further Study: *Counsels on Health*, pp. 31-35.

Part 2 POVERTY

What obligations do God's children have toward the poor?

“The poor shall never cease out of the land; therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land” (Deut. 15:11).

Concern for the poor is taught in the Scripture. The law of Moses commanded it (Ex. 22:25-27; Deut. 15:7, 8); the prophets have proclaimed it (Isa. 3:14, 15; Jer. 5:26-29; Eze. 16:49). Jesus Christ has taught it and exemplified it in His life (Luke 4:18, 2 Cor. 8:9); and the early church practiced it (Acts 2:45; 4:32; 11:27-30; 1 Cor. 16:1-3; Gal. 2:10). Failure to care for the poor was one of the sins that led Israel into captivity. That same failure will also cause the ruin and condemnation of many at the end of time (Matt. 25:31-46).

How does God regard the poor? James 2:1-6; Luke 1:51-53; 4:18, 19.

Many have argued that riches by themselves are evil and that poverty is a virtue. But that is not so. The Bible calls Abraham's riches a blessing from the Lord (Gen. 24:35), and Paul teaches that God furnishes us with everything to enjoy (1 Tim. 6:17). And poverty is a plague that was never wanted by God. To that end God set up laws in Israel to relieve His people of their poverty. And if people had obeyed God, there would have been no poor in Israel (Deut. 15:4-6). Poverty is a result of sin. Christ came to redeem us from sin's curse. No wonder that He has chosen the poor of this world to preach the good news to them.

If riches of themselves are not wrong, what is the problem? Luke 12:15-21; 1 Tim. 6:10.

The dangers of riches are self-sufficiency, arrogance, and pride. Riches often make us forget God, who is the Giver of all wealth (Deut. 8:18), and we become callous toward those who are poor. In fact, the Bible says that riches often make people oppressors of the poor. But what we do to the least of God's creatures, we are in fact doing unto God. The rich stand condemned because they forgot God and did not recognize their dependence upon Him. No expression of piety, no form of religious belief or practice, can make up for neglecting the poor (Amos 5:11, 21-24; Mark 12:38-40). To practice piety without compassion is to be a hypocrite.

Further Study: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp.530-536.

**Part 3
THE POOR AND
THE KINGDOM**

What particular promise did Jesus offer the poor?

“He lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God” (Luke 6:20).

Many have interpreted these words of Christ in their spiritual meaning only. And of course these words should be read in light of Matthew 5:3, where Jesus says: “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their’s is the kingdom of heaven.” But Luke did not leave out the words “in spirit” by accident or ignorance. He did mean “the poor.” This literal meaning is supported by the accompanying woe: “Woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation” (verse 24). The blessing pronounced upon the poor agrees also with Jesus’ words in Luke 4:18: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.”

What is the condition upon which the poor may receive the blessings of the gospel? Matt. 5:3.

It is not poverty *per se* that prepares a person for the kingdom of God, but the recognition of one’s own powerlessness and unworthiness. Material poverty may be a help in that respect, but it is no guarantee of it. Conversely, a person may be blessed with many goods and yet recognize his own need and dependence upon God in everything. Zacchaeus was a very rich man, as were many other tax collectors in Jesus’ day. Yet in his need for Christ and in his attitude toward his possessions, he showed in fact the true meaning of being poor in spirit. The rich man in Jesus’ parable was not condemned because of his riches, but because he considered them his “good things” (Luke 16:25). Lazarus, the poor man, was not saved because he was poor, but because he felt his need of God and depended on Him for everything. The rich may foolishly trust in their riches and therefore fail to enter into the kingdom of God. (See Mark 10:23, 24; Luke 12:16-21.) But the poor can become so concerned about what they should eat or drink or how they should find clothing and shelter that they, too, forget God or betray a lack of faith in Him. To them the apostle says to cast all cares and anxieties upon God, “for he careth for you” (1 Peter 5:7).

In what way can the rich be poor and the poor be rich? 2 Cor. 8:9; 6:10; 1 Cor. 1:5; Eph. 1:7.

How are God’s promises to us in the gospel related to our responsibilities to the poor?

Further Study: *Testimonies*, vol. 3, pp. 511-521.

Part 4 ALIENS AND REFUGEES

What should be our attitude toward aliens and refugees?

“He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment. Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Deut. 10:18, 19).

God is concerned about the aliens and refugees in the land. Not only do they share in the same needs as widows and orphans and other economically handicapped people, including the Levites (Deut. 12:12; 14:29), but foreigners are often socially powerless and therefore need an extra measure of love. Aliens and refugees are our neighbors in the very sense Jesus has given that term when He taught us to love our neighbor (Luke 10:25-37).

God gave Israel specific laws and social institutions to protect the foreigner from oppression and extortion, to give him at least a minimum basis of existence and to make him feel at home in the country in which he was living as an alien. Aliens, along with the poor, were entitled to the “second” harvest (Lev. 19:10; 23:22) and the triannual tithes (Deut. 14:28, 29). The alien also shared in the produce of the sabbath year (Lev. 25:6). They were entitled to the same protection, the same justice, and the same freedoms as the Israelite. But of course they also were to obey the same laws. And beyond all that, God told His people not to harm the aliens and refugees among them; He said that “the stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself” (Lev. 19:34, RSV).

Why would God’s people be able to understand better the plight of the refugees and to help them than unbelievers? Ex. 23:9; Deut. 24:17, 18. (See Heb. 11:13.)

God’s people themselves have been aliens and refugees in a foreign land. They know what it means to be without rights and privileges, homeless and without support, ridiculed and oppressed. In fact, it belongs to the very essence of the church that God’s people live as strangers and sojourners in this world (1 Peter 1:17; 2:11). For this reason hospitality is a hallmark of God’s people. We ought to welcome one another in the same way as Christ has welcomed us (Rom. 15:7) and to show hospitality to strangers, “for thereby some have entertained angels unawares” (Heb. 13:2). Jesus said: “I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” “As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me” (Matt. 25:35, 40, RSV).

Further Study: *The Adventist Home*, pp. 445-452.

Part 5 OPPRESSION

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

Scripture is full of warnings against oppression. And those who do oppress others are the enemies of God. He sent His Son into this world in particular “to set at liberty those who are oppressed” (Luke 4:18, RSV).

In what ways do people oppress others? Lev. 25:39; James 5:4; Luke 18:1-5; Isa. 1:21-23.

Christians frequently restrict the scope of evil to a narrow class of sins committed individually. However, sin rules in this world also in the form of evil structures, unjust laws, and bad institutions. Slavery is an example of such an institutionalized evil. And so is the nineteenth century factory system where 10-year-old children worked 12 to 16 hours a day. But, though we tend to recognize the “sins of our fathers,” all too little are we aware of the institutionalized evil in our own day. And much less are we inclined to do something about it. Today we see, for example, oppression by powerful confederations, laws that give special privileges to the rich, systems that encourage bribery, structures that favor some classes or races of people over others, and monopolies held by a few. The Bible not only warns us against individual sins, but also strongly condemns structural evil; and God urges His people to have nothing to do with it.

What are some examples of structural evil the Bible warns against? Amos 2:6; 5:10-15; Isa. 5:8; 10:1-4; Ps. 94:20-23.

It was probably by some legal technicality that the needy could be sold “for a pair of shoes.” The rich were able to take the poor person’s land or sell him into slavery. By unjustly and selfishly adding land to land and house to house and business to business, a few people gained control of a whole society, thereby robbing the majority of their social rights and economic freedoms. And this was all legal! But fraud and oppression of the poor are as sinful in God’s eyes as sexual immorality or drunkenness. And if the system of justice is evil, then where can people turn for real justice? Social evil may be more subtle than personal evil, but it harms more people and is extremely displeasing to God.

In Old Testament times God instituted certain laws to protect the poor and the oppressed. What can Christians do today to relieve people of social, economic, and structural oppression? (See Leviticus 25.)

Part 6
LONELINESS

“Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and afflicted. The troubles of my heart are enlarged: O bring thou me out of my distress. Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins” (Ps. 25:16-18).

Of all the diseases of our time—social, economic, and physical—loneliness is one of the greatest, if not the greatest. It is largely a result of the collapse of the traditional family systems and other primary groups, and the development of a mass society, especially in the cities. It is also rooted in modern man’s loss of faith and the decline of religion. There can be no real fellowship among people without a fellowship with God for whom we were created.

What are some of the symptoms of this loneliness in modern society? Observers of modern society point in particular to the rapid increase of suicide, especially among the well-to-do, the well-educated, and professional people; the rise of drug abuse and alcoholism; the restlessness of modern man; the sharp increase in mental illnesses, stress; violence and crime; and pleasure seeking. Though poverty, hunger, unemployment, and oppression have something to do with these characteristics of our age, their real cause is loneliness.

What can the church do to alleviate this problem of loneliness? James 1:27; 1 John 1:3, 7.

No other group in society is better prepared to help people in their loneliness than are the followers of Christ, who in fellowship with Him have also found fellowship with one another (Rom. 12:5). And is not this the essence of religion, that we love God with all our heart and our might and our soul and our neighbor as ourselves? No club, no social organization, no party association, no society can accomplish what the church could do if it would accept its mission of visiting the lonely in their affliction. Did not Christ come into this world to reconcile those who had been estranged from God and from one another? And did not Christ send us into the world to unite men to God and to create a new communion, a new fellowship, in which we all, without distinction, are each other’s brother and sister?

What is the relationship between evangelism, church growth, and fellowship? (See Eph. 4:15, 16.)

Church growth is intimately related to fellowship. A recent report about church growth in North America expressed it this way: “The people were loved in.”

Further Study: *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 690-693.

The Christian and the State

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

From the very moment Christianity came into existence, it has been confronted with the question: How should the followers of Christ relate to the state and its various functions and to the civil authorities who are in charge? Each generation of believers must come to grips with this question in its own ways. And in each nation where the church has been planted or where the gospel of the kingdom is being proclaimed, Christians must find their own forms of relating to the state and to the civil authorities. The relationship between the church and the state cannot—and should not!—take the same form everywhere. What seemed an appropriate way of relating to the state at one time may no longer be suitable—or even possible—at another. Though the varying circumstances in the world may demand different forms of relating to the state, these forms must be solidly based on sound biblical principles.

For our understanding of these biblical principles it is imperative that we know of the circumstances in which the early Christians lived. Christianity arose at a time when the state was at the same time a religious community. Although there was tolerance for other religions, deference to the emperor was required on religious grounds. The rise of a new religion such as Christianity was viewed as a direct threat against the state. The early Christian church was a noninstitutional church without property, power, or privileges—without schools, hospitals, or elaborate organization. It was a lay movement. A relationship between church and state as we know it now—namely, a relationship between two different spheres of interest or power or organization—actually did not exist. It was a relationship between the believers and the laws, institutions, customs, and authorities of the state in which they lived.

The early Christians’ attitude toward country, customs, culture, and civil authorities was strongly influenced by their belief that the form of this world was passing and that soon Christ would return to establish His own kingdom of righteousness.

Part 1
SUBMISSION

What is to be the Christian's attitude toward civil government?

“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God” (Rom. 13:1, 2).

No society can exist without some type of government and form of social control. For that reason every society has some form of government for the good of its members. The more complex these societies become, the more elaborate and pervasive also the system of government has to become. It seeks to maintain order, to smooth relationships, to settle disputes between people, to guarantee the functioning of institutions necessary for existence, to protect life, property, individual freedoms, and to promote the general welfare of society as a whole. For these reasons all people must obey civil authority and submit themselves to its law, orders, and regulations. However, Christians go beyond that. Their attitude toward civil authority is not merely based on human logic and expediency; they submit to earthly rulers as unto the Lord. Revolt against government is rebellion against God, who has instituted it and ordained it for the well-being of all. And rendering things unto Caesar that by divine ordinance belong to Caesar is religious duty and an expression of giving glory to God.

What are some of the functions of government the Bible mentions specifically? Rom. 13:3, 7; 1 Peter 2:12-14.

Ideally, and in the divine plan for it, government exists for the good of its citizens. It accomplishes that in at least two ways: (1) by developing, encouraging, and stimulating organizations and institutions that really contribute to the well-being of all; (2) by restraining, suppressing, and even removing those orders and organizations that have an evil influence on society or create divisions and disorder.

Should Christians actively participate in these two functions of government? Give examples from Scripture to support your view.

Some believers are of the opinion that members of the church should not be involved in government. They point to the danger of becoming contaminated by corruption and of being held responsible for all actions. Others are of the opinion, however, that by involvement in government, Christians can influence society for good and contribute to the advance of the kingdom of God.

Further Study: *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 601-603.

**Part 2
DUAL
CITIZENSHIP**

“Our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil. 3:20, RSV).

Christians hold a dual citizenship—one in the kingdom of God, and the other in the nation in which they reside. But what does that mean? Some have seen in this dual citizenship an inherent conflict. Since God’s kingdom is not of this world, they say, Christians can not actually live as citizens of both. (See John 18:36.) They must choose between one or the other. Many other believers think, however, that the kingdom of God is not a place or a country outside of this present world. It rather is a sphere, an attitude, a life-style which permeates the whole life and thought and gives citizenship here its special meaning. They say the kingdom of God is within them. (See Luke 17:21.) What do you think?

What are the meanings of the biblical term “kingdom of God” Mark 1:14, 15; Luke 10:8-11; 18:15-17.

Contrary to most people’s thinking in the time of Christ, the kingdom Jesus proclaimed was not a territory with visible structures or institutions of power. Rather, the kingdom of God consists of the lordship of Christ in our lives, which is realized in our redemption and expressed in worship and in our obedience of His law. In this sense the kingdom of God is a reality on earth. This kingdom is not a new social order established apart from earthly societies and governments. It rather works in and through these earthly institutions. Christians, as citizens of the kingdom of God, are called to live out these principles of that kingdom within their citizenship on earth. Our citizenship in heaven, therefore, does not change our earthly citizenship. Rather, our citizenship on earth receives new meaning and direction as a result of our citizenship in heaven.

When will these two citizenships become one? Matt. 25:31, 34; Rev. 7:9-12.

With the coming of Jesus into this world, the kingdom of God has been established. And all who receive Him and accept Him as Lord and Saviour are citizens of that kingdom of God. At the same time, however, the full reign of Christ has not yet been established on this earth. Many people have never even heard of Him. And many others continue to reject Christ as Lord of their lives. At the second coming of Christ the kingdom will be initiated. It will be fully established at the close of the 1000 years.

Further Study: *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 547-551.

Part 3 GOD AND CAESAR

“He said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar’s and unto God the things which be God’s” (Luke 20:25).

God removes kings and sets up kings (Dan. 2:21). All things belong to Him, the earth and its fullness. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Christ (Matt. 28:18). There is no power without Him. Whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him (Col. 1:16). This testimony of Scripture should prevent us from a completely dualistic understanding of Jesus’ words recorded in Mark 12:17, Luke 20:25, and Matthew 22:21. The things which belong to Caesar and the things which belong to God are not two entirely separate entities, domains, or spheres of influence. God is in ultimate control of everything. Our whole life belongs to Him—the government is instituted by God, and the authorities are ministers of God, attending to His interests (Rom. 13:1-7).

Although separating the things which belong to Caesar from the things which belong to God, Jesus also emphasized the fact that in His kingdom the earthly and the heavenly belong together, under God. From this viewpoint—since the things belonging to Caesar actually belong to God—the government is a steward! Citizens of the kingdom of God pay taxes, tribute, revenues, and respect to earthly rulers, as unto God. Authorities are the servants of God.

What attitude should Christians take, though, when civil authorities make requirements that conflict with God’s requirements? Acts 5:29.

Sin has permeated every aspect of life on earth, every institution, every structure. Government, though ordained by God, is no exception. It also is run by imperfect human beings and, like everything else, constantly influenced by powers of evil. Under these conditions it is unavoidable that at times governments issue rules and regulations or establish structures and organizations which are contrary to the principles of the kingdom of God. In such cases the followers of Christ should obey God rather than men.

Can you think of some examples of legislation or of institutions which are in flagrant conflict with the Word of God and the principles of His kingdom? Could Christians ever participate in acts of opposition to the government?

Further Study: *Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 201-204.

**Part 4
CHURCH
AND STATE**

“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well” (1 Peter 2:13, 14).

At this point the question must be raised: How do the counsels given by Christ regarding the Christian’s attitude toward civil ordinances and authority apply to the church as an institution in its relationship to the state? It is important that we notice a distinction first. The New Testament Christian does not know about church-state relationships that developed after the death of the apostles. The counsels are addressed to the followers of Christ in their individual relationship to government, legal ordinances, and social institutions. The emphasis thereby is on good conduct, submission, and the right attitude—never upon rights or privileges. But with the spread of the gospel and the christianization of many countries in the world, the church itself underwent some powerful changes. It began to acquire properties and to develop institutions of its own. It developed structures and organization with its own government and entered into business, often big business. As a result, new forms of relationship developed between the church and the state. These have given rise to great conflicts and powerful confrontations because that relationship is no longer one between individual believers and civil authorities, but between two institutions of considerable influence.

What principles should guide the church as an institution in its relationship to the state? Titus 3:1; Matt. 22:21.

In church-state relations we are confronted with areas of interest that may belong to both the church and the state—the education of children, for instance. As a social institution, the church must submit to the secular ordinances and laws which govern such institutions in the land. It may thank God if the state allows the church some special privileges (tax exemption, for instance), but the church should submit when the state exercises its legitimate authority over these institutional aspects of the church. Only when the state intrudes in what specifically belongs to the church such as the formulation and teaching of doctrines, the ordination of its ministers, or the believers’ relationship to God, the church may rightly protest. It is to meet such issues that the church has long maintained a Department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty. Representation is also maintained at the United Nations and various national government centers.

Why is separation of church and state the best policy with regard to potential conflicts between the two? What does separation of church and state really mean?

**Part 5
PEACE**

“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour” (1 Tim. 2:1-3).

Christians are peacemakers. (See Matt. 5:9.) One way to make peace is through intercessory prayers for those who are in authority. Another is to live peaceably with all men (Rom. 12:18) and to work actively toward peace as a sign of the kingdom of God. (See Luke 10:5, 6.) This peace is not just an absence of war, though that is part of it. The peace Christians are urged to seek and to pursue for all men (Ps. 34:14) is the peace given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace (John 14:27). This peace should be established within the church itself and also pursued in the world.

What attitude should prevail therefore among believers when conflicts do arise? Col. 3:15; 1 Cor. 6:1-8; Phil. 2:1-5.

Though Christians do have a very positive attitude toward government, they nevertheless are urged not to seek arbitration outside of their communion of faith. A number of reasons are given. First, believers ought to be an example to the world—examples of peace, fellowship, and love. If society cannot see these exemplified in the church, then where would they find such a model? Second, government agencies are definitely of a lower order than the church. The apostle speaks of the “unrighteous” (1 Cor. 6:1, RSV), “unjust” (KJV), and of those who are “least esteemed by the church” (6:4). Third, it puts the whole church to shame if we cannot find persons wise enough in the church to decide between members who have conflicts with each other (6:5, 6). It actually is a defeat for the gospel. Finally, Christians have to learn to have the mind of Christ, in humility counting others better than themselves, having other people’s interest in mind, suffering wrong and being defrauded rather than to be wrong themselves (6:7-9). The church ought to set an example to the government and to society as a whole, rather than turn to them for justice.

In what ways can Christians best promote peace? Rom 12:16-20; 1 Peter 3:8-10.

We ought to realize that a separation of church and state does not mean a separation of religion from life. Who would be able to pursue peace better than the followers of Christ?

Further Study: *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 191, 192.

Part 6
RESPECT AND
CAUTION

“He said unto them, the kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve” (Luke 22:25, 26).

Earthly governments are not an acceptable model for church organization. In the first place, earthly governments are built on power, whether by contract or by absorption. Second, the Christian concept of leadership is centered in Jesus Christ, whose kingdom is not of this earth. His leadership was characterized by voluntary submission, humility, and service (servanthood).

What was Jesus’ reaction to the report that an evil king would kill Him? Luke 13:31, 32.

The Bible portrays both respect and caution in its attitude toward government. On the one hand, we are urged to subject ourselves to its authority because it has been instituted by God and to pray for the earthly rulers. On the other hand, the Bible also speaks of those earthly rulers as “unrighteous” (1 Cor. 6:1, RSV), as “least esteemed by the church” (1 Cor. 6:4, RSV), as outright evil, and as persecutors of the righteous (Revelation 13 through 18). The book of Revelation portrays symbols of many such evil rulers. Jesus Himself called King Herod, who was head of the Jewish government at His time, “that fox” (Luke 13:31, 32). In fact, Jesus told the Pharisees to “go and tell that fox” that He would continue with His work until He had finished it. That sounds like a revolutionary attitude. However, Jesus was not a revolutionary! He kept a balance between the demands of the kingdom of God and the ordinances of this world. He rebuked evildoers and criticized evil practices; yet He submitted Himself voluntarily to them.

How can the church become more active in promoting peace and prosperity in the nation and in the world?

“In conformity to the divine requirements there is a transforming power that brings peace and good will among men. If the teachings of God’s word were made the controlling influence in the life of every man and woman, if mind and heart were brought under its restraining power, the evils that now exist in national and in social life would find no place.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 192.

Further Study: *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 68, 69.

A Light to the World

“I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles” (Isa. 42:6).

The aim of this quarter’s lessons has been to deepen our understanding of the relationship between the Christian and the world and to discover anew the biblical principles that should guide us in that relationship. It has become obvious by now that this relationship has many different forms and facets which are also constantly changing. This makes it necessary for every generation of believers, in every country and culture, to discover for themselves how to apply the biblical principles to their particular situation.

It has become evident, further, that these biblical principles are based on two premises. The first is that the whole world lies in the power of sin and that everything in this world is affected by its evil influence. Therefore, Christians should shun this world, that is, its corruption, wickedness, and association with evil. The other basic premise is that God loves this world. Out of love He created it and endowed it with riches, beauty, energies, and wonderful things for people to enjoy. Out of love God is actively at work in this world (John 5:17) to save it and to restore it so that it can fulfill the purpose for which it was made.

Perhaps no other biblical image describes this twofold attitude toward the world better than that of light. It views the world as darkness and the church as light. This stresses on the one hand the radical difference between the church and the world, “for . . . what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?” (2 Cor. 6:14, 15, RSV). On the other hand, the image of light also emphasizes its role of shining to scatter darkness and the need of light in a dark place (Matt. 5:14-16). Light and darkness are opposites, and in God’s plan of salvation the light must be brought where the darkness exists. Participation in the work of Christ, who is the True Light (John 1:9; 1 John 2:8), is a life of witnessing to that Light in a world that lies in darkness.

Part 1 GOD IS LIGHT

“This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5).

In the Bible the words “light” and “darkness” are often used figuratively. When we read that “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all,” we understand this to mean that God is altogether good, without a trace of evil. Yet this is only one meaning of the word “light” as used in the Bible to apply to God. We need to consider also the other meanings in order to understand more fully the biblical message that God is light. This is the more important, since Scripture calls the followers of God “children of light,” who are sent by God into the world to let His light shine.

What are some of the other meanings of “light” in the Bible as it applies to the work and the character of God? Ps. 27:1; 2 Cor. 4:6, 7; Isa. 60:1-3.

There are more than 20 different meanings found in Scripture. The ones that stand out most prominently are these: salvation, truth, righteousness, goodness, glory, power, life, knowledge, help, comfort, joy. Notice how real and tangible these are. Light, in Scripture, is a real experience, a tangible reality, much as is the physical light. One notices when it is there or when it is absent.

What is the relationship between God and physical light? Gen. 1:2-5; Rev. 22:5.

Without God there is no light. Even what we know as “day and night,” which seem so natural to us, would not exist without God’s creative and sustaining power. And since life depends on light, this world would not exist without the grace of God.

How does God’s light continue to shine in this world? Matt. 5:16; 1 John 2:9-11; Phil. 2:14, 15.

“If we wish to direct others in the path of righteousness, the principles of righteousness must be enshrined in our own hearts. Our profession of faith may proclaim the theory of religion, but it is our practical piety that holds forth the word of truth. The consistent life, the holy conversation, the unswerving integrity, the active, benevolent spirit, the godly example,—these are the mediums through which light is conveyed to the world.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 307.

Further Study: *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 306, 307.

Part 2 CHRIST, THE TRUE LIGHT

“Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12).

The Scriptures testify that Jesus is light (John 1:9). By Jesus’ claim that He is light He emphasizes not only His divinity and His oneness with God but also the authenticity of His life and work, the absolute truth of all His words.

Note the context of these passages in which Jesus declares that He is the light of the world. John 8:12; 9:5.

“The world has had its great teachers, men of giant intellect and wonderful research, men whose utterances have stimulated thought, and opened to view vast fields of knowledge; and these men have been honored as guides and benefactors of their race. But there is One who stands higher than they. . . . We can trace the line of the world’s great teachers as far back as human records extend; but the Light was before them. As the moon and the stars [planets] of the solar system shine by the reflected light of the sun, so, as far as their teaching is true, do the world’s great thinkers reflect the rays of the Sun of Righteousness. Every gem of thought, every flash of intellect, is from the Light of the world.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 464, 465.

What is the deepest meaning of the biblical testimony that Jesus is the “light”? Isa. 49:6; Luke 2:32; John 12:46.

The term “light of the world” has a great many meanings in Scripture: truth, life, knowledge, etc. However, the central meaning of Jesus as the light is that He is the Messiah, the One sent by God to reconcile human beings to Himself and to each other, the One in whom the whole world, lost in sin, may find salvation.

How did Jesus show by His life and words that He was indeed the Messiah, the Light of the world? Luke 4:16-21; 19:10.

Of the miracles Jesus performed, one of the most striking was His opening of the eyes of the blind. (See Mark 8:22-26; 10:46-52.) We all are blind, groping about in darkness as a result of sin. If we let Jesus open our eyes, darkness will cease. But if we reject His healing, we shall remain in darkness forever.

Has Jesus opened my eyes and dispelled the darkness of my life? In what ways?

Further Study: *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 463-465.

Part 3 THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

To what did Jesus liken the life and the work of His followers in the world?

“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house” (Matt. 5:14, 15).

These words of Christ summarize the calling and mission of the church in the world. What a miracle of grace! For who of us, by nature, is a light? To be a light is, in the words of the apostle John, to love our neighbor (1 John 2:7-11). Other passages of Scripture identify the light as doing the truth (John 3:20, 21), having the mind of Jesus Christ, and walking blameless before God (Phil. 2:5-15).

What difference is there between Jesus as the light of the world, and the light of the world as it applies to the followers of Christ? John 1:6-8; 2 Cor. 4:5-7.

As our moon and the planets in our solar system have no light in themselves but reflect only the light of the sun, so it is with the followers of Christ. They are not the light by themselves, but they are called to reflect the True Light, Jesus Christ. We have no light in ourselves. But we can bear witness to the Light. And even bearing witness to the Light is not our own work, but it is God Himself “who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God” (2 Cor. 4:6, RSV). Without Him we “can do nothing” (John 15:5). It is God who works in us “both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13, RSV).

What is the only way, therefore, by which the followers of Christ can be the light of the world? John 12:36.

Christians do most of the wholesome and helpful things common to society as a whole. It is in the permeating influence of the love of God, through grace, touching every aspect of life that the Christian sheds Heaven’s light on the world. This is the difference between the church and the world.

How can I let my light shine in the environment where God has placed me?

Further Study: *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, “The Beatitudes” (Matt. 5:14), pp. 38-44.

**Part 4
O GLORIFY
GOD**

What is the aim of bearing witness in the world as Christ's light bearers?

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16). (See also John 15:7, 8.)

Whether the symbol used is light shining or fruit bearing, the object is to glorify God. All too little attention have we given to God's purpose for our calling in this world. Usually we think of the aim of mission as proclaiming the Word of God, helping people to accept Christ, planting and building up churches, and serving humanity in its deepest needs. And all of these are indeed reasons for the Christian to be in the world. Yet the main aim of our whole life and work in the world is to glorify God. It is for the glory of God that we were made (Isa. 43:7). Christ Himself came into this world to glorify God (John 17:4). For the same purpose He also sends us into the world (2 Thess. 1:11, 12), so that even those who in the past have been ignorant of the promises of God may now glorify Him.

In each of the following passages, how is God said to be glorified? Connect the answers with Revelation 14:7. Isa 49:3-6; Matt. 15:31; Acts 13:47, 48; 2 Cor. 9:13.

The Bible tells us that when the crowds saw the sick and crippled people healed, they glorified the God of Israel (Matt. 15:31). (See also Matt. 9:8; Mark 2:12; Luke 5:25, 26; 13:13; Acts 4:21.) Other ways by which we are called to glorify God are the preaching of the gospel and sharing God's promises with those who do not know Him (Acts 13:48), ministry through our God-given gifts (1 Peter 4:9-11), offering praises (Ps. 50:23), dying for the sake of God and His work (John 21:19), healthful habits and cleanliness of our body (1 Cor. 6:19, 20), Christian obedience, stewardship, and liberality in giving (2 Cor. 9:13). It is noteworthy that the Scriptures emphasize *works* as a way to glorify God. But all of these works must, of course, be rooted in faith and love. Paul wrote: “If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing” (1 Cor. 13:3, RSV). As faith is dead without works (James 2:17), works by themselves mean nothing either. But born out of faith and rooted in love, these works glorify God and lead many others to worship Him.

How, then, can Revelation 14:6, 7 best be fulfilled in our world today?

Further Study: *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 825-828.

Part 5 LIGHT AND DARKNESS

“In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not” (John 1:4, 5).

In the same way as the Bible often uses the word “light” to denote goodness, salvation, righteousness, truth, knowledge, or life, so does darkness in Scripture stand for evil, lostness, ignorance, falsehood, error, or death. As light stands for the presence of God, so darkness denotes the absence of God.

What is the meaning of the words “and the darkness comprehended it [the light] not” (John 1:5)?

Various explanations have been offered. Some maintain that sinful man did not understand the life and the work of Christ because his mind is darkened (Rom. 1:21). Others insist that we first have to live in the light in order to understand the gospel (John 3:21). Still others emphasize that the text should be translated: “And the darkness has not overcome the light.” The Greek word used in the text is more frequently translated this way in Scripture. Indeed, even through the powers of evil seem triumphant in this world, the message of the gospel is that Jesus has overcome the world, goodness has triumphed over evil, life over death (2 Cor. 2:14; Col. 2:15). Christ is head over all things, far above all rule, authority, power, and dominion (Eph. 1:20-23). Another group of interpreters maintains that the text means that people, though estranged from God, have indeed understood the meaning of the gospel, but they have in pride rejected it. They have clearly heard Jesus cry out: “He who believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And he who sees me sees him who sent me. I have come as light into the world, that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. . . . He who rejects me and does not receive my sayings has a judge; the word that I have spoken will be his judge on the last day” (John 12:44-48, RSV). But they have chosen darkness over light.

Each of these interpretations stresses an important aspect of the biblical message of salvation and of the work of mission. Without the work of Christ, through His Spirit, no one can understand the depth of God’s grace and the meaning of His work for us. Without His power we cannot accept it. But those who are willing to give up their own ideas, will, and habits will see the light clearly and find in it the way, the truth, and the life.

Is it possible to walk in light and in darkness at the same time? (See Matt. 6:23, 24; Luke 11:35.) What would be the hallmark of such a believer or of such a church? (See Rev. 3:15-18.)

Further Study: *Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 83-87.

What is God's will for all humanity?

“This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour: who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:3, 4).

God wants all humanity to be saved. To that end He sent His Son into the world to enlighten everyone, so that whoever seizes that light and accepts Jesus as his Lord and Saviour shall be saved.

How does God accomplish His work of salvation in the world today? John 6:44; 1 Peter 2:9, 10; Col. 1:12, 14.

No one can be saved by his own power or because of his own will. Thanks be to our God, who Himself is constantly at work to draw people unto Himself, to call them out of darkness into His marvelous light, to uphold them in their struggles, and to build them up in the faith. It is God who by His spirit is calling us to be members of His own household as sons and daughters of God (Rom. 8:14-17).

How can we, having once accepted the light, remain in it? Rom. 13:12-14; Eph. 5:8-17; 1 John 1:7-10.

Salvation is God's free gift to all people. Whether we remain in the light as heirs and children of the light depends to a large extent on our determination to walk in the light. What does that mean? Three aspects stand out clearly. First, to cast off darkness. That is, to give up all those habits, thoughts, and interests which detract from our walk with God. (See Eph. 4:22, 25; 1 Peter 2:1). Second, to walk in the light. That is, to choose to do good and to love one's neighbor, and thus glorify God. Third, to put on the armor of light. This armor of light is designed to protect the believers from the attacks of the evil one and to make it possible for the followers of Christ to use the weapons of their spiritual warfare to overcome the darkness and to penetrate it. The parts of this armor are truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, and the sure word of God (Eph. 6:11-18).

In what ways can Christians really become the light of the world?

“Every soul is to be a bright and shining light, showing forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. ‘We are laborers together with God.’ ”—*Christian Service*, p. 21.

Further Study: *Christian Service*, pp. 18-22.

A New Heaven and a New Earth

“By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:9, 10).

Great men and women of faith have always regarded this world and everything in it as transitory. Our real home is that world where God dwells in the midst of His people, where there is no more mourning, fear, pain, sin, or death (Rev. 21:1-4). Notice that our real home is not heaven, but a new earth!

Although God’s people have expected the arrival of this new earth since God’s promise of salvation to our first ancestors, nevertheless there have been four periods in the history of humanity when this expectation was of universal dimension. The first period was the time of the prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, who announced the restoration of the people of Judah to their homeland which would become the center to which the nations would flock and find salvation.

The second period of universal messianic expectation was the time of the birth of Christ. Inside as well as outside the Jewish nation there were prophets foretelling the arrival of the Messiah. Says Ellen White: “Outside of the Jewish nation there were men who foretold the appearance of a divine instructor. These men were seeking for truth, and to them the Spirit of Inspiration was imparted.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 33.

The third period was the time of the 1820s through the early 1840s when again all over the world people arose foretelling the restoration of all things.

Finally, in our day we see everywhere the rise of numerous religious movements which find their creative center in the expectation of a new heaven and a new earth. Let us now, more than ever before, become aware of these signs pointing to the fullness of our time and prepare ourselves, and the millions of others living in the expectation of a new heaven and a new earth, for this most glorious event of all times—the restoration of the kingdom of God.

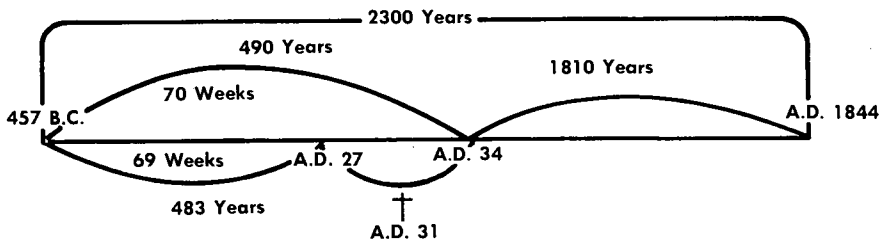
**Part 1
FULLNESS
OF TIME**

“And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever” (1 John 2:17).

“The world passeth away.” In this world everything is transitory; nothing is permanent. So why be so foolish as to put one’s trust in the things of the world, its forms and fashions, its wisdom and beauty? All these things are passing away (1 Cor. 7:31). All life is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers and the flower falls. Only the word of the Lord abides forever (1 Peter 1:24, 25). (See also Matt. 6:25-33.) But it is not just the civilization on this world that is passing; the world itself will be radically altered.

What does Scripture tell us about the time of the end of this world? Dan. 2:31-45; 12:1-7.

“Surely the Lord God does nothing, without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7, RSV). God has indeed revealed that this world of ours will come to an end. The Bible speaks repeatedly about a “fullness of time,” a period in history when certain prophecies regarding special events in the program of God’s salvation were being fulfilled. The apostle Paul says that when a certain time had been fulfilled, God sent forth His Son (Gal. 4:4). Jesus Himself said: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand” (Mark 1:15). Many interpreters of Scripture have in particular pointed to the prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27 concerning the “seventy weeks of years” (RSV) in which 69 weeks or 483 years were set aside for God’s people until the coming of the Messiah. He would then finish the transgression, put an end to sin, make atonement for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness (see the diagram). In a similar way, the Bible has also given us some clear time indicators concerning the end of the world when Christ will come a second time:



Further Study: *The Great Controversy*, pp. 343-354.

Part 2 THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

What signs confirm that we are indeed living in the last days of this world's history?

“Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.”

“And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold” (Matt. 24:7, 11, 12).

The events characterizing our world today may not by themselves convince many people that we are living at the very end of time. But to those who accept Christ and who know His Word, these events constitute the clearest signs of the end of our world: the terrible famines; the disastrous earthquakes; the floods, droughts, and atmospheric disturbances; the rise of occultism and of hundreds of false messiahs. Not only are these signs clearer and more frequent than at the time when we first believed (Rom. 13:11), now they are also truly universal.

Besides the signs specifically mentioned by Christ in Matthew 24:3-31 and in Luke 21:7-28, what are some other signs mentioned in Scripture? 2 Tim. 3:1-5; James 5:1-5; 2 Peter 3:1-6.

The facts themselves are not in dispute. Scholars from every discipline recognize that our age is an age of crisis—crises in society and in the economy, in law and in government, in relations between people and nations. As one scientist expressed it so powerfully: “We are racing toward catastrophe on several separate but related routes.”—Geoffrey Abert, *After the Crash: How to Survive and Prosper During the Depression of the 1980s* (New York: New American Library, Signet Books, 1979), p. 29. But what do these events really mean, besides creating fear and distress such as people have never experienced before? In the light of the sure word of prophecy we know that when we see all these things, “the end of all things is at hand” (1 Peter 4:7).

In light of the clarity and the universality of these signs of the time of the end, what should be our attitude? What kind of persons should we be? How should we conduct our lives? Rom. 13:11-14; 1 Thess. 5:1-11; 2 Peter 3:11, 14.

What preparation have you made to prepare yourself, your family, and friends, as well as the people with whom you associate daily, to be ready to stand before the Son of man?

Further Study: *Christ's Object Lessons*, “To Meet the Bridegroom,” pp. 405-414.

**Part 3
THE GOSPEL
IS BEING
PROCLAIMED**

“This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come” (Matt. 24:14).

The proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom throughout the whole world is a divine commission, a test of the true church, and the breath by which the church lives and moves and has its existence (Matt. 28:19, 20). But it is also God’s way of leading the history of this world to its end and of ushering in His kingdom. As such, the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom is a sign both of the certainty of the promise of God and of its fulfillment in our time.

What does Scripture mean by the “gospel of the kingdom”?
Mark 1:14, 15; 2 Cor. 5:18-20.

The kingdom of God was the central theme of Jesus’ own preaching. It also ought to be the starting point of our proclamation and of our mission, for we are His ambassadors. We have no other gospel but the gospel of the kingdom. And we have no other mission but to proclaim the arrival of that kingdom. But what does it all mean? From Jesus’ own words and the writings of the apostles, the following elements stand out clearly: (1) It is the proclamation of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ, who Himself is the truth (John 14:6). (2) This proclamation urges people to put their faith in Him and be saved. (3) It is also a call to repentance and to a changed life in the power of the Holy Spirit. (4) The gospel of the kingdom is a message of peace and of reconciliation; it is at the same time also a work of judgment. In fact, it is through the proclamation of the gospel that people are saved or condemned (John 3:16-18). (5) The proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom is also a work of healing and liberation. Poor people receive new dignity; the unemployed are enabled to help themselves; the hungry are fed; the sick are healed; the lonely are visited; the afflicted are helped in their distress (Luke 4:18-21). (6) Proclamation means word and deed; it is accomplished through presentation and manifestation.

What means has Heaven provided so that this gospel of the kingdom can be preached in all the world in this generation? Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 4:7-13; John 16:7-11.

All power in heaven and on earth is given to Christ. Through the Holy Spirit, bringing us that power, He sends us into the world.

Further Study: *The Desire of Ages*, p. 818-824.

**Part 4
THE COMING
OF CHRIST**

What will be the greatest event at the end of time?

“The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:16, 17).

The last day of the world’s history is the day of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:8), the day when the whole world will see “the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory” (Luke 21:27). This will be the most glorious event of all times. Every eye will see Him, even the people who pierced Him (Rev. 1:7). There will be nothing secret about it. People will see Him—and His myriads of angels—and hear the shouts of command and the summons of the trumpet. (See Matt. 24:31; 1 Cor. 15:51, 52.) However, that “great day” (Rev. 6:17) will not have the same meaning to everyone. To many it will be a “day of redemption” (Eph. 4:30), the day they have been hoping for, longing for, living for, praying for. To many others, however, it will be a day of dread, fear, and terror, as is obvious from their shouts to the mountains to fall on them and to the hills to cover them (Rev. 6:16, 17). Let us therefore choose now to which group we want to belong.

**What events will take place at the second coming of Christ?
1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:22-25; 2 Thess. 1:5-12.**

Five events are clearly mentioned in Scripture: (1) Those who have loved His appearance and have expected Him “shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump” (1 Cor. 15:51, 52). (2) Those who died in Christ will be “raised imperishable” (1 Cor. 15:52, RSV) in the first resurrection. (3) Those who have loved the Lord and have remained faithful to His Word and who are alive at His coming will, with the resurrected saints, be taken up into the air to meet the Lord, to be with Him (1 Thess. 4:17) and to reign with Him as priests a thousand years (Rev. 20:6). (4) The living unbelievers, however, will be slain by Christ when He “shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels” (2 Thess. 1:7). (5) Those unbelievers who will have died before the second coming of Christ will not be raised, but remain in their graves until the thousand years will have ended (Rev. 20:4, 5).

What difference does it make in my life to know that Jesus is coming soon?

Further Study: *The Great Controversy*, p. 641-645.

What will be the situation on earth during the second coming of Christ?

“The heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains” (Rev. 6:14, 15).

“Desolate! Desolation and ruin!” (Nahum 2:10, RSV). This picture of plundered Nineveh is perhaps the best description of the situation on earth during the second coming of Christ. Peter states that “the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up” (2 Peter 3:10, RSV). The Old Testament prophets, in describing events of their day, foretell the conditions at the great day of the Lord. “In the fire of his jealous wrath, all the earth shall be consumed; for a full, yea, sudden end he will make of all inhabitants of the earth” (Zeph. 1:18, RSV). (See also Isa. 24:6, 19, RSV). Yet this utter destruction of all life on earth is not the final word. The prophet Isaiah knows that “after many days” the earth will be restored. (This will be after the passage of the thousand-year period of Revelation 20:3-7.)

What events will take place during this period of desolation on earth? Rev. 20:4-6; 1 Cor. 6:2, 3.

While the earth is “waste and void,” “its cities . . . laid in ruins” (Jer. 4:23-26), its inhabitants destroyed, and the devil bound and thrown into a pit (Rev. 20:1-3), the saints are being given thrones on which to rule with Christ as priests for a thousand years (Rev. 20:4-6). The Bible describes this reigning of the saints in particular as a work of judgment (Rev. 20:4). As the apostle Paul says: “Do you not know that we are to judge angels?” (1 Cor. 6:3, RSV). That judgment really belongs to Christ (John 5:22), but He has chosen to commit that judgment together with His saints. Those who have been persecuted, tortured, and killed for their faith in God and their testimony of Jesus will now sit in judgment over their persecutors, torturers, and murderers. The ones who suffered from the evil work of fallen angels, principalities, and powers will now judge them. The saints are receiving the kingdom, and with that reign they also judge. (See Dan. 7:10, 18, 22, 26, 27.)

What happens at the end of the thousand years? Rev. 20:7-14.

Further Study: *The Great Controversy*, pp. 653-661.

**Part 6
A NEW HEAVEN
AND A NEW
EARTH**

“I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Rev. 21:1, 2).

Out of the terrible desolation and ruin of the old earth there arises “a new heaven and a new earth.” What a difference between these two worlds! The first lies in the power of the evil one (1 John 5:19, RSV). “None is righteous, no not one; no one understands, no one seeks for God.” “The way of peace they do not know” (Rom.3:10, 11, 17, RSV). But the new heaven and the new earth we are looking for, according to God’s promise, is full of righteousness, peace, and happiness. (See 2 Peter 3:13.) God Himself will remove all the results of sin and will dwell with us.

What does the Bible tell us concerning life on this new earth? Isa. 65:17-25; 66:22, 23; Rev. 21:3, 4; 22:1-5.

Holy men and women of God, at various times, have tried to paint a picture of life on the new earth. But can any mortal really understand what God in His wisdom and mercy has prepared for those who love Him? We do read of joy, feasting, and eternal happiness; of work and of worship; of music and of living together in genuine fellowship. But all we can say with certainty is that “what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived,” has God “prepared for those who love him” (1 Cor. 2:9, RSV). The apostle Paul once told of “a man in Christ” who was caught up into Paradise. But the things he heard and saw and experienced there could not be told. He was unable to describe them (2 Cor. 12:1-4).

What will be the hallmark of the relationship between God and man on the new earth? Rev. 21:2, 3, 9; 22:4, 17.

“They shall be his people,” a relationship also described as a marriage. We, as a unit in the New Jerusalem, are the bride. Christ is the Bridegroom, who has presented “the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:27, RSV). As His bride, we shall also bear His name, a name of love, “for God is love” (1 John 4:8).

What guarantee do we have that sin and rebellion will not rise again in this new earth? (See Nahum 1:9; Heb. 10:10-12.)

Further Study: *The Great Controversy*, pp. 674-678.

Lesson for 4th quarter '82

Sabbath School members who have not received a copy of the Adult Lessons for the fourth quarter of 1982 will be helped by the following outline in studying the first two lessons. The title of this series is "God's Great Gift."

First Lesson

GOD SEEKING MAN

Memory Text, Gen. 1:1

1. *God—The Creator (Gen. 1:1)*
2. *Man—the Crown of Creation (Gen. 1:26, 27)*
3. *Creator of God-Man Relationship (Gen. 1:28, 29; 2:15)*
4. *Testing of the Relationship (Gen. 2:17)*
5. *Breakdown of the Relationship (Gen. 3:6, 7)*
6. *The Way Back (Gen. 3:9)*

Second Lesson

GOD—CONSTANTLY OFFERING HIS COVENANT

Memory Text, Ex. 6:7

1. *Covenant Language (Gen. 17:2, Heb. 9:15)*
2. *Covenant With Noah (Gen. 6:18)*
3. *The Covenant With Abram (Gen. 12:1-3)*
4. *The Covenant With Moses (Ex. 6:7)*
5. *The Covenant With David (Ps. 89:3, 4)*
6. *The New Covenant (Jer. 31:31, 33)*

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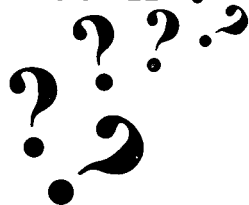
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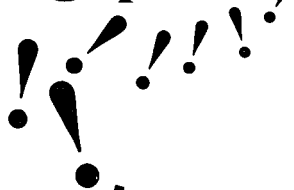


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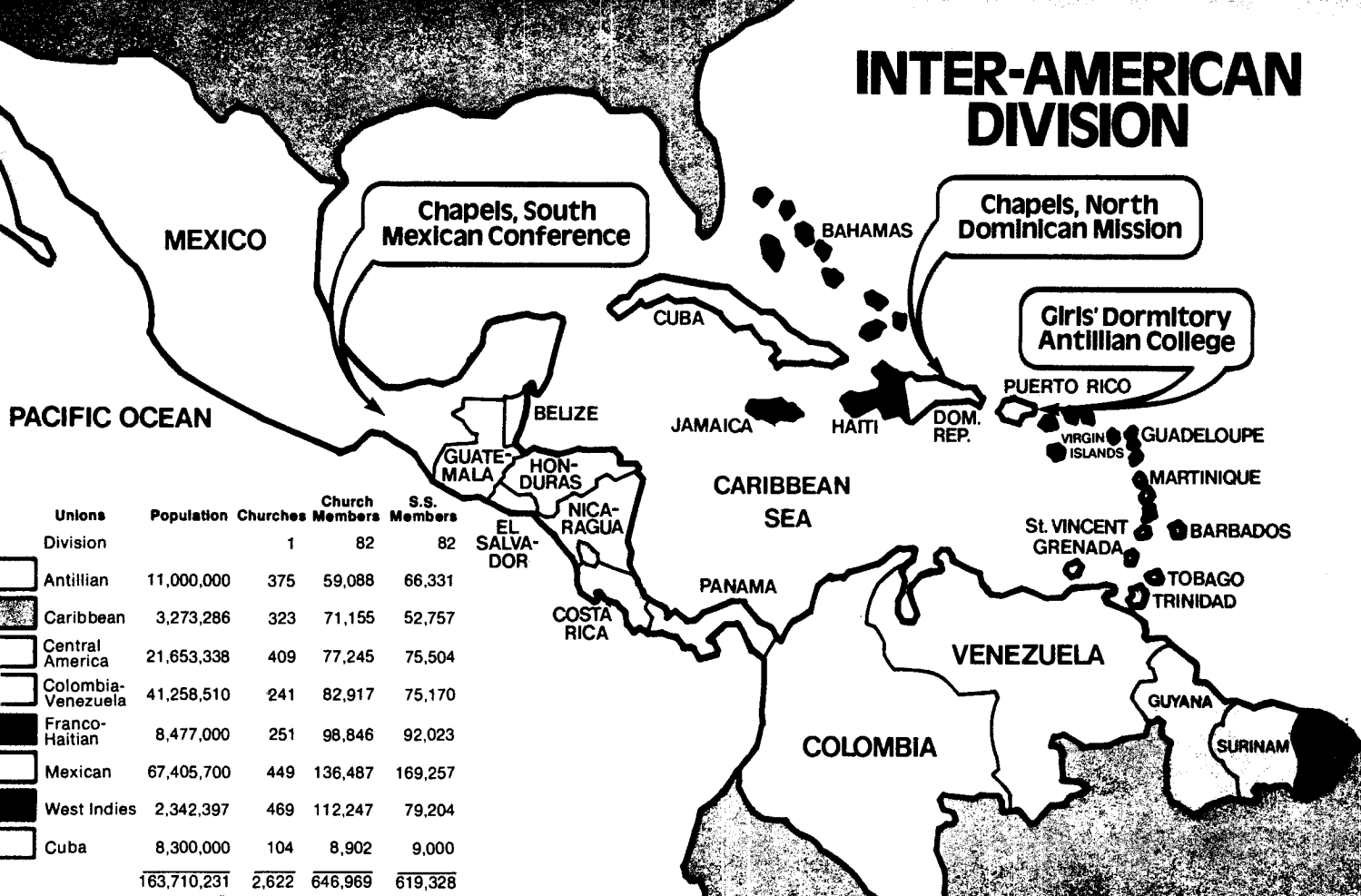
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INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION



Chapels, South Mexican Conference

Chapels, North Dominican Mission

Girls' Dormitory Antillian College

PACIFIC OCEAN

CARIBBEAN SEA

Unions Division	Population	Churches	Church Members	S.S. Members
Antillian	11,000,000	375	59,088	66,331
Caribbean	3,273,286	323	71,155	52,757
Central America	21,653,338	409	77,245	75,504
Colombia-Venezuela	41,258,510	241	82,917	75,170
Franco-Haitian	8,477,000	251	98,846	92,023
Mexican	67,405,700	449	136,487	169,257
West Indies	2,342,397	469	112,247	79,204
Cuba	8,300,000	104	8,902	9,000
Total	163,710,231	2,622	646,969	619,328