

Adult

Sabbath School Lessons

Christ and His Infant Church



APRIL, MAY, JUNE 1987

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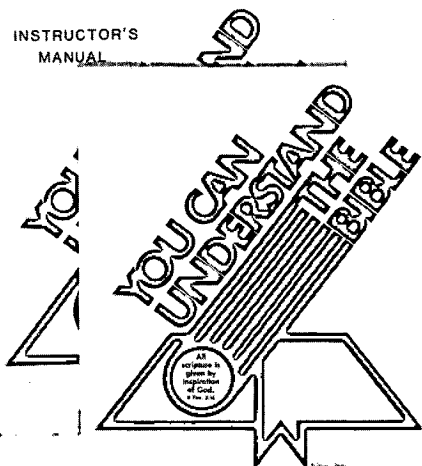
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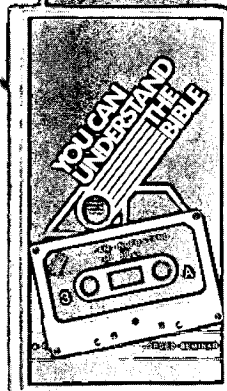
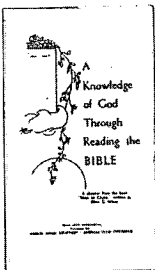
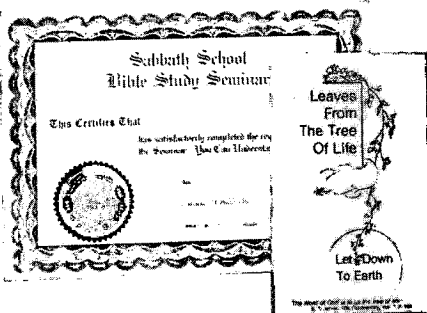


**How to Get
the Most
out of**

Bible Study

Leo R. Van Dolson

**THE
GREATEST
OF
THESE**



Contents

1. Joy to the World
2. Expectations Fulfilled
3. Days of Popularity
4. Demonstrating the Kingdom
5. Duties and Privileges of Discipleship
6. Human Crises and the Kingdom
7. The Gospel to the Outcast
8. Choosing the Kingdom of God
9. Conflict Increases
10. Communion and the Cross
11. Resurrection and Ascension
12. The Spirit Descends
13. The Growing Church

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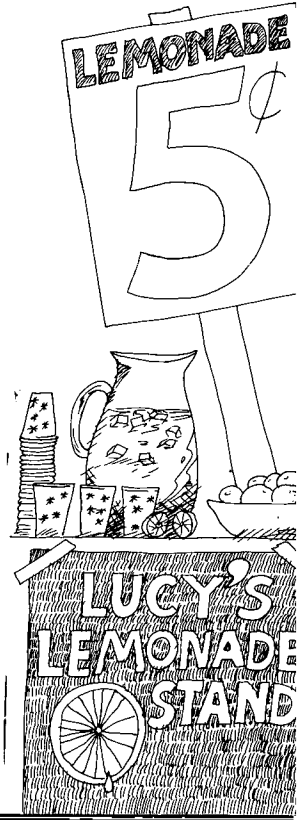
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This is Lucy Henderson's lemonade stand. Lucy sells lemonade here four days a week, after school, for 5¢ a glass. Her mother donates the lemonade. Lucy usually sells 15 glasses of lemonade a day. So her weekly income is \$3.00.

On Sabbath, Lucy puts a quarter and a nickel into an envelope, marks it "Tithe" and drops it in the offering plate. That 10% of Lucy's income helps support the world ministry of the church. Lucy is happy to return her tithe to the Lord.



We all know how but how much should

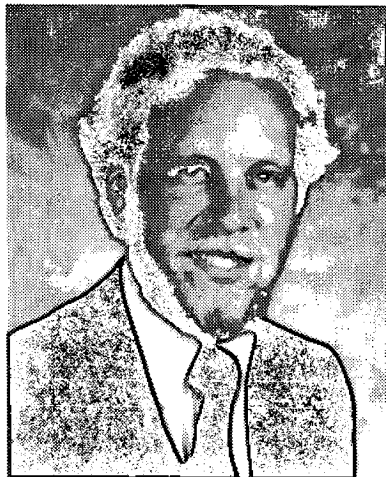
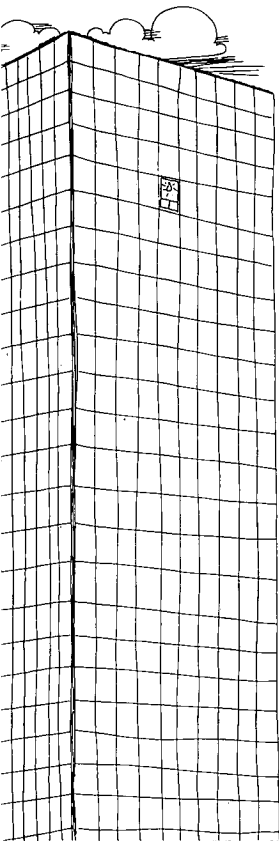
Lucy and her daddy both return tithe on an equal basis: 10% of income. But how much should Lucy and her daddy give in mission offerings?

Sometimes members are encouraged to give \$2.00. Now to Lucy, \$2.00 is more than half her weekly income. To Lucy's daddy, \$2.00 is mere pocket change. Lucy worries because \$2.00 seems so much. Her daddy feels \$2.00 for him is really not enough!

 My Personal
Giving Plan

*Our Mission—
The Gospel to the World*

Proportionate financial support



This is Lucy Henderson's daddy's building. Lucy's daddy works in an office on the 32nd floor from eight to five each weekday. Mr. Henderson's weekly income is substantially higher than Lucy's.

On Sabbath, Mr. Henderson puts a check into an envelope, marks it "Tithe" and puts it in the offering plate. That 10% of his income helps support the world ministry of the church. Mr. Henderson is happy to return his tithe to the Lord.

much tithe to return, we give in offerings?

Wouldn't it be better if we planned our offerings on a percentage basis, just like tithe? Many are doing just that. The fact is, if every church member gave 3% of income to the World Budget Offering, all world budget financial needs, from the support of missions to educational institutions, would be adequately met. Giving as God has blessed is always real.

an idea as old as tithing.



Meet the Author

**Of
This Quarter's
Lessons**

Walter R. L. Scragg was born and educated in Australia. He spent ten years in evangelism before working with the "Voice of Prophecy" and later, "Faith for Today." He served as radio and television director in Australia and at the General Conference.

In 1975 he was elected president of the Northern Europe-West Africa Division, then was called home to hold the same position for the South Pacific Division.

He has written six books, including three for juniors, and numerous magazine articles. He has authored three Bible correspondence courses and four sets of Sabbath School lessons. He and his wife, Betty, have three adult children. His hobbies include gardening, cooking and writing.

Watch at your local Adventist Book Center for the supplementary book. It is written by W. R. L. Scragg and is being published by the Review and Herald Publishing Association.

Introduction to the Gospel of Luke

“To Seek and To Save”

Luke and Acts form two parts of one continuing historical record. Luke wrote this history in order to inform, persuade, and convict Theophilus and others who would later read his account. First, Luke is an evangelist. At the end of his Gospel he wants his readers (including us today) to confess Jesus as Lord. At the end of his history he expects his readers to join the band of witnesses to Jesus.

Second, he writes for the church. He outlines what Jesus said during His life and ministry in order that the church may know and obey. He recounts the mighty deeds Jesus did in the church as the Spirit provided power and direction to the apostles.

Luke's clear, connected narrative is illuminated by the historian's eye for detail and accuracy. The life and deeds of Jesus capture the reader. Excitement builds as the tiny band of disciples changes the course of history through their witness.

The joy of salvation is his theme, the church his constant concern, the Son of Man his Hero, and the Spirit his abiding Partner and Provider.

Luke was a Gentile physician who, after his conversion to Christianity, became the companion of Paul on his missionary journeys. As part of a most effective medical missionary team, Luke developed a keen interest in meeting the human needs of the common people and those who were despised and rejected. In his Gospel he says much about Jesus' interest in those whom the Jews looked down upon, including the Gentiles. His Gospel is intended as a primer in the Christian faith. Not being an eyewitness of the events recorded in the Gospel, Luke researched carefully the life and ministry of Jesus in order to present an account that would confirm the faith of his readers. Not only does he present Christ as the Ideal Man, but he also shows how the Ideal Man came to “seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10).

Overview of Luke—Jesus, the Son of Man

1:1-4	Prologue
1:5—4:13	Preparation of the Son of Man
4:14—9:50	Public Ministry of the Son of Man
9:51—19:10	Preparation for Passion
19:11—23:56	Passion of the Son of Man
24:1—24:53	Post-resurrection Appearances of the Son of Man

Joy to the World

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Luke 1:1 through 2:52.



MEMORY TEXT: "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people, for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour" (Luke 2:10, 11).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The joy surrounding the first coming of Christ should echo in the hearts of those anticipating His second coming. The Holy Spirit, who filled humble and devout people with joy and confidence then, will fill us with joy and confidence today.

OVERVIEW: Luke 1:1 — 2:52

1:1-56 Signs, Songs, and the Spirit	1:57-80 Deliverance affirmed	2:1-52 Joy to the world
Zacharias and Elisabeth; Mary and the Spirit	The birth of John the Baptist	Bethlehem; The shepherds; Thankfulness and praise

INTRODUCTION: The Gospel of Luke overflows with examples of Jesus' compassion for the sick, women, children, and outcasts. Luke emphasizes that the divinely conceived Jesus was born into this world in the same way that all other human infants are born. As might be expected of a physician, Luke pictures Jesus bending over the sickbed of Peter's mother-in-law and restoring her to health instantly. Luke alone records Jesus' interest in and redemption of the despised Publican, Zacchaeus.

This week's memory text picks out four important emphases in Luke's writing: (1) making clear the purposes of God; (2) fulfilling human hopes; (3) establishing a setting in history; and (4) the right response to God's actions. His narrative presents authentic knowledge of how God sets about making His salvation known. Luke drew on "the traditions handed down to us by the original eyewitnesses and servants of the gospel" (Luke 1:2, NEB).

Luke had developed his own fund of stories and facts. When in Jerusalem with Paul he must have talked with the remaining disciples. While traveling he had frequent contact with church leaders. He met with firsthand witnesses and could write down what they said as well as refer to the written records about Jesus.

In both Luke and Acts the ever-present Lord dominates. Luke tells us about Jesus as Son of man on Earth and as the ascended Lord. The book of Acts is as much a story of what Jesus has done as is the Gospel itself.

Many times, in reading the Gospel, one senses that Luke has the church in mind. The words Jesus spoke and the deeds He performed are put together in such a way that the church may understand better its role as witness and servant.

The Spirit guided Luke in three ways as the evangelist placed his special stamp on the telling of the gospel story: first, by seeing that the special material Luke alone recorded was included; second, in Luke's selection of words; third, in the order in which he arranged his material.



I. SIGNS, SONGS, AND THE SPIRIT (LUKE 1:1-56).

Throughout Luke's books the intervention of angels and the direction of the Holy Spirit are mentioned frequently. Luke emphasizes God's direct action in human affairs.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Study the chart below that compares the first two chapters of Luke with the same chapters in Matthew. As you study the list of events, notice how much we depend on these two authors for our knowledge of the events surrounding Jesus' birth and childhood.

Incident	Matt.	Mark	Luke	John
The Human Ancestry of Jesus	1:1-17		3:23-38	
The Announcement to Zacharias			1:5-25	
The Annunciation			1:26-38	
Mary's Visit to Elisabeth			1:39-56	
Birth of John the Baptist			1:57-80	
The Announcement to Joseph; His Marriage	1:18-25			
Birth of Jesus			2:1-7	
The Announcement to the Shepherds			2:8-20	
The Circumcision			2:21	
Presentation at the Temple			2:22-38	
Visit of the Magi	2:1-12			
Flight to Egypt	2:13-18			
Return to Nazareth	2:19-23		2:39, 40	
First Passover Visit			2:41-50	
Youth and Young Manhood			2:51, 52	

—Adapted from *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 196

The gospel story begins in the temple, where the people of God came continually for cleansing and forgiveness. By placing Jesus in such a setting Luke emphasizes His humanity. Jesus lived and taught on Planet Earth. His teachings and deeds are those of a real person.

Luke places several events within the temple boundaries. At the end of the Gospel the disciples are there (Luke 24:53). The first Christians made it their base for worship and witness (Acts 2:46).

How does the Bible describe the characters of those through whom God worked to bring about His will? Luke 1:6; 2:25.



1. John's Birth Announced (Luke 1:12-17).

Zacharias "was standing before the golden altar in the holy place of the sanctuary. The cloud of incense with the prayers of Israel were ascending before God."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 97. The angel instructed him as to the special nature of John's lifestyle and witness (Luke 1:15-17). The Nazarite vow (Num. 6:1-21) included abstinence from wine and strong drink.

Two themes important to the way Luke tells his story emerge. The first is the note of warmth and joy with which Luke fills both Luke and Acts. (See Luke 19:6-10 and Acts 2:46, 47.) The second theme vital to our understanding of Luke is the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

What active part does the Spirit take in fulfilling the plan of salvation? Luke 1:67; 10:21; Acts 2:4.

The miracle of John's birth reminds us of Sarah (Gen. 21), of Rachel (Gen. 30), of Hannah (1 Sam. 1), and the Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4). In the same way that God told Abraham and Sarah that the world would be blessed through Isaac, the angel told Zacharias that blessing would come from the birth of his son. (Compare Gen 22:18 and Luke 1:14-17.)

2. The Virgin Birth (Luke 1:26-38).

In God's plan the humanly impossible happened. Where Zacharias quibbled, Mary submitted to God's will (verse 38). Jesus was conceived in her of the Holy Spirit. He was the "holy child." Although this and other sections of Luke tell of miracles, signs, and wonders, Jesus is the true Sign of our salvation.

Luke's source for this story may have been Mary herself. God favored her by choosing her to bear His Son. Her reactions to the will of God demonstrate her simple faith and complete devotion. Because of her willing submission God blessed her in a special way. (See Luke 1:28-30, 42.)

3. Mary's Song (Luke 1:46-56).

The songs and prophetic psalms of Luke 1 may have formed part of the praise and music of the early church. Four songs that still form part of current church music are Mary's song, the song of Zacharias, the Gloria in Excelsis of the angelic host, and Simeon's prayer.

COMPARE Mary's psalm with some of the Old Testament praises to God. (Compare Luke 1:47 with Hab. 3:18; Luke 1:48 with 1 Sam. 1:11; Luke 1:50 with Exodus 20:6; and Luke 1:54, 55 with Micah 7:20.)

Because God acts to uplift the lowly, Jesus later could speak confidently of the meek inheriting the earth. Because God acts today to fulfill the promises, we may have assurance of eternal life in Christ. In these and other ways the first chapters of Luke set themes for his Gospel and for the New Testament as a whole. In Galatians 3 Paul picked up the thoughts expressed by Mary, who saw Jesus' birth as fulfilling the promises made to Abraham.



II. THE BIRTH OF JOHN (Luke 1:57-80).

This section of the lesson and the section that follows describe how the prophecies of the birth of John and the birth of Jesus were fulfilled.

1. The Significance of John's Birth.

The work that John was to do had been prophesied in Malachi 4:5, 6. (See Luke 1:17.) Now the time had come for the birth of the child.

How did God use the events surrounding the birth of John to focus attention on His gracious actions? Luke 1:64-66.

God's favor to Elisabeth caused much comment (verse 58). Joy filled the community where the family lived. Luke alone gives us these details that help us understand how both John and Jesus were able to generate a large following quickly. From the very beginning their lives were associated with great signs. The communities would not forget this and would continue to wonder about what all this might mean.

2. The Prophecy of Zacharias (Luke 1:67-79).

The song recorded in these verses can be outlined in two parts:

- Verses 68-75: Praises to God for His blessings.
- Verses 76-79: A song in honor of the child and his destiny.

Zacharias spoke first of the salvation about to dawn through the gracious actions of God. He declared these actions to be the precise fulfillment of the promises made to the fathers.

The promised salvation came at the time of greatest need. "Sin had become a science, and vice was consecrated as a part of religion. Rebellion had struck its roots deep into the heart, and the hostility of man was most violent against heaven. It was demonstrated before the universe that, apart from God, humanity could not be uplifted. A new element of life and power must be imparted by Him who made the world."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 37.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Become acquainted with the parallels between the prophecy of Zacharias and those of the Hebrew prophets by filling in the blanks below:

Luke 1:68 compared to Ps. 106:4, 5—God visits and saves His people.

Luke 1:69 compared to Ps. 18:2 _____

Luke 1:71 compared to Ps. 106:10 _____

Luke 1:72 compared to Ps. 106:45 _____

Zacharias stated that John would be a “prophet of the Most High” (verse 76, RSV). This contrasts with Jesus, the “Son of the Most High” (verse 32, RSV). The New Testament insists that the role of John was to prepare the way for the coming of Jesus. (See Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:2; Luke 3:4-6; Acts 13:24.) The Old Testament spoke of a forerunner who would go before the Lord (Isa. 40:3; Mal. 4:5). John fulfilled these promises.



How does God provide for the salvation and well-being of mankind?

Luke 1:77-79.

Salvation and its history provide the plot and structure for what Luke wrote. The when, where, what, who, and why of God’s salvation permeate his words.

NOTE: We have no record of inspired words during the four hundred years between the writing of Malachi and the conception of Jesus. Luke recorded seven new Spirit-inspired sayings given in the space of the few months that surround the time of Jesus’ birth. The voice of inspiration, unrecorded for so long, now spoke of the coming Messiah and His salvation.

III. JOY TO THE WORLD (Luke 2:1-52).

1. Kings and Governors (Luke 2:1-5).

At the beginning of Luke’s Gospel we met Herod, the ruler of Judea (Luke 1:5). Now, as the moment of the birth of the King of kings approaches, we meet Augustus, the emperor of Rome (Luke 2:1). Note how specific Luke is about who is the governor (verse 2), the territory he governs (verse 2), the hometown of Jesus (verse 4), His birthplace (verse 4), and His linear descent (verses 4, 5).

Thus Luke established the historical Jesus. He put Him into a real world with real history behind Him. This is no fantasy, no fiction, but fact. Jesus’ presence on earth provides an anchor for our faith in God’s power to save, deliver, and give victory over sin.

SEARCH AND LEARN: List the titles given Jesus in Luke 1 and 2:

- Luke 1:31 _____
- Luke 1:32 _____
- Luke 1:35 _____
- Luke 2:11 _____
- Luke 2:26 _____

THINK IT THROUGH: What do these titles teach us about the nature of Christ?



2. The Birth of Jesus (Luke 2:6-20).

Shepherds ranked low on the scale of the Jewish hierarchy. They had continuous contact with animals, which made ritual cleanliness difficult. After He was born Jesus, the Lord of the world, was placed in an animal food trough. The inhospitable world into which Jesus came (verses 7, 12) contrasted sharply with the compassion and care that the Lord showed others.

THINK IT THROUGH: Consider the answer you would give to the scoffer who asks, Where is the peace and goodwill that the angel promised? Luke 2:10:14.

3. Respect for the Law of Moses (Luke 1:8, 9; 2:21-24).

Luke records the details of how Zacharias served in the temple and Joseph and Mary made the simplest possible dedication offering. Luke shows great respect for the Law of Moses. Later Paul took a vow according to the Law (Acts 21:18-26). Jesus distinguished the Law of Moses from the Ten Commandments, basing His moral and ethical teachings on the Ten Commandments.

4. The Early Years (Luke 2:25-52).

One short incident alone comes to us from the thirty years Jesus spent in Nazareth. We know that during these years God continually watched over both Jesus and John. "He seemed as one who was set apart. His hours of happiness were found when alone with nature and with God. Whenever it was His privilege, He turned aside from the scene of His labor, to go into the fields, to meditate in the green valleys, to hold communion with God on the mountainside or amid the trees of the forest."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 89, 90.

Jesus submitted to His parents. He listened while they taught Him from the Scriptures. He also learned Joseph's trade.

What startling fact did Simeon recognize about the salvation which Christ would bring? Luke 2:30, 31.

Simeon made direct reference to Jesus' salvation being offered to the Gentiles (verse 32). Thus the theme of salvation to all peoples enters at the very beginning of the story. When Jesus had lived only eight days Anna became one of the first evangelists, speaking "of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (verse 38).

Through this array of events we must perceive God planning and executing His plans. When we wonder about other parts of God's plan that are not yet fulfilled, we may draw hope and confidence from what He did in Jesus Christ. Because Jesus came once and fulfilled prophecy, He will come again. Because the Spirit filled devout persons with joy and confidence, we

know that He also can fill us. The Christian hope for the future rests in that divine moment when Jesus became flesh and dwelt among us. God put Himself, literally and physically, into our world and changed the course of history.



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:

1. On the timing of Jesus' birth: "the fullness of the time had come. Humanity, becoming more degraded through the ages of transgression, called for the coming of the Redeemer. Satan had been working to make the gulf deep and impassable between heaven and earth. . . . Then 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."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 34, 37, 38. Read the entire chapter, pp. 31-38.

2. "With deep earnestness the mother of Jesus watched the unfolding of His powers, and beheld the impress of perfection upon His character. With delight she sought to encourage that bright, receptive mind. Through the Holy Spirit she received wisdom to co-operate with the heavenly agencies in the development of this child, who could claim only God as His Father."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 69.

3. Think of the implications of the following verses on your own life and witness as a Christian: "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves" (Eph. 1:4-6, NIV).

SUMMARY: God fulfilled His purpose of offering salvation through His beloved Son. Accompanied by prophecy, signs, the witness of angels, and the filling of the Spirit, John and Jesus were born. Peace and goodwill came to mankind, even though many have not yet accepted these results.

APPLICATION

- How does the history of Jesus' human existence strengthen my faith?
- How does the Spirit confirm in my life the reality of the living Jesus?
- What preparation may I make for the promised outpouring of the Spirit in these last days?
- What can I let the Spirit do in me that will assure my readiness for Christ's second coming?

Expectations Fulfilled

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Luke 3:1 through 4:37.

SAB **MEMORY TEXT:** "The fame of him went out into every place of the country round about" (Luke 4:37).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus' example shows us that we are to be baptized and points the way to the victory we can gain over sin and Satan.

OVERVIEW: Luke 3-4:37

3:1-20 Preparation	3:21-38 Beloved Son	4:1-13 Victory	4:14-37 The kingdom announced
John preaches repentance	Jesus baptized; His genealogy	Jesus defeats Satan	Miracles begin

INTRODUCTION: The list of rulers in Luke 3:1, 2 makes it possible for us to fix the ministry of John about 27 A.D. We do not know how long he preached before Jesus' baptism and his own imprisonment (verse 20), but it was not very long. John made a considerable impact on the Jews. Groups of his followers later attached themselves to the church (Acts 19:1-7). Apparently, John did not begin a separate movement but lived according to his word: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). In the same way that John prepared the people for the coming of Jesus, we, as God's Elijah people today, are to prepare the world for the second coming.

What is said of John the Baptist must also apply to God's latter-day messengers: "Such a messenger must be holy. He must be a temple for the indwelling Spirit of God."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 100.

The role of the Seventh-day Adventist movement is centered in the proclamation of the Three Angels' Messages of Revelation 14:6-12. As was true of the messages of John, these speak of a judgment and the need for a people obedient to the will of God. They also warn of religious apostasy and destroying fire. Yet the same messages offer a saving, redeeming gospel. In the same way that John turned the hearts of the fathers to the sons, so the message of the last days calls for reconciliation and renewal. Amid the stern warnings of judgment it insists on the compassion and concern of Jesus as revealed in His earthly ministry. The everlasting gospel carries with it the gentleness of the Lamb of God to whom John pointed (John 1:29) and the righteous wrath of God about which John warned (Luke 3:17).



I. PREPARATION (Luke 3:1-20).

1. Rulers and Priests (Luke 3:1, 2).

Following a common practice of his day, Luke authenticated Jesus' ministry by giving Him a specific context in history. Almost from the beginning of Christianity some have wanted to write Jesus out of history. Luke will have none of it. Four of the individuals listed feature prominently at the trial of Jesus: Herod, Pontius Pilate, Annas, and Caiaphas. When Luke wrote, people still lived who had witnessed the events described and could have challenged his historical statements if they had been inaccurate.

2. Preparing for the Lord (Luke 3:3-18).

John worked on both banks of the Jordan (John 3:23; 10:40). The things that stand out in his ministry are baptism and the call to repentance.

INTERPRET: List at least three key thoughts in John's message in Luke 3:4-11 that should have prepared the people for Jesus' ministry:

1. _____ Verses 4, 5.
2. _____ Verses 8, 9.
3. _____ Verse 11.

How does John's message echo the concerns of the ancient prophets? Luke 3:12-14. Compare Micah 6:8.

THINK IT THROUGH: How would you apply John's commands in Luke 3:13, 14 to your responsibility in your community and to the responsibility of the church both local and international?

John could not conceive of baptism without repentance. Although baptism is a symbol, it is no empty act. Christian baptism represents repentance, a changed life, and the cleansing of the Spirit.

3. Herod (Luke 3:19, 20).

The family of Herod the Great played a significant role in Luke's history: at the beginning (Luke 1:5), at frequent intervals, and at the end (Acts 24:24; 25:13). John the Baptist, Jesus, James, Peter, and Paul all felt its despotism. One member of the family, Herod Agrippa, met a particularly gruesome end, thus showing the ultimate fate of all who oppress God's people (Acts 12:20-23).



II. THE BELOVED SON (Luke 3:21-38).

1. Jesus' Baptism (Luke 3:21, 22).

Jesus joined the general baptism being conducted by John. When His turn came He stepped down into the water. Through inspiration John recognized Him as the "Lamb of God" (John 1:29). Perhaps nothing shows us more

clearly the prophetic role of John than his understanding that Jesus' mission would completely supersede his.

What lesson can we learn from Jesus' praying as the Spirit descended? Luke 3:21.

"Never before have the angels listened to such a prayer. They are eager to bear to their loved Commander a message of assurance and comfort. But no; the Father Himself will answer the petition of His Son. Direct from the throne issue the beams of His glory. The heavens are opened, and upon the Saviour's head descends a dovelike form of purest light. . . . The people stood silently gazing upon Christ. His form was bathed in the light that ever surrounds the throne of God. His upturned face was glorified as they had never before seen the face of man. From the open heavens a voice was heard saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'"—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 112.

2. The Genealogy (Luke 3:23-38).

Luke's decision to include the genealogy of Jesus shows how important he thought such details to be.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Examine the differences between the two genealogies of Jesus, Luke 3:23-38; Matt. 1:1-16, noting the following:

1. The order of listing.
2. The immediate and most distant ancestors listed.
3. How Jesus is identified in the listings.

Some things we may discover about the purpose of Luke's genealogy:

1. It shows Jesus as a descendant of David. That is important in order to establish Him as Messiah and coming King.
2. It stresses Jesus' humanity in contrast with the record of the divine Voice which declared Him "beloved Son."
3. Some listed in the genealogies recorded in Matthew and Luke had humble origins but became part of God's greater plan.

What importance would you attach to Jesus' humanity? How does it help to know that He came "in the flesh"? Would Luke's story thus far lead you to acknowledge the divinity of Jesus? Luke 3:22; 2:10, 11. Compare John 1:1-3, 14; Matt. 1:23.

"By His humanity, Christ touched humanity; by His divinity, He lays hold upon the throne of God. As the Son of man, He gave us an example of obedience; as the Son of God, He gives us power to obey."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 24.



III. VICTORY (Luke 4:1-13).

Jesus was "led by the Spirit" (verse 1) up and down the wild lands. God did not let Jesus go alone to meet the Devil, nor does the trusting Christian meet temptation or trial alone.

ILLUMINATION: “If we have in any sense a more trying conflict than had Christ, then He would not be able to succor us. But our Saviour took humanity, with all its liabilities. He took the nature of man, with the possibility of yielding to temptation. We have nothing to bear which He has not endured.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 117.

Make a list of points from the story of Jesus’ temptation which help you in your own personal struggle against the wiles of Satan. Luke 4:1-13; Heb. 4:14-16.

Jesus’ victory stands in marked contrast to Israel’s failure in their wilderness experience. A special feature of the story places Satan in retreat. He left Jesus “until an opportune time” (Luke 4:13, NIV). Matthew records that the angels waited on Him at the end of the trial (Matt. 4:11). Luke reserves mention of the ministrations of the angels to the time of almost overwhelming distress and temptation (Luke 22:43, 44).

How were the temptations and the victories of Jesus regarded as the early followers of Jesus reflected on them? 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 2:10, 17.



IV. THE KINGDOM ANNOUNCED (Luke 4:14-37).

1. In the Synagogue on the Sabbath (verses 14-19).

Jesus’ visit to His hometown synagogue came at the end of a series of Sabbath preaching and teaching engagements (verses 14, 15). As a general rule both Jesus’ and Paul’s presence in a synagogue indicate Sabbath observance. Jesus’ “custom was” to attend the synagogue (verse 16).

What gave authority to Jesus’ ministry? Luke 4:14. Compare Acts 4:31, 32.

Jesus came both with the right to preach and teach and with power to do mighty deeds. His fame grew out of the evidence of that power. He spoke with authority and simplicity. “He brought plain, simple truth to their comprehension. How simple His language! Even the poorest, the unlearned and ignorant, could understand Him.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1120.

SEARCH AND LEARN: In John 1:38 we read the first words from Jesus’ lips as He begins His ministry, “What seek ye?” Compare this with His first words recorded by the other Gospel writers. Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:14, 15; Luke 4:17-21.

Luke says that Jesus came preaching the kingdom (Luke 4:43). Because the first three Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) take a similar approach to the story of Jesus, they are called the Synoptic (see together) Gospels, even though each has unique sections. Luke's use of the Nazareth sermon sets him apart from Matthew and Mark. John, whose Gospel for the most part contains material not found in the Synoptics, begins with the majestic and authoritative statement about Jesus as the Word.

What is the significance of Luke's selection of the Nazareth sermon as his first recorded words of Jesus' ministry? Luke 4:17-19. (Compare Isa. 61:1, 2; Luke 19:10.)

Jesus declared the year of God's acceptance of mankind ("the acceptable year of the Lord," Luke 4:19). He was looking forward to the benefits of His atonement. The year of God's favor or grace has never closed. We are caught up in the offer of His grace.

What did Jesus imply about the responsibility of the church and of each member to those in need? Luke 4:17-19. (Compare Matt. 25:34-45.)



2. Reaction in Nazareth (Luke 4:20-30).

First Jesus met Satan. Now He met the opposition of His own people. Not until His death did He escape from these two opponents.

ILLUMINATION: "Truth was unpopular in Christ's day. It is unpopular in our day. It has been unpopular ever since Satan first gave man a disrelish for it by presenting fables that lead to self-exaltation. Do we not today meet theories and doctrines that have no foundation in the word of God? Men cling as tenaciously to them as did the Jews to their traditions."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 242.

Whom did Jesus select from the Old Testament as examples of saving faith? Why did the Jews of Nazareth react so violently? Luke 4:25-28.

Jesus now came to Capernaum by the Sea of Galilee, a central point from which much of His ministry extended.

Demon possession apparently afflicted many in the times of Jesus. Similar conditions still exist in some primitive areas of the world. Many who have lived in such areas testify to the power of the name of Jesus in helping such individuals. In more developed societies Satan works just as persistently, and his hold also can be broken only through the power of Jesus.

How does this incident demonstrate Jesus' ministry as one of power and authority? Luke 4:8, 12, 34, 35.

Take note of the positive reactions to Jesus' ministry from its very beginning.

1. With power: verse 32.
2. Created fame: verses 14, 37.
3. Well received: verses 22, 36.
4. Received with astonishment: verse 32.

In contrast with this, the angry mob scene of verses 28-30 predicted how such fame and honor easily might turn into hatred and violence. This story, unique to Luke, counterpoints the stories of Jesus' immense popularity that follow.

Each of us, in our own way, is poor, broken-hearted, captive, blind, and bruised. We walk the world wounded with sin and death. But will we heed the Yes of God's favor and answer with our own Yes of faith? This question lies at the very heart of Luke's telling of the gospel story. At the end of His recital of the gospel he wants us to declare our faith in Jesus.



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:

1. This insight about John the Baptist is helpful: "John did not fully understand the nature of the Messiah's kingdom. He looked for Israel to be delivered from her national foes; but the coming of a King in righteousness, and the establishment of Israel as a holy nation, was the great object of his hope."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 103. Ellen White has four chapters on John the Baptist. Read the one entitled "The Voice in the Wilderness," pp. 97-108.

2. On the nature of Christ's temptation two chapters in *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 114-131, have excellent comments. Here is one gem: "Christ had come to disprove Satan's claim. As the Son of man, Christ would stand loyal to God. Thus it would be shown that Satan had not gained complete control of the human race, and that his claim to the world was false. All who desired deliverance from his power would be set free. The dominion that Adam had lost through sin would be recovered."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 115.

SUMMARY: John the Baptist came preaching his message of repentance and cleansing. After His baptism Jesus defeated Satan during the temptation in the wilderness. He preached in Galilee, quickly gaining wide popularity, but at the same time opposition began to appear.

APPLICATION

- How should I relate to John's message of repentance, reconciliation and preparation? How may I be part of the last-day Elijah message?
- Where can I see parallels in the life of Jesus to the temptations I face? How does His example instruct me in overcoming temptation?
- What practical steps may I take this week as a partner of Jesus in ministry to the needy?

Days of Popularity

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Luke 4:38 through 6:49.



MEMORY TEXT: "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father in heaven is merciful" (Luke 6:36).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Life in the kingdom of God brings healing and forgiveness. It also brings radical changes in the way that we relate to others.

OVERVIEW: Luke 4:38—6:49			
Luke 4:38-44; 5:12-26	5:1-11; 27-39; 6:12-19	6:1-11	6:20-49
Healing and Forgiveness	Calling and Instructing the Disciples	The Sabbath	Life in the Kingdom
Simon's mother, a leper and a paralytic healed; sins forgiven	Simon, James, John, and Levi; Jesus and prayer; 12 selected	Compassion on the Sabbath	Jesus teaches about relationships within and outside the kingdom

INTRODUCTION: Many scholars regard Luke as one of the great theological minds of the New Testament. Apart from a few references in the epistles we virtually have no other source of information about the history of the early church than that which Luke provided. He tied together the Gospel and the story of the early years in a remarkable presentation of the history of God's saving act in Jesus Christ.

Even when telling the same story or relating the same teaching as the other Gospel writers, Luke differs in choice of words and, at times, in sequence of events and emphasis. This we should expect. Large quantities of material were readily available (John 21:25). "The writers of the Bible were God's penmen, not His pen."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 21. On the other hand we should not turn the writing of the Word of God into a secular or human event. "For it was not through any human whim that men prophesied of old; men they were, but, impelled by the Holy Spirit, they spoke the words of God" (2 Peter 1:21, NEB).

Because each of the Gospel writers wrote from his particular perspective and background, our lives as Christians are enriched. We should rejoice in the variety that the Spirit has given us and not stumble over minor differ-

ences of interpretation. At the end of each Gospel the child of faith will again confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Redeemer. That, after all, is what the writer and his Guide desire.

SUN

I. HEALING AND FORGIVENESS (Luke 4:38-44; 5:12-26).

Jesus already had offended some by healing the possessed man on the Sabbath (Luke 4:31-37). All of the Gospel writers make the point that Jesus went out of His way to heal on the Sabbath. On the Sabbath Jesus performed the first miracle recorded in Luke's Gospel.

1. Healing Continues (Luke 4:38-44).

Jesus healed Simon's mother-in-law on the Sabbath, but in private. This miracle occurred before the call of Simon and no doubt had considerable influence on the future disciple. Just as the devil possessing the man in the synagogue had fled at Jesus' rebuke, so the high fever "left her" at Jesus' rebuke. This does not mean that both fever and possession are forms of demonism, but that both the devil's direct control of a person and the more indirect result of Satan's activity—sickness—cannot withstand Jesus' power.

What do the story about Simon's mother-in-law and Jesus' concern for the needy recorded in Luke 4:39, 40 teach us about the Christian's privilege in serving others?

The devils witnessed at least twice to the true nature of Jesus. What the world around could not perceive, the devils, whose master already had felt Jesus' authority, knew only too well. They recognized Jesus as:

1. The "Holy One of God"—Luke 4:34; compare Luke 1:35 and 3:22.
2. "Christ the Son of God"—Luke 4:41; compare Luke 2:11, 26.

What was significant about the way Jesus answered the urgent demand that He not leave the district where He was working? Luke 4:42, 43.

He met the demand by explaining the needs elsewhere which only He could appreciate (verse 43). In doing so Jesus gave a model for all who do urgent business for the King of kings. We who carry His commission dare not confine our work to one area, one race, or one culture. The world is our field.

ILLUMINATION: "In the excitement which then pervaded Capernaum, there was danger that the object of His mission would be lost sight of. Jesus was not satisfied to attract attention to Himself merely as a wonder worker or a healer of physical diseases. He was seeking to draw men to Him as their Saviour. While the people were eager to believe that He had come as a king, to establish an earthly reign, He desired to turn their minds away from the earthly to the spiritual. Mere worldly success would interfere with His work."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 260.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Examine the miracles in Luke 5:12-26. How do these miracles relate to Jesus' mission as outlined in Luke 4:17, 18.



2. A Man of Prayer.

At Jesus' first public appearance He bowed in prayer (Luke 3:21; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 111). Luke tells us that He took time to be alone with God (Luke 4:42; 5:16). This pattern continued throughout His ministry. (See Luke 6:12; 9:18, 28 and other references.) The early church also prayed (Acts 1:14). A praying Christ and a praying church fulfilled God's mission. In a special way prayer marked the critical points in Jesus' ministry: His baptism, His transfiguration, His trial in Gethsemane, and His suffering on the cross.

What purposes did prayer fulfill in Jesus' life?

1. Through prayer He found strength to accomplish God's will (Luke 22:41, 42). In John's Gospel Jesus expressed Himself frequently about His submission to the will of God (John 6:38, 39).
2. Prayer maintained the oneness of the Son with the Father (John 17:21-23). Prayer also maintains the unity of the church.
3. Prayer aided Jesus during the sufferings He endured (Heb. 4:14-16; 5:7).

ILLUMINATION: "As one with us, a sharer in our needs and weaknesses, He [Jesus] was wholly dependent upon God, and in the secret place of prayer He sought divine strength, that He might go forth braced for duty and trial. . . . Through continual communion [with God] He received life from God, that He might impart life to the world. His experience is to be ours."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 363.

What do we learn about faith from the miracles of Jesus? How does faith show itself? Luke 5:12, 13, 18, 19.

The crippled man had people bring him to Jesus and then had them break open a roof. Faith cannot be isolated from action. To have faith means to do, to depend, to act with trust and hope in Jesus.

Jesus linked healing with the forgiveness of sins. Wholeness could only come into a heart at peace with God. From the moment of forgiveness a new relationship governed the life of the forgiven (1 John 1:9).



II. CALLING AND INSTRUCTING THE DISCIPLES (Luke 5:1-11; 27-39; 6:12-19).

1. Fishermen Called (Luke 5:1-11).

Jesus selected His disciples from the humbler professions. He saw in them men who held no false views of self-importance. Later He would declare His mission particularly among the despised. They provided an open page on which the will of God might be written and expressed.

Simon let down the nets at Jesus' command. What other reactions of the disciples to Jesus' call help us understand what He saw in these men? Luke 5:5-11.

2. A Tax-Gatherer Added (Luke 5:27-29).

Matthew naturally adds more detail about his own call (Matt. 9:9-17). Tax-gatherers (publicans) appear frequently in the Gospels. Some held contracts from the Roman government to collect poll tax over a wide area. Zacchaeus, a chief tax-gatherer, was one of these. Others worked at toll or customs points (Levi Matthew), or went from home to home collecting the head tax. Most Jews despised and hated them, not only because they represented the Roman power but also because they diverted money to their own use.

What special role did Jesus assign the Twelve? Luke 6:13. How did the church view their role later on? Acts 1:26; 2:14, 37.

ILLUMINATION: "The fact that they were humble men would not diminish their influence, but increase it; for the minds of their hearers would be carried from them to the Saviour, who, though unseen, was still working with them. The wonderful teaching of the apostles, their words of courage and trust, would assure all that it was not in their own power that they worked, but in the power of Christ."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 22, 23.

III. THE SABBATH (Luke 6:1-11).

1. Sovereign Over the Sabbath (Luke 6:1-5).

The incident Jesus referred to is recorded in 1 Sam. 21:1-6. David persuaded Ahimelech, the priest, to give him the shewbread from the altar to satisfy the extreme hunger of his troops. The authority of the future king of Israel and the need of the men involved overrode the requirements of the law of Moses.

For Jesus and His disciples the position was a little different. The story does not mention extreme hunger. It was a casual act of plucking grain, rubbing it in their hands and eating. The experts in the law saw this as secular work on the Sabbath—reaping and winnowing.

THINK IT THROUGH: In exercising sovereignty over the Sabbath, what power did Jesus show? From what requirements about the Sabbath did Jesus' act free us? What restraints still remain? Luke 6:5; 23:56.

2. Compassion and the Sabbath (Luke 6:6-11).

Thus far, Luke's report of Jesus' Sabbath deeds teaches us that:

1. Jesus went regularly to the synagogue on Sabbath (Luke 4:16).
2. He showed His power over satanic forces on the Sabbath (Luke 4:34, 35).

3. He visited and healed in private homes on the Sabbath (Luke 4:38, 39).
 4. Jesus used divine authority to reinstitute the true meaning of the Law (Luke 6:5).
 5. Works of compassion are appropriate on the Sabbath (Luke 6:10).
- Note that Sabbath worship was “his custom.” Jesus did not let good deeds take the place of worship with the community of faith. The emphasis Luke places on the Sabbath both in the Gospel and Acts cannot be ignored. The pattern of support for appropriate Sabbath-keeping begins in the Gospel and never fades from the New Testament.



IV. LIFE IN THE KINGDOM (Luke 6:20-49).

Although this sermon seems to have taken place on the plain (Luke 6:17), the fact that it was preceded by a night of prayer followed by the ordination of the disciples ties it in with the address known as the Sermon on the Mount outlined in Matthew 5-7. Ellen White’s description of the locale of the Sermon on the Mount helps harmonize the two accounts:

“With words of prayer and instruction, [Jesus] laid His hands upon their heads in benediction, setting them apart to the gospel work. Then He repaired with them to the seaside, where in the early morning a great multitude had already begun to assemble. . . . Then, as the narrow beach did not afford even standing room within reach of His voice for all who desired to hear Him, Jesus led the way back to the mountainside. Reaching a level space that afforded a pleasant gathering place for the vast assembly, He seated Himself upon the grass, and His disciples and the multitude followed His example.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 4.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Compare the presentation of the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:1-12 with the account in Luke 6:20-26. Make a note of the differences you find. Examine a similar list of blessings and cursings in Deuteronomy 28:3-6; 16-19. Why does the Lord announce both blessings and woes?

ILLUMINATION: “By his addition of the woes and various small modifications Luke has brought out the social concern inherent in the message of Jesus and has accented the contrast between suffering now and future reward. Matthew, however, by adding further beatitudes and making more extensive modifications has turned the beatitudes into a programme of Christian righteousness.”—I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, (England: Paternoster Press, 1978), p. 246.

1. Love Your Enemies (Luke 6:27-36).

Twice Jesus commanded “love your enemies” (verses 27, 35). This takes Christian relationships one step further than the simple command to “Love your neighbor.” To love one’s enemies would immediately include Gentiles, especially the Romans. Nowhere in the Greek, Latin, or Jewish literature of the time does anyone except Jesus propose, “Love your enemies,” although the command to love your neighbor and the golden rule both appear.

ANALYZE: List the features of the love Jesus commands us to have. How would you apply these as principles today? To whom? When? Luke 6:27-29, 35, 36.

How does Jesus expect us to show that we are “sons of the Most High”? Luke 6:35, 36. Compare Jesus’ conclusion in this passage with the similar one in Matthew 5:44-48. What does this teach us about the practical nature of Christ’s commands concerning Christian living?

Jesus set Christian right-doing within relationships: a saving relationship with God and a servant relationship to our fellow beings. The love Jesus commands views itself as within a covenant. Our covenant relationship to other persons requires that we seek their best good. We are to live in patient devotion to others’ welfare.



2. The Blind Leading the Blind (Luke 6:37-45).

In a series of rich symbols, Jesus highlights the ease with which people judge others and fail to see their own faults. Note the following:

1. Our blindness—verse 39.
2. Sawdust in the eye—verses 41, 42.
3. The fruit of a tree—verses 43, 44.
4. The treasure of the heart—verse 45.

How may we avoid a judgmental attitude? What practical steps should we take to prevent the problem of hypocrisy? Verses 36, 37, 40, 45.

3. Hearing and Doing (Luke 6:46-49).

Back then, as today, people liked to listen to this fascinating Teacher. They often talked about what He said and did, but most did not take His instructions seriously enough to put them into action.

What further help do other New Testament writers give in understanding the relationship we have with others? Phil. 2:3, 4; James 3:11-14.

Jesus’ frequent teachings about how we should relate to one another help us understand how common it is to have broken or faulty relationships. He regarded the governing and healing of such relationships as a key part of His ministry.

We call Jesus’ teaching “moral” or “ethical,” but at the simplest level it speaks to us about getting along with each other. Within the kingdom, love governs relationships.

At the end of the sermon Jesus asked a simple direct question, “Why call

me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). When the commands come from the Lord Himself and involve our life within the kingdom of God, nothing should deter us from obedience.

The obedient person "is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon the house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock" (Luke 6:48). Jesus is that Rock. Faith builds its actions on His Word.



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:

1. Here is one author's comment on the prayer life of Jesus and the special emphasis Luke gives: "Luke stresses the importance of prayer. There are two principal ways in which this interest is brought out. The first is in recording the prayers of Jesus (3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28ff; 10:21ff; 11:1; 22:41ff; 23:46; seven of these are in Luke alone and they show Jesus at prayer before each great crisis of His life). This Gospel alone records that Jesus prayed for Peter (22:31ff). The second is in the parables which teach so much about prayer, the friend at midnight (11:5ff), the unjust judge (18:1ff), the Pharisee and the publican (18:10ff). In addition Luke records some exhortations to the disciples to pray (6:28; 11:2; 22:40, 46), and he has a warning against the wrong kind of prayer (20:47)." —Leon Morris, *Luke: an Introduction and Commentary* (England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1974), p. 46. Take time to study the texts listed in the quotation for a view of how important prayer was in the life of Jesus.

2. For more about the call and training for discipleship read the chapter entitled "He Ordained Twelve" in *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 290-297.

SUMMARY: Healing and forgiveness flowed from the Son of man as He ministered in Galilee. There He called His disciples, met opposition regarding the Sabbath, and preached a major sermon on interpersonal relationships.

APPLICATION

- When I do wrong am I able to accept Christ's healing as well as His forgiveness? What if someone has wronged me?
- How do I react to the call to witness? What priority do I give to witnessing? How may I be a "fisher of men" in my own community?
- Have I protected my Sabbath-keeping from harsh restraints, and equally, from carelessness in keeping it holy? How did I keep last Sabbath? What will I do this coming Sabbath?

Demonstrating the Kingdom

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Luke 7:1 through 9:50.



MEMORY TEXT: "Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little" (Luke 7:47).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: In order for us to receive the blessings of the kingdom of God, faith is essential. There also must be a willingness to follow Jesus, even when the risk to personal security may be considerable.

OVERVIEW: Luke 7:1—9:50

7:1-50 Relating to God's Purposes	8:1-56 Source of Authority	9:1-50 Jesus' Mission Confirmed
Miracles bear their witness; Simon and the woman	Sowing the seed; Raising the dead	The disciples sent out; John the Baptist; The transfiguration

INTRODUCTION: Twice in this lesson we meet the figure of John the Baptist. Previously we studied about the circumstances of his birth (Luke 1:5-25; 57-60) and about his preaching and baptizing (Luke 3:1-20). Apparently he suffered at the hand of Herod about the time that Jesus began His ministry.

The Jews looked for a prophet who would appear before the end of the age to announce and prepare for the Messiah. John the Baptist answered that expectation. In the same way, God's latter-day people will fulfill their prophetic mission immediately prior to the second coming of Jesus. The criticism of the Pharisees directed toward John divided that generation. The last-day generation also will be divided between those who prepare for Jesus' coming and those who ignore the last-day message of warning.

John's impact on his generation raised questions about the ministry of Jesus. Some saw such similarity between what Jesus said and what John had preached that they thought perhaps John had been reincarnated in Jesus (Luke 9:19).

John's life ended at the tyrant's whim. "But the Baptist did not surrender his faith in Christ. The memory of the voice from heaven and the descending

dove, the spotless purity of Jesus, the power of the Holy Spirit that had rested upon John as he came into the Saviour's presence, and the testimony of the prophetic scriptures,—all witnessed that Jesus of Nazareth was the Promised One."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 216.

Contemplating John's faithfulness Ellen White wrote: "God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as coworkers with Him."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 224, 225.



I. RELATING TO GOD'S PURPOSES (Luke 7:1-50).

1. A Gentile's Faith (verses 1-10).

In this chapter Luke brings together a series of incidents to illustrate Jesus' question, "Why do you keep calling me 'Lord, Lord'—and never do what I tell you?" (Luke 6:46, NEB).

In 1984 John Weidner, an Adventist who assisted in the escape of more than 800 Jews during World War II, was declared a "righteous Gentile" by the Israeli parliament. Similarly the Jews in Luke's story affirmed that the centurion "was worthy" (Luke 7:4).

How did the centurion illustrate the response of faith to the power and presence of Jesus? Verses 6-9.

This story links with the vital story of the centurion in Acts 10. Luke, along with the other Gospel writers, made it clear that the mission to the Gentiles had its precedent and authority in Jesus' ministry.

2. Jesus the Life-giver (Luke 7:11-18).

What do stories such as this one about the raising of the widow's son teach us about the compassion of Jesus? Verses 13, 14.

ILLUMINATION: "Jesus knew about that widow and the struggle she had had bringing the boy up. She had given him the best she possibly could. Now, in a few minutes she would return to her cottage home, desolate because the light of her life had been extinguished. Little did those mourning friends realize the mighty power of this Onlooker. When the poor widow was about to pass, He stepped forward and commanded her son to rise. Imagine, if you can, the wonderful joy in the mother's heart when her only son sat up and smiled."—L. Van Dolson, *Taming Tension Through Total Health* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1984), p. 91.

3. Miracles Bear Their Witness (Luke 7:18-35).

Jesus answered the questions brought to Him by John's disciples by performing a series of miracles of which we have no details (verse 21). These miracles showed how Jesus was fulfilling His mission (verse 22). (Compare Luke 4:18 and Isa. 35:5, 6.) Jesus' life and ministry fitted the messianic

prophecies. John the Baptist did not perform miracles of this nature. (See John 10:41.)

Those who quibble over what Jesus did or did not do will “be offended” in Him (Luke 7:23). In the Greek the word for taking offense derives from the springing of a trap set to catch birds. When we accept without question what Jesus has done, we keep clear of the trap of unbelief.

How did Jesus illustrate different reactions to the preaching of God’s purpose? Luke 7:31-35.

In Proverbs 8, Wisdom assumes almost the role of a person. Solomon sought to show the importance of experience and good counsel in ordering life. Jesus drew on Solomon’s imagery to emphasize that a right response to God’s plan is the essence of wisdom. (See 1 Cor. 1:24, 25.)



4. Simon and the Woman (verses 36-50).

The similar stories in John 12:1-8 and Mark 14:3-9 should be read along with this story in order to throw more light on the significance of the woman’s action and the various reactions to it. Luke focuses on different details in the story and expects us to draw a different lesson. John identifies the woman as Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus.

How did Jesus demonstrate that He was a prophet, and even more than a prophet? Luke 7:39, 40, 48, 49.

THINK IT THROUGH: The parable of the two debtors (verses 41, 42) demonstrates that a recognition of sin is essential for true repentance. What can you do to heighten your awareness of sin?

SEARCH AND LEARN: From your study of the story of the woman at Simon’s feast, prepare answers to the following:

1. What was wrong with Simon’s evaluation of Jesus? Luke 7: 39.

2. What constitutes true gratitude? Verses 40-43.

Luke told the story about Simon and Mary in order to demonstrate to his readers how Jesus saves (verse 50). Jesus already had said that His purpose was to call sinners to repentance (Luke 5:32). Now we learn that the faith of the repenting sinner saved her. A student of soul-winning has much to learn from the simple methods Jesus used. (1) A soul in need received a straightforward and encouraging answer; (2) Jesus raised no doubts; He remained positive; (3) Faith had the opportunity to express itself in action. Similar examples of simple, direct evangelism appear in Luke 19:9, 10;

Acts 2:37, 38; 16:30, 31. Luke never forgot that he was writing for a church of witnesses.

One feature of Luke's writing is the prominence he gives to women. Mary and Elisabeth are the heroines of the first two chapters. Anna is a witness to Jesus the Messiah (Luke 2:36-38). The healing of Simon Peter's mother-in-law (Luke 4:38, 39) and the son of the widow at Nain (Luke 7:11-17) show Luke's interest. At the beginning of chapter 8 (verses 2, 3) he lists some of the women who showed hospitality to Jesus.



II. SOURCE OF AUTHORITY (Luke 8:1-56).

1. The Parable of the Sower (Luke 8:4-21).

Luke next brings to our notice what Jesus said about the authority and significance of the Word. Not only does it bring growth to the church in numbers, but it also brings spiritual growth in the church members' lives.

What should we expect from the Word of God as it is taught and listened to? Verses 11-15. What responsibility do we have to share the Word even in times of difficulty? Acts 4:19, 20. How should the Word affect our lives? Col. 1:6.

By teaching in parables Jesus offered His audiences the opportunity to dig beneath the surface for the true meaning. On the other hand, they might turn a blind eye, refusing to see the real point. A disciple would understand the true significance of what Jesus taught. (See Luke 8:9, 10.) Not that God deliberately hides from us the knowledge we need, but spiritual things are "spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14).

ANALYZE: Discover the application of the parable of the sower by completing the chart that follows:

Type of Soil	Type of Hearer
Beaten path	
	Superficial understanding; no deep commitment
Thorny ground	
	Bring forth fruit with patience

SEARCH AND LEARN: Study carefully the parable of the sower and the illustration of the light on the lampstand (Luke 8:11-17) looking for the following aspects of witnessing: (1) The content of our witness; (2) How people react to the witness; (3) How to present our witness.

2. Jesus' Mission Clarified (Luke 8:19-21).

At this time Jesus' mother did not fully understand Jesus' actions and teachings. His brothers had not yet responded. Later they would join the band of witnesses. (See Acts 1:14.) Perhaps Luke introduces this story fol-

lowing the parable of the sower in order to show that a person may represent poor soil at one time and good at another. The sower has responsibility for the condition of the soil and its preparation to receive the seed. Those who constitute the true family of God hear the Word and obey.



3. Nature Obeys Its Maker (Luke 8:22-25).

Jesus' voice brought order and peace to nature at Creation and did so during the storm on the lake. In Jesus resided divine power. To accept this shows faith; to reject or doubt it creates fear.

ILLUMINATION: "Sin has destroyed our peace. While self is unsubdued, we can find no rest. The masterful passions of the heart no human power can control. We are as helpless here as were the disciples to quiet the raging storm. But He who spoke peace to the billows of Galilee has spoken the word of peace for every soul."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 336.

4. The Reaction of the Gadarenes (Luke 8:26-40).

SEARCH AND LEARN: How did the following react to the healing of the demon-possessed man?

1. The man himself (verses 38, 39) _____
2. The swineherds (verses 34-36) _____
3. The people of the district (verse 35) _____

THINK IT THROUGH: Can you think of occasions when the work of God, even though carried on in the best way possible, brought mixed reactions? What reasons would you give for this? What does it teach you about effective witnessing?

5. Raising the Dead (Luke 8:41-56).

One by one Luke has put together stories that demonstrate Jesus' great power and authority as well as showing His loving compassion for humanity. First we read the parable of the sower that shows how the Word exercises its authority in differing situations. Then we see the word of Christ in action. He rebukes a storm. He calls out the demons. Then His word raises the dead (verses 52-55). At the end of this chapter we must acknowledge the divine power of Jesus Christ, and ask the question, What does such power mean to me?



III. JESUS' MISSION CONFIRMED (Luke 9:1-50).

Only because Jesus had (and has) the authority to confer great power on His disciples is the continuing success of the church possible. Besides acknowledging the success of Jesus' work, the vision on the mount of transfiguration gave heaven's blessing to the disciples' acting in Christ's stead.

1. To Proclaim and to Heal (Luke 9:1-6).

These few verses lie at the heart of Seventh-day Adventist evangelism and commitment. We minister to the whole being. A typical Adventist presence includes a hospital or clinic, a school, a church, and a community service center. We are not to work alone. Notice how Jesus emphasized teamwork: "Calling the twelve about Him, Jesus bade them go out two and two through the towns and villages. . . . It was the Saviour's purpose that the messengers of the gospel should be associated in this way. In our own time evangelistic work would be far more successful if this example were more closely followed."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 350.

2. Who is this Jesus? (Verses 7-22).

Herod's guilt at the murder of John provoked his curiosity about Jesus. John's influence continued to contribute to the success of Jesus, just as he had predicted. (See John 3:30.)

SEARCH AND LEARN: What details does Matthew 16:18, 19 add to the report of Peter's confession that are not found in Luke 9:18-20? How do these additional details help us understand what Jesus intended the disciples to learn through this experience?

"The word Peter signifies a stone,—a rolling stone. Peter was not the rock upon which the church was founded. The gates of hell did prevail against him when he denied his Lord with cursing and swearing. The church was built upon One against whom the gates of hell could not prevail."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 413.

In Luke the confession follows the mighty miracle of feeding the five thousand. As is true of so many other stories in Luke's Gospel, Jesus' compassion and service to those in need shines through. As we study such stories we receive the challenge to minister to those in need. Such Adventist outreach ministries as health education programs, Community Services, and the Adventist Development and Relief Agency have their basis in these concerns of Jesus.

3. Glory on the Mountain (Luke 9:23-36).

In the continuing paradoxes of the kingdom the disciples must keep the true nature of Christ hidden for the time being (verse 21) and avoid denying their Lord before the world (verse 26). Later the church felt no restrictions and went everywhere preaching the Word. By such cautions Jesus preserved His ministry until the appointed time for it to end. Satan would have taken advantage if one wrong move had occurred (Luke 4:13).

How did Jesus help the disciples understand that they must endure trials before final victory? Luke 9:22, 26, 27.

As indicated concerning the Deity described in Ezekiel 1:28 and the Ancient of Days introduced in Daniel 7:9, Jesus radiated the glory of God.

Luke was the only one of the Gospel authors to record that Jesus went to the mountain to pray and that while He was in prayer the transfiguration took place (verse 29).

FRD

4. Defeat for the Disciples, Victory for Jesus (Luke 9:37-50).

As this section of Luke's report of Jesus' ministry closes and the long journey to Jerusalem and the cross begins, we are aware of tensions and paradoxes in the Gospel story. Jesus answers faith with healing, yet the disciples lack the power that their Lord possesses (Luke 9:40). Not too long before, Jesus had given them power to overcome all devils and heal sickness (verse 1). What had gone wrong? (Verses 46-48).

Jesus received the assurance from heaven that His ministry fulfilled the divine purposes. Yet His disciples could not accept or understand that One who had shared in such glory (verse 32) would suffer (verse 44). As yet they could not understand how the power and authority that Jesus obviously possessed would not help Him evade or overcome any assault.

Although the disciples made great confessions of belief (verse 20), they did not seem to be able to avoid human pride and selfishness (verse 46-48). Even their humble origins did not protect them from pride of position. They, too, had to abase themselves and become as little children. Then, and only then, could the power of the kingdom of heaven have its sway in their lives.

FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:

1. "Jesus never refused an invitation to such a feast. The object ever before Him was to sow in the hearts of His hearers the seeds of truth, through His winning conversation to draw hearts to Himself. . . . By this act He declared that even publicans and sinners were not excluded from His presence."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol 5, p. 1120.

2. "However imperfect and sinful we may be, the Lord holds out to us the offer of partnership with Himself, of apprenticeship to Christ. He invites us to come under the divine instruction, that uniting with Christ, we may work the works of God."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 297.

3. Ellen White's comments on the material covered in this lesson can be studied in *The Desire of Ages*, chapters 62 ("The Feast at Simon's House," pp. 557-568), chapter 35 ("Peace Be Still," pp. 333-341), chapter 37 ("The First Evangelists," pp. 349-358) and chapter 46 ("He Was Transfigured," pp. 419-425).

SUMMARY: Jesus' compassion and forgiveness reached across human boundaries of prejudice to heal and redeem, thus not only demonstrating His power and authority but also providing a basis for the future ministry of the disciples and the church.

APPLICATION:

- What am I doing within my neighborhood to develop contacts that are not just social but also redemptive?
- What can I do to avoid the traps of pride and position that limit my power to do God's will?

Duties and Privileges of Discipleship

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Luke 9:51 through 11:54.



MEMORY TEXT: "And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Within the kingdom of God the appropriate response of the disciple of Christ is to witness for Him and prepare for the Judgment which all face.

OVERVIEW: Luke 9:51—11:54		
9:51—10:24 Joy in Success Human Response	10:25 to 11:13 God's Love and God	11:14-54 How People Fail
The mission of the seventy; Discipleship	The Good Samaritan; Mary and Martha; Fatherhood	Devils cast out; Light and darkness; Woes against false leaders.

INTRODUCTION: In the previous lessons we have touched on the way in which Jesus sought to shatter the social barriers of His day. God did so first by sending angels to Zacharias, Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds, all of whom came from humble origins.

We also have seen how Jesus broke down the rigid customs regarding women, seeking to include them among His closest followers and according them His compassion and care. This theme continues in this lesson in the story about Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42). The condition of women in those days is attested in the following comment: "Up to the age of twelve and a half, a girl had no right to refuse a marriage decided by her father, and he could marry her even to someone deformed. Furthermore, a father could even sell his daughter into slavery."—Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1969), p. 364.

In another story from this week's lesson a Samaritan receives favorable comment. The Samaritans descended from the remnants of the tribes who stayed in Palestine following the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. Because they intermarried with the peoples who were moved into the vacuum

caused by the exiles, they were considered inferior by the Jews. Mostly the Jews would have nothing to do with them and vice versa.

Jesus could not find shelter in Samaria (Luke 9:53), and was not offered a cup of water (John 4:9). The word "Samaritan" was hurled as an insult (John 8:48). Jesus worked continuously against these and other prejudices, thus opening the way for the universal gospel.



I. JOY IN SUCCESS (Luke 9:51 to 10:24).

1. Meeting Obstacles (Luke 9:51-62).

With the cross only about six months away, Jesus now began His Samaritan and Peraean ministry. When the Gospels are compared it becomes clear that Jesus visited Jerusalem at least four times during the last year of His ministry. Luke does not contradict this, although he notes only one such visit. In Luke, Jerusalem symbolizes the climax of Jesus' ministry and the crises that awaited Him there. (See also Luke 13:22.)

What attitude did Jesus expect the disciples to take toward those of other cultures? Why? Luke 9:52-56.

Samaritans played an important part in God's plan. They are singled out in the spread of the gospel (Acts 1:8). Similar concerns should motivate the church toward the many ethnic and cultural groupings within nations. Not only do peoples, tongues, and tribes need the gospel, but kindred groups do also.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Complete the following list of various excuses given for not becoming a disciple (Luke 9:57-62):

1. Unwillingness to suffer privations.

2. _____

3. _____

2. Laborers in the Lord's Harvest (Luke 10:1-16).

COMPLETE: Fill in the blanks below with what Jesus said about the work of the Seventy in the following areas:

1. The purpose of the mission (Luke 10:1, 2) _____

2. The message to be given (verse 9) _____

3. What all must face (verse 14) _____

A teaching that should not be overlooked in this episode is the inevitability of judgment. Judgment begins with attitudes toward the one who brings the gospel (verses 5, 6). "Son of peace" (verse 6) refers to the welcoming openness that makes it possible for the gospel to be preached. Not only does

the possibility of rejecting Jesus emerge from our witness, but so does the possibility of knowing and accepting Him (verse 16).

MON **3. Causes for Joy (Luke 10:17-24).**

Jesus and the disciples could rejoice for three reasons:

1. The disciples had dealt a severe blow to the power of Satan (Luke 10:17-20).
2. God's grace had given insight into the identity of Jesus (Luke 10:21, 22).
3. The disciples had shared in God's saving action (Luke 10:23, 24).

What does the defeat of Satan mean in the practical life of the Christian? Luke 10:18; Rev. 12:10, 11.

ILLUMINATION: "Christ's humanity was united with divinity, and in this strength He would bear all the temptations that Satan could bring against Him, and yet keep His soul untainted by sin. And this power to overcome He would give to every son and daughter of Adam who would accept by faith the righteous attributes of His character."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 223.

II. GOD'S LOVE AND HUMAN RESPONSE (Luke 10:25 to 11:13).**1. The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37).**

SEARCH AND LEARN: Note the four questions in the following verses that provide the structure for this well-loved parable:

- Verse 25 _____
- Verse 26 _____
- Verse 29 _____
- Verse 36 _____

TUE **From what background did the lawyer ask his questions? Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18. Whom would he have regarded as neighbor, non-neighbor, or enemy?**

"According to the ideas of Jewish religious leaders at that time the commandment of love for one's neighbors related only to persons belonging to one's own blood (pure Jews and therefore not Gentiles and Samaritans). In the parable of the good Samaritan Jesus, however, teaches explicitly that love for one's neighbor knows no bounds of nationality or of anything else, no matter what."—Norval Geldenhuys, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., n.d.), p. 311.

The question "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" was not asked as a seeker after Christ might ask. Rather the lawyer wanted to know what extraordinarily good thing he might do to provide a reserve of good deeds against which he might draw if considered inadequate by God.

How did Jesus lead the lawyer from a legalistic concern to an understanding of what it means truly to love? Note the steps in Luke 10:25-28, 36, 37.

2. The Priest and the Levite (Luke 10:31, 32).

Jericho, with its orchards, gardens, and trade, housed many priests and Levites. Plentiful produce and trade meant ample tithes. According to the scribes, a priest or Levite who was made unclean by letting his shadow fall on a dead body or letting blood splatter on his garments could not receive tithes. The ritual demanded for cleansing cost both time and money. (See Numbers 19.)

At the heart of the parable lies a radical criticism of the attitude of mind that puts concern for religious strictness before human need. Any religion that concentrates on form and ignores suffering fails the test of neighborliness and fails to measure up to Christ's kind of love.

How does willingness to risk ourselves and our possessions for those in need enter into Jesus' story? Luke 10:33-35.

The parables of the lost sheep and coin (Luke 15) illustrate God's commitment to saving souls by recording joy in heaven. (See verses 7, 10.) The Good Samaritan provides everything he possibly can. In this he represents Jesus, the great and good Neighbor of this suffering world.

How did Jesus turn the nature of the question of "the neighbor" around so that the focus was on responsibility to others? Luke 10:36, 37.

Jesus made "neighbor" a verb rather than a noun. What we ought to *do* for others is the important question, not who the others *are*.



3. Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42).

Mary and Martha lived at Bethany, near Jerusalem. For background about Jesus' relationship to this family read John 11; 12:1-8.

Mary listened to Jesus' words. She would not let Martha, with her busy preparations for the meal, distract her. We serve Jesus better by listening to His words, storing them in our hearts, and following them than by inordinate concern about the physical details of His service.

THINK IT THROUGH: Consider what might be appropriate reactions to this story and to other counsels given by Jesus in John 6:27; Luke 12:29-31. How do these counsels relate to discipleship? Luke 9:23-25.

4. Discipleship and Prayer (Luke 11:1-13).

How had Jesus prepared the way for the disciples' question about prayer? Luke 11:1; 9:18, 28.

By observation the disciples learned that in Jesus' life prayer was the secret of power. They knew that divine acknowledgement of His mission had come on at least two occasions while He was praying (Luke 3:21; 9:29).

EVALUATE: The Lord's Prayer contains several elements that are essential in the relationship between human beings and God, such as God's fatherhood and His holiness. Study the prayer in Luke 11:2-4 and in Matthew 6:9-13. Then list the important statements you find in this prayer about our dependence on and relationship to God.

Luke records several stories that illustrate prayer. The story of the friend at midnight (Luke 11:5-8) makes the point that we should go on praying because God responds graciously to His children.

How should we relate to the fact that prayers sometimes seem unanswered? Luke 11:9, 10; Col. 4:2; Jude 20.



III. HOW PEOPLE FAIL GOD (Luke 11:14-54).

1. Devils Cast Out (Luke 11:14-26).

What lesson may we draw from Jesus' warning about the house that He implied was empty? Luke 11:21-26.

2. True Enlightenment (Luke 11:29-36).

How did Jonah's ministry parallel the work of Jesus so that it might be thought of as an apt illustration of what Jesus was doing? Jonah 1:2; 3:2-4. (Compare Matt. 12:40; Luke 6:24-26; 21:34-36.)

"The lesson is for God's messengers today, when the cities of the nations are as verily in need of a knowledge of the attributes and purposes of the true God, as were the Ninevites of old. Christ's ambassadors are to point men to the nobler world, which has largely been lost sight of."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 274.

Lesson 5 - May 2 Duties and Privileges of Discipleship

Jesus is like a light that enters a house, spreading illumination everywhere (Luke 11:33-36). If we do not have that light the fault is ours.

3. Hypocrisy and Rejection (Luke 11:37-54).

What might have protected the Pharisees from hypocrisy and over-emphasis on works of righteousness? Luke 11:42; John 5:42.

The Pharisees dominated religious thinking in their day. Although they had many constructive ideas Jesus perceived their hypocrisy. "The glorification of themselves was the object of their lives. It was this that led them to pervert and misapply the Scriptures, and blinded them to the purpose of Christ's mission."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 409.



SEARCH AND LEARN: Jesus offered various solutions to the greed and hypocrisy of the Pharisees and scribes. Discover these solutions in Luke 11:39-42. Now look at the failings for which Jesus offered no solution (verses 46, 52).

By putting on the mask of conformity and culture we may hide depravity and perversion. We may seem generous and good stewards and yet oppress employees or cheat others. We may urge others to sacrifice and work but do little or nothing ourselves.

Probably the most thought-provoking story in this lesson is the parable of the Good Samaritan. It offers us no comfort. It demands that we risk ourselves for the sake of the other person. It exposes our self-sufficiency and selfishness. All of us have been wounded by sin. All of us are lying as dead men by the roadside. We need Jesus, our Good Neighbor, to bind up our wounds and carry us to safety. With our own salvation assured we then face the question, Who will be neighbor to those in need?

FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:

"A consistent life is a great miracle. In the preaching of the Word of God, the sign that should be manifest now and always is the presence of the Holy Spirit, to make the word a regenerating power to those that hear."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 407. Read the chapter "The True Sign," pp. 404-409.

SUMMARY: In this lesson the life and works of Jesus stand as an eternal standard by which we as Christians measure our response. Discipleship will lead us to risk all for our Lord, to sense and answer the need of others.

APPLICATION

- Am I prepared for the joy and challenge of witnessing about the kingdom? How shall I relate to rebuffs?
- How open should I be to others about the true condition of my spiritual life? If I hide some things is that hypocrisy?

Human Crises and the Kingdom

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Luke 12:1 through 14:35.



MEMORY TEXT: "Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God" (Luke 12:8).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Christ makes it possible for the citizens of His kingdom to confront successfully the various crises of human life—such as those that involve material security, mental and physical suffering, and eternal salvation. Through Christ we have strong assurance of God's love.

OVERVIEW: Luke 12:1—14:35

12:1-59 True Security	13:1-21 Suffering and the kingdom	13:22-35 Entry to the Kingdom	14:1-35 Doors opened and closed
Treasure in Heaven; Seeking first the kingdom; Waiting for the Lord	Sudden death; The Sabbath; Understanding the kingdom	The kingdom feast; Jerusalem forsaken	The place of honor; Excuses; The poor called; Counting the cost

INTRODUCTION: Apart from His personal name, Jesus, and the title, Lord, the most common title used for Jesus in the Gospels is Son of man. This title virtually drops out of use at the close of the gospel story. Apparently, the four Gospel writers thought it especially apt for Jesus during His earthly ministry. It also was our Lord's favorite way of referring to Himself. The title appears frequently in the book of Ezekiel, referring to the messenger as he heard and presented God's words. It set Ezekiel into the appropriate relationship with the Lord who gave the message. In Daniel, however, the Son of man appears as a heavenly being before the Ancient of Days (Dan. 7:13, 14). He receives the kingdom from God. At the same time, apostasy in the form of the little horn power comes under judgment and is destroyed.

By assuming the title for Himself, Jesus focused the hopes of those who looked for deliverance and the restoration of the kingdom on His work and

ministry. He also raised a question: How could the One who spoke of His own suffering and death be the One who would receive the kingdom?

Keep in mind both the prophecy of Daniel 7 and the Servant prophecy of Isaiah 53. They are an essential part of the thought world of Luke.

SUN**I. TRUE SECURITY (Luke 12:1-59).**

A right relationship to the kingdom brings security in the hour of judgment. When we accept and acknowledge the Son of man before others He will acknowledge us before "the angels of God" (a way of speaking about judgment, Luke 12:8, 9; Dan. 7:10). But the rich fool was condemned in the judgment because of his covetousness (Luke 12:15-21). Those who seek first the kingdom will be ready to receive it when Christ comes (verse 32).

1. The Leaven of the Pharisees (Luke 12:1-12).

What two threats to our witness are always present? Verses 1, 4. What two realities counter these two dangers? Verses 2, 5.

Both the Pharisees and the disciples of Christ may attempt to hide the real allegiance of their hearts. On the one hand, the religious leaders of Christ's day tried to appear righteous and hide their iniquity. On the other hand, those who wish to follow Jesus sometimes try to keep that fact secret in order to keep from jeopardizing their position or status.

What understanding helps us counter the fear of persecution or inadequacy in our witness? Verses 7, 11, 12.

2. The Rich Fool (Luke 12:13-21).

Thoughts of judgment and the omniscience of God provoked a man standing near Jesus (verse 13). Apparently he had not understood Jesus' assurances about the hairs of our heads being numbered and God's care for the sparrows. He hoped Jesus would judge in his favor and against his brother, who probably also stood nearby. Instead Jesus told a parable that pinpointed the terrible consequences of covetousness.

In what ways did the rich fool fail to take into account the final judgment? Luke 12:16-19.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Study the difficulty that those with great possessions have in gaining the kingdom as developed in the following stories: The Rich Young Ruler (Luke 18:18-23); Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11); Simon Magus (Acts 8:9-24). What patterns can you detect in their attitudes?

MON

3. Seek the Kingdom (Luke 12:22-40).

How should those who have made their supreme aim the kingdom of God relate to the cares of this life? Verses 22, 29, 30. (Compare Luke 21:34.)

“All who choose Christ’s kingdom of love and righteousness and peace, making its interest paramount to all other, are linked to the world above, and every blessing needed for this life is theirs. In the book of God’s providence, the volume of life, we are each given a page. That page contains every particular of our history; even the hairs of the head are numbered. God’s children are never absent from His mind.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 313.

What security did Jesus offer those who live the life of His kingdom? Luke 12:32-34. In what way does such security have practical value?

Verse 32 alludes directly to the promise of Dan. 7:27: “The kingly power, sovereignty, and greatness of all kingdoms under heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High” (NEB).

Luke 12:35-40 presupposes that there will be an apparent delay in the return of the Son of man. We live in that period of waiting. How does this passage instruct us in the way that we should live? What does it mean to “be ready?”

4. “My Lord Delays” (verses 41-48).

This passage refers particularly to those who carry responsibility in the church—pastors, church officers, and others. Authority (verse 44) carries with it responsibility (verses 42, 43), and, at the day of reckoning, accountability (verse 48). In a wider sense it applies to all who serve as followers of Jesus.

THINK IT THROUGH: In the contemporary church what forms of authority are given to ordinary members? Church officers? Pastors? In what ways should they carry out their responsibilities? How does the church hold them accountable?

Who has the ultimate responsibility for the welfare of the church? Eph. 1:22; 4:15.

SEARCH AND LEARN: How do you react to the concept of the Christian message splitting families? Do you think this represents God’s will? Luke 12:49-52. Compare Luke 3:16, 17 and Mal. 4:5, 6.

**II. SUFFERING AND THE KINGDOM (Luke 13:1-21).****1. Sudden Death of the Innocent (Luke 13:1-5).**

How should the Christian relate to the unexpected death of innocent people? Luke 13:1-5.

The death of the innocent ordinarily results from the breaking of the laws of nature or the law of God. A wall not built to withstand an earthquake will tumble at the smallest shock (verse 4). When hatred overrides the dictum "love your neighbour" there are victims (verse 2). Those who break such laws carry the responsibility. We should neither blame God, nor think such victims especially sinful, as those who brought the news of the massacre seemed to think concerning the victims (verses 2, 4).

How does the parable of the fig tree represent God's continuing call to repentance? What will the unrepentant ultimately face? Luke 13:6-9.

2. Sabbath Healing (verses 10-17).

Great Power walked the streets and lanes of Israel. Who would recognize it? Certainly not the ruler of the synagogue. Like the Pharisees and scribes (Luke 11:37-54), hypocrisy blocked the ruler's humanitarian concerns. The story does not rewrite the Sabbath command. Rather it shows how the kingdom message placed its emphasis on answering human need.

3. The Power of the Kingdom (verses 18-21).

To what future events do these parables look? Acts 1:8; Rev. 14:6, 7; Matt. 24:14.

The defeat of Satan (Luke 11:20) showed how God's kingdom was advancing. Neither hypocrisy nor false restrictions attached to the keeping of the Commandments would hold back the kingdom.

**III. ENTRY TO THE KINGDOM (Luke 13:22-35).****1. The Kingdom Feast (verses 22-30)**

In Matthew Jesus is quoted as speaking of both a narrow path and a narrow gate leading to the kingdom (Matt. 7:13, 14). Luke focuses on the narrow gate. Jesus' response came in answer to a question about how many will enter the kingdom.

What limits entry to the kingdom? Verses 25, 27.

We must anticipate the close of probation. "Now, while our great High Priest is making the atonement for us, we should seek to become perfect in Christ. Not even by a thought could our Saviour be brought to yield to the power of temptation. . . . He had kept His Father's commandments, and there was no sin in Him that Satan could use to his advantage. This is the conditions in which those must be found who shall stand in the time of trouble.

"It is in this life that we are to separate sin from us, through faith in the atoning blood of Christ. . . . It rests with us to co-operate with the agencies which Heaven employs in the work of conforming our characters to the divine model."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 623.

2. Jerusalem Forsaken (Luke 13:31-35).

Jesus knew that before long He would go to Jerusalem for the last time. His work would continue until then. "I must walk to day, and to morrow, and the day following" (verse 33). Neither Herod nor His other enemies would be able to stop His activity before His time came. Even when it did, He would escape at last and "be perfected" (verse 32).

What hope sustains those who find that national, racial, or earthly systems have failed them? Luke 13:35.

Once Jesus left this world, He would not be seen by its inhabitants until the second coming. "Jesus referred to the time when men—including those 'also which pierced him' (Rev. 1:7)—would see Him 'coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory' (Matt. 24:30). At the last great day even scoffers would be compelled to acknowledge the blessedness of the One whom they now so freely cursed."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 493.

IV. DOORS OPENED AND CLOSED (Luke 14:1-35).

1. The Place of Honor (Luke 14:1-11).

Human pity often motivated Jesus. He had compassion on the multitudes, He wept at Lazarus' death, He called the children to Him, He welcomed the despised and outcast. Although these too must be converted, His openness to human suffering—whether of the mind, the heart, or the body—and His constant concern that religion not push aside such needs, made His teaching radically different.

There are 27 direct references to the Sabbath in Luke-Acts, all upholding its sacredness and true meaning. The many Jewish opponents of the early church would have charged the members with Sabbath-breaking had such been the case. Jesus and His followers kept and honored the seventh-day Sabbath.

ANALYZE: Consider the legalistic approach to the Sabbath shown by the religious leaders of Jesus' day. Luke 14:1-5; 13:14, 15. There is danger of both legalism and laxity in our Sabbath-keeping today. List three examples of each in the blanks that follow:

Sabbath Legalism

Sabbath Laxity

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

The feast at the home of the Pharisee gave Jesus occasion to deal with (1) personal humility (Luke 14:7-11); (2) attitudes to the poor (Luke 14:12-14); and (3) response to the kingdom (Luke 14:15-24).

Once before Jesus had cautioned the Pharisees about their habit of seeking the best seats (Luke 11:43). Later He returned to the issue again (Luke 20:46). Only at God's invitation may we occupy a place at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9). Read Paul's similar statement on humility in 1 Corinthians 1:26-30.

2. Excuses: The Poor Called (Luke 14:12-24):

God wants every seat filled around the table at the great messianic banquet. The invitation to His guests will be successful: "Then I heard what sounded like a crowd, like the sound of a roaring waterfall, like loud peals of thunder. I heard them say, 'Praise God! For the Lord, our Almighty God, is King! . . . For the time has come for the wedding of the Lamb' " (Rev. 19:6, 7, TEV). Niagara is but a whisper, and Victoria Falls is but a murmur compared with the great shout of the delivered.

Christ's righteousness provides a place at the table for those who are faithful (Rev. 19:8, 9; see also Matt. 22:11, 12).

INTERPRET: Study the list of excuses in Luke 14:16-20. What kinds of things might hinder us today from committing ourselves fully to the invitation of the Saviour? List some modern parallels to the excuses Christ mentioned.

A similar list excused Hebrew men from military duty in ancient times. (See Deut. 20:5-9.) In the passage in Luke, Jesus gave the kingdom absolute priority. Because the poor, the lame, the halt, and the blind had no possessions, they were free to respond to the demands of the kingdom. The Yes of faith puts the humblest soul at the table of the King of kings.

"Many who appear wholly indifferent to religious things are in heart longing for rest and peace. Although they may have sunken to the very depths of sin, there is a possibility of saving them."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 233.



3. Disciples in Crisis (Luke 14:25-35).

How do the parables of the watchtower and the warring kings relate to Christian commitment? Luke 14:28-33.

How can salt lose its savor, as indicated in Luke 14:34?

“The explanation probably lies in the nature of Palestinian salt. . . . The water of the Dead Sea contains various substances, evaporation produced a mixture of common salt and carnallite. . . . Carnallite, or gypsum out of which the salt content had been dissolved away, would be ‘salt that had become tasteless.’ ”—I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (England: Paternoster Press, 1978), p. 596.

As followers of Jesus, we have met the demands of the kingdom as we have studied this lesson. Christ called His followers to total commitment. No excuse suffices to reject that commitment. As we look to Jesus, bear the cross after Him, and partake of the bounty of His grace and love, we shall be able to follow and obey.

FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:

1. “He who feels most deeply his need of divine aid will plead for it; and the Holy Spirit will give unto him glimpses of Jesus that will strengthen and uplift the soul. . . . He is anointed for his mission; and he succeeds where many of the learned and intellectually wise would fail.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 436.

2. For the Parable of the Wedding Feast see *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 219-237. “By the great supper, Christ represents the blessings offered through the gospel. The provision is nothing less than Christ Himself. . . . The love of God had furnished the costly banquet, and had provided inexhaustible resources.”—pp. 222, 223.

3. “Are you, O careless heart, a fruitless tree in the Lord's vineyard? Shall the words of doom ere long be spoken of you? How long have you received His gifts? How long has He watched and waited for a return of love?” “The pitying Saviour is saying concerning you, Spare it this year also, till I dig about it and dress it.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 216, 218.

SUMMARY: Wherever Jesus went He presented a message that demanded decision and response. Whether the person involved was Pharisee or scribe, poor or rich, a decision was demanded. Christ continues to confront us with the choice for or against Him and the kingdom of God.

APPLICATION

- Jesus said, “Seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you: (Luke 12:31). What am I seeking today?”
- The vineyard keeper said, “If it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down” (Luke 13:9). How may I be a fruitful tree in the orchard of faith?”
- The lord said, “Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled” (Luke 14:23). Am I a faithful servant who searches out and calls to the kingdom those in need?”
- The mockers said, “This man began to build, and was not able to finish” (Luke 14:30). What will help me finish my course?”

The Gospel to the Outcast

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Luke 15:1 through 17:10.



MEMORY TEXT: "I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance" (Luke 15:7).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus makes it clear that the very ones who might have been expected to accept God's gracious call to the kingdom often reject it and that Heaven includes in its call those whom society rejects and despises.

OVERVIEW: Luke 15:1—17:10

15:1-32 Quest for the lost	16:1-31 Wealth deceives	17:1-10 Profitable servants
The lost sheep; The lost coin; The lost sons	The unjust steward; Having one master; The rich man and Lazarus	Forgiveness; faith; Doing our duty

INTRODUCTION: The Gospels report Jesus' great popularity at certain periods in His ministry. A woman squeezed her way through a huge crowd to touch His clothes (Luke 8:43, 44); people trampled each other (12:1); He took a boat to escape the throng (5:1-3); and even when He retreated to a desert place in order to have some time alone with His disciples, the crowds searched for Him until they found Him (9:10-12).

Many loved and supported Him. Some came out of curiosity, looking for the out-of-ordinary. Their interest and attention was fickle. Some were honest seekers attracted by the insights Jesus gave them into the beauty and power of the kingdom of God. They were not satisfied with the nit-picking theology and the exclusiveness of their religious teachers.

In Luke 15, the following are singled out particularly as being in the crowd:

1. **Pharisees.** They were a small but influential sect. Usually, but not always, they opposed Jesus. Later some became Christians (Acts 15:5). They discriminated against other groups. This appalled Jesus. He declared that, although religious leaders had excluded the poor and outcast, God most certainly had not.

2. **Scribes.** They were, for the most part, religious scholars or lawyers, devoted to the teaching and interpretation of the sacred writings. The scribes

were well-versed in the law of Moses and the traditional law of the various rabbinical schools. Jesus offended them by fellowshiping with outcasts and opening the kingdom to those the scribes thought should be excluded.

3. **Tax-gatherers.** They were one of the unclean or despised groups. The lower category of tax-gatherers collected poll tax or customs duties. The richer ones contracted with the government to give an agreed return. Abuses were frequent.

4. **Sinners.** Scribal interpretation made certain professions unclean because of the nature of their work. For various reasons shepherds, physicians, donkey keepers and leatherworkers were on the suspect list. Luke, a physician, may have felt the sting of Pharisee discrimination.



I. QUEST FOR THE LOST (Luke 15:1-32).

When a typical audience surrounded Jesus, the Pharisees would take a position in the crowd that would keep them from risking contact with the ritually unclean.

What attitude prevents us from benefiting from the breadth of God's outreach to the world? Luke 15:2. (See also Num. 14:2.)

In the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament, the word for "murmured" (Luke 15:2), almost always describes the complaining or grumbling of Israel. Jesus brought hope to the masses, but some still "murmured."

Works-related religion expects to trigger God's action on its behalf through its own good deeds. The Pharisees thought that God would redeem Israel when enough of the people lived rigorously according to the law. Jesus attacked such legalism but magnified the law. Later Paul joined with the other apostles in attacking legalism while upholding the true place of the law. (See Rom. 3:20, 31.)

1. Lost Sheep, Lost Coin (Luke 15:3-10).

What aspects of the character of God are represented by the shepherd and by the woman in the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin? Luke 15:3-10.

These parables wrote in advance the plot for the book of Acts. The church went on the initiative seeking the lost, sharing the good news of the open door of salvation with all. The church did not seek to overwhelm people with its institutions or size, but humbled and spent itself in the same way that Jesus did.

What kind of people became the dominant group in the early witness of the church? 1 Cor. 1:26-29.

People who help people, people who care—these God can use because they model their attitudes after that of Jesus the Friend of sinners.

In the story of the lost coin we have the only parable in which a woman represented aspects of the character of God.



2. The Lost Sons (Luke 15:11-32).

It may help you understand the power in this story if you think of it first of all as a story relating the tensions within this family of a father and two sons.

THINK IT THROUGH: What does the parable teach about the causes of human antagonism and the ways in which reconciliation might be sought? Review parallel situations you have known.

Consider the attitudes of the father, the older son and the younger at each of the following crisis points:

- (1) the younger son leaves home (verse 13);
- (2) the prodigal comes to his senses (verse 17);
- (3) the reconciliation with the father (verse 20);
- (4) the anger of the older son (verse 28).

THINK IT THROUGH: Have there been times when you would identify with the prodigal? With the older son? With the father? What does the parable teach us about the basic requirements of reconciliation within families, between friends, in the church? Look for some help from **Philippians 2:1-4** and **1 Corinthians 13**.

The Bible contains many stories about older and younger brothers: Cain and Abel; Esau and Jacob; Aaron and Moses, to name a few. In each case cited, the younger receives the special blessing of God.

In what ways did the older brother prove himself as needy of the father's forgiveness as was the younger? What command did the older brother also break? Luke 15:28-30.

"When the father comes out to remonstrate with him [the older brother], the pride and malignity of his nature are revealed. He dwells upon his own life in his father's house as a round of unrequited service, and then places in mean contrast the favor shown to the son just returned. He makes it plain that his own service has been that of a servant rather than a son."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 207, 208. Page 209 adds that the older brother represents the unrepenting Jews of Christ's day and those of pharisaical bent in every age.

How does this parable illustrate justification by faith (Luke 15:22-24)? What significance lies in the difference between the speech the prodigal proposed to make (verses 18, 19) and what he actually said (verse 21)?

God is on the stretch to save humanity. He goes past the expected, breaks new ground, and gives a status beyond any power of the sinner to earn. Jesus' stories overflowed with the love of God.

SEARCH AND LEARN: List the themes that unite the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son:

1. Luke 15:4, 8, 20 _____
2. Luke 15: 7, 9, 24 _____



II. THE DECEIT OF WEALTH (Luke 16:1-31).

1. The Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-9).

The agent or steward in this story held a position of trust. He had legal right to buy and sell and make contracts on behalf of his employer without reference to him.

How did the law of Moses indicate that interest on a loan to another Jew should be handled? Deut. 15:7-11; 23:19, 20.

No Jew should lend "upon usury" to a fellow Jew who was in real need. The scribes therefore condemned usury. They considered it a sin to charge interest on something a person needed but did not possess. Yet they found a way around it. For instance, if a person had just enough oil for one lamplighting when asking for a loan the lender could argue that because the borrower had that tiny amount of oil, the borrower did not "need" oil. Therefore interest could be levied.

To what measures did the unjust steward resort when he found himself in extremity? Luke 16:1-3.

Desperate times demand desperate measures. The agent's action was dishonest, although technically he acted within the law of usury. Following the law of Moses, he decided to take off the bill any interest accumulated. Contemporary records indicate that the interest on a loan of wheat was 25 percent, on oil 100 percent. The steward simply cut the wheat bill by 20 percent and reduced the oil bill by half. Thus he earned approval from his debtors and made it appear that his employer was a strict Jew who honored the law.

Jesus stated that the steward was "unjust." However, those who seek the kingdom should not hesitate to take all legitimate steps, even though seemingly desperate, to take advantage of every opportunity to grow in grace. (See Matt. 5:29, 30.)



2. One Master (Luke 16:10-18).

SEARCH AND LEARN: Examine Luke 16:10-13 for sound principles of stewardship. List what you find in the spaces provided below:

ILLUMINATION: "Alas, how many are appropriating to themselves the gifts of God! How many are adding house to house and land to land. How many are spending their money for pleasure, for the gratification of appetite, for extravagant houses, furniture, and dress. Their fellow beings are left to misery and crime, to disease and death. Multitudes are perishing without one pitying look, one word or deed of sympathy."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 371.

What contrast is there between those who fail to accept the kingdom and those who regard it as essential to their well-being? Luke 16:15, 16.

Jesus listed again and again the false interpretations of the law that had made obedience either a sham or almost impossible. In verse 16 Jesus is not dividing the work of redemption into two dispensations. Note verse 17. "It might be thought that the Law was over and done with. Jesus however assures His hearers that it does not lack fulfillment. It outlasts *heaven and earth*. Jesus never cast doubt on the validity of the Law. It was the way it was interpreted, particularly by the Pharisees, that drew His criticism."—Leon Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1974), p. 251.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Review the New Testament teaching regarding the sanctity of marriage. Luke 16:18; Matt. 5:31, 32; 19:7-9; 1 Cor. 7.

3. The Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-33).

Explanations of this parable as it relates to life after death include:

1. Parables should not be used to support doctrinal positions.
2. The story had no possibility of being literally or physically fulfilled.
3. It is impossible to interpret the picture painted of life after death literally.
4. The purpose of the parable was not to teach about life after death.

The parable continues to show the contrast between the wealthy and the poor. How cruelly the rich can treat the poor! Yet in the kingdom of heaven the poor find welcome, while the arrogance and selfishness of the rich restricts their entry as if the gate to the kingdom were a needle's eye and they were like a camel loaded with goods trying to negotiate it.

How did Jesus apply the parable? Luke 16:19-31.

Would Jesus use a false although popular belief about people being gathered into the bosom of Abraham? As a figure of speech, yes. He used hyperbole (the use of exaggerated expressions) in the parable of the mustard seed. It teaches spiritual lessons, not horticulture! The point of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus is not the state of the dead, but the attitude of those who discriminate against others.

Where did Jesus direct the attention of those who were seeking to understand God's purpose? Luke 16:31; 24:44.

At the resurrection "God works no miracle to re-create a man who would not be re-created when he was granted every opportunity and provided with every facility. . . . His character is not in harmony with God, and he could not be happy in the heavenly family."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 270.



III. PROFITABLE SERVANTS (Luke 17:1-10).

1. Offenses Will Come (Luke 17:1-6).

What must those who offend the purposes of God ultimately face? Luke 17:1, 2; Rom. 6:23.

This passage stands side by side with one on forgiveness, thus pointing us to the power of God to remove the penalty of sin and give us the assurance: "There is no condemnation now for those who live in union with Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1, TEV).

In what way should we treat an offender so that he or she does not remain guilty of sin but has the opportunity to repent? Luke 17:3, 4; Matt. 18:21, 22.

How did Jesus respond when the disciples asked that their faith might be increased? Luke 17:5-10.

2. Doing Our Duty (Luke 17:7-10).

What motivates the Christian to go beyond duty? What motivations are right for the Christian? Luke 17:7-10; 12:29-37.

The Pharisees taught that good works provided a claim on God. Jesus denied that. No one can put God in his debt. Anyone who feels that the extra service done for the church or for the good of humanity gives him or her such a claim must face the teaching of this parable. To serve God is our duty. We should not expect to be rewarded as a result of such activity. There must be activity, but it will come as the natural result of our love and gratitude for what God has done for us.

Again, as is brought out so often in Luke, the disciples are to wait in humility before their Lord, ready to serve, ready to obey. Let us remember the father who would not let his son speak of what he would do, but immediately put the robe of acceptance around the returning prodigal. Thus God welcomes us. Our duty calls us to respond to that welcome, not in order to receive some reward, but because of the Father's provision and because of His love for us.

FRI FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:

1. "Never a prayer is offered, however faltering, never a tear is shed, however secret, never a sincere desire after God is cherished, however feeble, but the Spirit of God goes forth to meet it. Even before the prayer is uttered or the yearning of the heart made known, grace from Christ goes forth to meet the grace that is working upon the human soul."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 206. Read the complete chapter entitled "Lost, and Is Found," pp. 198-211.

2. "Every year millions upon millions of human souls are passing into eternity unwarned and unsaved. From hour to hour in our varied life, opportunities to reach and save souls are opened to us. . . . A few more years at the longest, and the voice which we cannot refuse will be heard saying, 'Give an account of thy stewardship.' "—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 373, 374.

3. "This parable [the rich man and Lazarus] was designed to teach that future destiny is determined by the use men make of the opportunities of this present life. Jesus was not discussing either the state of man in death or the time when rewards would be passed out; He was simply drawing a clear distinction between this life and the next and showing the relationship of each to the other"—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pp. 830, 831.

4. Review the New Testament teaching on life after death: John 11:11-15; 1 Cor. 15:16-18, 50-54; 1 Thess. 4:15-17; Heb. 11:39, 40.

SUMMARY: Jesus used striking illustrations to show the bankruptcy of any system that relies on works for salvation. He proclaimed the provisions of the loving Father who forgives and saves those who are faithful through the gift of His Son.

APPLICATION

- The prodigal said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son" (Luke 15:21). With what degree of humility do I approach the heavenly Father?
- Jesus said, "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much" (Luke 16:10). At what level does faithfulness begin in my life?
- In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Abraham was quoted as saying, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:31). Am I hearing the Word of God and the counsel of His latter-day messenger, Ellen G. White?

Choosing the Kingdom of God

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Luke 17:11 through 19:10.

SAB **PMJ** **MEMORY TEXT:** "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus' words and actions attract those who would be disciples, but the choice demands radical changes in the light of the approaching kingdom of heaven.

OVERVIEW: Luke 17:11—19:10

17:11-37 Failure and Success	18:1-30 Vindication Justification Reward	18:31—19:10 Jesus Saves
The grateful Samaritan; The days of the Son of man	The persistent widow; Pharisee and publican; Entry to the kingdom	Son of David; Zacchaeus

INTRODUCTION: Some of the interpretations of the Old Testament by the Jews of Jesus' day both raised expectation and created misunderstandings as Jesus' ministry continued. The Jews looked for David's throne to be established eternally at that time. (See 2 Sam. 7:1-11, 16.) Some asked, Is Jesus that King? Some called Him by the royal title, "Son of David" (Luke 18:38, 39). They also expected that the messianic prophecies pointing to radical social and political changes would take place in their time. (See Isa. 35:5-10; 61:1-9; Zech. 14:9-17.)

It is true that the Old Testament includes a vision of God reigning over the universe (Psalm 47:2). Jesus will assume that position (Luke 21:27; Rev. 19:16). Jesus also applied the prophecy of Dan. 7:9-14 to Himself and called for preparation for the great judgment during which the saints would receive the kingdom (Luke 12:32). The Jews believed that all the prophecies were to be fulfilled immediately at the advent of the Messiah and that if Jesus were the Messiah He would act to restore their kingdom right then. They overlooked the fact that these prophecies were conditional on their acceptance of the Messiah and their spiritual preparation for His kingdom. Jesus did set up the kingdom of grace at His first coming. All those who become citizens of

that kingdom will have a part in the universal kingdom He soon will establish.

Jesus' coming kingdom implies judgment (Luke 21:36). Therefore we must decide and repent. The coming kingdom approaches (Matt. 25:31-34). Therefore we must watch and wait. The messianic kingdom establishes peace and justice. Therefore we must live peaceably and act justly. The Son of man will give the kingdom to the saints. Therefore we must accept His salvation and be numbered among the saints.

Miracles, parables, ethical teachings, exhortations, insights into the future—all direct the attention of the followers of Jesus to the kingdom of God that is both in our midst and still awaited.



I. FAILURE AND SUCCESS (Luke 17:11-37).

1. The Grateful Samaritan (Luke 17:11-19).

We already have met the good Samaritan; now we meet the grateful Samaritan. Again "this stranger" (verse 18) showed how those who receive the blessings of the kingdom should react. The ungodly (according to the Jews) reacted in the way the godly should. The story teaches that thanksgiving must be added to faith.

What role does thanksgiving have in the life of the Christian? Why do you think it necessary? Luke 17:16-19; Col. 3:15; Eph. 5:20.

What warning did Jesus give about trying to determine when and how the kingdom will appear? Luke 17:20, 21, 23; Matt. 24:36.

Seventh-day Adventists must guard against creating definite time lines, or making too firm predictions about the timing for Jesus' return. Such teachings may actually say, "My Lord delays His coming." On the other hand, as children of light, we must discern the times (1 Thess. 5:4). Observing the signs and times keeps us alert and ready. Attempting what is rightly God's work by setting the time of Christ's return, destroys faith rather than builds it. Being ready demonstrates strong faith.

2. "Days of the Son of Man" (Luke 17:22).

The crowd had seen Jesus exercise divine power many times. Each such demonstration revealed the power of the kingdom. Soon Jesus would leave them, and that power would not be exercised in precisely the same way. Searching for it, they would think this or that event represented such power. But they would not see it again until the Son of man appeared with the blinding glory of "His day" (verse 24).

THINK IT THROUGH: How does the passage of time seem to erode belief in the soon return of Jesus? Luke 17:26-30. What can we do to preserve the freshness of hope in Christ's soon return?

What should be our priority in the light of the approaching advent of Christ? Luke 17:33.

THINK IT THROUGH: How would you apply Luke 17:31-37 to what it means to prepare for the second coming?

Commenting on similar passages in Matthew 24:40, 41, the *SDA Bible Commentary* says, "The teaching known as the 'secret rapture,' according to which the saints are to be secretly snatched away from this earth prior to the visible return of Christ, is wholly unscriptural. Its advocates appeal to the statements of Christ in vs. 39-41 as proof. But these verses teach no such thing. The 'coming' of ch. 24 is always, without exception, the literal, visible appearance of Christ (see vs. 3, 27, 30, 39, 42, 44, 46, 48, 50)."—Vol. 5, p. 504.

Those who wait for the coming are completely separate in expectation and faith from those who look elsewhere for deliverance or ignore God's warning. (See also Matt. 25:32-33.)

II. VINDICATION, JUSTIFICATION, AND REWARD (Luke 18:1-30).

1. The Persistent Widow (Luke 18:1-8).

This parable illustrates further the situation on earth when the Son of man returns (verse 8). The previous chapter listed three factors that destroy faith:

1. Seeking to know by "observation" when the kingdom will appear (Luke 17:20). Faith will have nothing to do with such human guesses (verses 21, 23).
2. Adopting an attitude of indifference and presuming that the world will go on unchanged (Luke 17:26-28). Faith knows better (verses 24, 30).
3. Giving priority to life in this world rather than life in the kingdom (Luke 17:34-36). Faith has its priorities straight (verse 33).

SEARCH AND LEARN: Who does the unjust judge in chapter 18 represent? Does he represent worldly situations or powers that oppress God's people? Does he represent God? How does God act differently from the unjust judge? Luke 18:4, 8.

How does this parable teach that persistence in prayer is essential? Luke 18:1, 5, 7, 8.

The expression "weary me" (verse 5) comes from a Greek word with an original meaning "to give a black eye." The judge not only resented the continual annoyance by the widow, but also may have feared for his reputation. One issue here is the character of God and of His people. There is a striking contrast between the just and merciful God and the unjust judge. If the unjust judge would yield to importunate prayer, certainly the just and

merciful God will be more than willing to respond to the needs of His children. Because they are His, they are not left defenseless, but they, too, will stand vindicated at the end (Dan. 7:21, 22).

2. Pharisee and Publican (Luke 18:9-14).

How does the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican illustrate God's way of saving people? Luke 18:13, 14; Rom. 5: 1, 2.



3. Jesus and the Little Children (Luke 18:15-17).

What do we perceive in little children that makes them an apt illustration for a correct approach to our Lord? Luke 9:47, 48; 18:16.

4. Wealth and the Kingdom (Luke 18:18-30).

The parable of the prodigal son features honor toward parents. In the story of the rich young ruler Jesus upholds four other commandments. Never once did He undermine or fail to support the Ten Commandments.

APPLICATION: How would you describe Jesus' attitude toward this man of wealth? Luke 18:22-24. (See Mark 10:21.) How does His attitude differ from contemporary feelings about successful persons? Under what conditions would the command to sell all and follow apply today?

Jesus' case against the misuse of wealth finds its greatest demonstration in this story. Wealth deceives. It attracts away from Christ. Yet in this same lesson, and in direct contrast with the incident being studied, the salvation of the wealthy Zacchaeus is brought in.

What lay behind Jesus' conclusions about wealth and entry to the kingdom in Luke 18:24, 25? (See also Isa. 58:6, 7; James 5:1-8.)

"His claim that he had kept the law of God was a deception. He showed that riches were his idol. He could not keep the commandments of God while the world was first in his affections. He loved the gifts of God more than he loved the Giver."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 520.

What attitude about success leads to the conclusion expressed in the question in Luke 18:26?

In Luke's Gospel it is not too long before the seemingly impossible becomes part of the record. A short while after, Zacchaeus gave much of his riches to the poor in response to his salvation (Luke 18:27).

THINK IT THROUGH: As spokesman for the disciples Peter quickly pointed out that they had “left all” to follow Jesus (Luke 18:28). They were concerned about rewards. Did Jesus rebuke them? How large a part should rewards play in motivation toward the kingdom? Luke 18:28-30.



III. JESUS SAVES (Luke 18:31 to 19:10).

1. Jesus to Suffer (Luke 18:31-34).

What factors contributed to the disciples’ failure to understand Jesus’ very plain words about His suffering? Luke 18:31-34; 9:44, 45; 24:25, 26.

Blindness to God’s plans for ourselves may afflict us often. But through prayer, the study of God’s Word, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit we learn God’s will for us.

2. The Blind Beggar (Luke 18:35-43).

SEARCH AND LEARN: Study the story of the blind beggar for contrasts and similarities with the story of the rich young ruler. What can we learn from the two stories about how we should relate to God’s will?

This story provides a pivotal point within Luke’s narrative. Jesus was now approaching the ascent from Jericho to Jerusalem (verse 35). The last stage of the three-and-a-half year ministry had arrived. Even after all His witnessing, teaching, and healing, whom did the people think He was? They referred to Him as “Jesus of Nazareth.” The beggar knew better, as did many others. He is the “Son of David.” In his blindness he saw more clearly than most. Thus began the acclaim that accompanied Jesus to the gates of Jerusalem and into the temple itself. The beggar represented those whom Jesus had said He came to free (Luke 4:18, 19).



3. Zacchaeus Saved (Luke 19:1-10).

COMPLETE: Fill in the blank sections of the chart that follows in order to compare the stories of the rich ruler (Luke 18:18-24) and Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10).

Comparisons	Ruler	Zacchaeus
Occupation	councilman	
Spirituality		seeking
The Appeal	follow Me	
Reaction		enthusiastic
Result		

THINK IT THROUGH: What do we learn about soul winning from what we read about Jesus' actions toward Zacchaeus?

If any one verse might contain the theme of Luke's two-part story it would be 19:10. "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." The text illustrates two points Luke wanted to make. First, God is on the initiative in the quest for souls. In the same way the church later took the initiative. Second, there are ethical and moral consequences in everything touched by salvation. When the lost become the redeemed they live as the saved should.

The story of Zacchaeus has the quality of a parable about it. Zacchaeus represents the curious, secular, but lost world. Jesus Himself is God seeking and saving. The murmuring crowd shows us the self-satisfied, self-righteous people who sense no need for personal change. The meal represents God's way of welcoming and saying Yes to all men.

"God comes with entreaties and assurances to those who are making mistakes. He seeks to show them their error, and lead them to repentance. But if they refuse to humble their hearts before Him, if they strive to exalt themselves above Him, He must speak to them in judgment."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*. vol. 4, p. 1156.



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION

1. Jesus worked at destroying barriers between people: "Jesus had begun to break down the partition wall between Jew and Gentile, and to preach salvation to the world. Though He was a Jew, He mingled freely with the Samaritans, setting at nought the Pharisaic customs of His nation."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 193. (Read the chapter entitled "At Jacob's Well," pp. 183-195).

2. "The Christian in his business life is to represent to the world the manner in which our Lord would conduct business enterprises. In every transaction he is to make it manifest that God is his teacher. 'Holiness unto the Lord' is to be written upon daybooks and ledgers, on deeds, receipts, and bills of exchange"—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 556.

3. Consider the application to your experience of Ephesians 2:14-16.

SUMMARY: Jesus set the kingdom of God in motion in order that we might be part of the kingdom when the Son of man appears. Those who respond to His call must give absolute priority to the kingdom, rejecting the self-sufficiency of religion and wealth.

APPLICATION

- How may we find protection from self-exaltation and self-congratulation as we see the good things God has done for His people?
- In what ways might wealth or lack of it assist or hinder my personal witness?
- Have I laid aside every selfish claim to worth and come to Jesus in the simplicity of a little child?

Conflict Increases

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Luke 19:11 through 21:38.



MEMORY TEXT: “Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man” (Luke 21:36).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The world today displays signs of the soon return of our King. The continuing guidance of Jesus our Lord sustains our faith and the activity of the kingdom.

OVERVIEW—Luke 19:11—21:28

Luke 19:11-48 Rejected by the Jews	Luke 20:1—21:4 Confrontation	Luke 21:5-38 The Coming End
The ten pounds; Triumphal entry; Tears over Jerusalem	By what authority? The vineyard; Caesar's taxes; The resurrection	Troubles and protection Jerusalem's fall; The Son of man appears

INTRODUCTION: By the time Luke wrote his Gospel a problem familiar to Seventh-day Adventists had appeared in the early church. Many were questioning why the Lord had delayed His coming. How should the church relate to this apparent delay? How could the church maintain its sense of urgency as time passed?

By recording the teachings of Jesus and stories about Him, Luke sought to keep the conviction of the soon return of Jesus as strong as ever and yet to make it clear that an unspecified period of time must elapse before Jesus returned. This did not rule out a period of time (long by human reckoning) before Jesus' coming; rather both Jesus and the New Testament writers allowed for it and indicated what to expect during it.

The early church lived both with “the Lord will come today” expectations, and with “occupy till I come” activities. In precisely the same way the remnant church today continues its faith and practice.

The New Testament writers viewed the period between the ascension and the return of Jesus as one of intense activity by the church and of increasing perplexity among the people of the world as the end approaches rapidly. In that period:

1. The church had a work of witness to accomplish (Matt. 24:14; 28:19, 20; Acts 1:8).

2. The issues between Judaism and Christianity would become clear (Luke 21:24; Rom. 11:1-32).
3. The church would face apostasy and dissension (Acts 20:29, 30; Matt. 24:24; 2 Thess. 2:3, 4).
4. The Holy Spirit would sustain the church and comfort it (John 14:16-18; 1 Cor. 12:11-13).
5. Long time periods would intervene (Rev. 12:6; 13:5).

Jesus made it clear that the church must wait in faith and witness to the world while remaining constantly on the alert for His return.



I. REJECTED BY THE JEWS (Luke 19:11-48).

1. Parable of the Ten Pounds (Luke 19:11-27).

The similar parable in Matt. 25:14-30 has a different purpose. "The Matthean parable reminds us that we all have different gifts, the Lucan that we all have one basic task, that of living our faith. The Matthean story concentrates on the servants and their trading, but Luke has references to a nobleman receiving a kingdom and the attitude of his subjects."—Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Luke: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester, England: Intervarsity Press, 1974) pp. 273, 274.

THINK IT THROUGH: Why do you think Jesus felt it necessary to tell a parable that indicated a longer than expected period between His departure and return? (See Luke 19:11.) If the parable has to do with the one thing that all disciples receive and not with our gifts, what would that one thing be? Would it be the gospel, our witnessing work, our characters?

In 4 B.C. Archelaus, eldest son of Herod the Great, made an urgent trip to Rome to ask Augustus to confer the same kingdom on him that Herod the Great had ruled. No sooner had he set out than a deputation of Jews followed to plead that he be given no kingdom. Augustus reduced his kingdom by more than half that of his father's. This story was well known and may have been the basis for that part of Jesus' story. The citizens in the story represent the Jews who opposed Jesus. The story leads up to Jesus' lament over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41, 42).

How does failure to use what God gives us affect our role as servants of the king? Luke 19:26; 8:18.

In Bible times money was kept secure by wrapping it in the neck scarf, or kerchief, that almost everyone wore. Doing so put the money at risk. At least the servant in Matthew did provide the minimum security—he buried the money. But that does not excuse him for not putting it out to interest.

2. Ascending the Mount of Olives (Luke 19:28-40).

What special significance does the Mount of Olives possess in both history and prophecy? 2 Sam. 15:30; Zech. 14:4.

Jesus' contemporaries and the Gospel writers viewed His frequent visits to the Mount of Olives (Luke 21:39), His victory over temptation in Gethsemane, and His arrest there (Luke 22:39-54), as demonstrating His fulfillment of Old Testament expectations.

How do you explain Jesus' rebuke to those who objected to the people proclaiming Him King? Luke 19:35-40.

3. Tears Over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-48).

"The Jewish nation was a symbol of the people of all ages who scorn the pleadings of infinite Love. The tears of Christ when He wept over Jerusalem were for the sins of all time. In the judgments pronounced upon Israel, those who reject the reproofs and warnings of God's Holy Spirit may read their own condemnation."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 587.

Israel rejected the Son of promise; but God never rejected His promises. Instead He released them to us in Jesus Christ. "The Son of God, Christ Jesus, proclaimed among you by us, . . . was never a blend of Yes and No. With him it was, and is, Yes. He is the Yes pronounced upon God's promises, every one of them" (2 Cor. 1:19, 20, NEB).



II. CONFRONTATION (Luke 20:1 to 21:4).

1. By What Authority? (Luke 20:1-8).

When the world seemed set against Him where did Jesus go and what did He do? Luke 20:1, 2. What is the lesson for us?

Jesus made the temple His base (Luke 19:47). He purified it (Luke 19:45, 46), then taught the good news of the kingdom there.

The same kinds of questions about the authority of the Word of God as those found in Luke 20:2 arise frequently today. From your experience what answers do you find best satisfy those who raise such questions?

2. The Parable of the Husbandmen (Luke 20:9-18).

The parable applied in the first instance to the Jews, but it has eternal significance (note the parallels with Isa. 5:1-7).

SEARCH AND LEARN: Analyze the parable of the husbandmen, giving it an application both to Jesus' day and to our modern situation in the following areas:

1. The "certain man" (Luke 20:9)
2. The husbandmen (verse 9)
3. The servants (verses 10, 11)
4. The murder (verse 15)
5. The "others" (verse 16)

How does the concept of Jesus as the chief cornerstone illustrate the relationship between Jesus and the church? Luke 20:17, 18; Acts 4:11, 12; Eph. 2:19-22.

Jesus the Rock, Jesus the Cornerstone, may yet figure in our future in another way. The Rock also brings judgment against a sinful world (Luke 20:18; compare Dan. 2:34, 44; Isa. 8:14).



3. Taxes for Caesar (Luke 20:19-26).

"The government under which Jesus lived was corrupt and oppressive; on every hand were crying abuses—extortion, intolerance, and grinding cruelty. Yet the Saviour attempted no civil reforms. . . . Not because He was indifferent to the woes of men, but because the remedy did not lie in merely human and external measures."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 509.

THINK IT THROUGH: Among the issues that face the church in the modern world are bearing arms, religious liberty, school attendance on the Sabbath, compulsory community service on Sabbath, seizure of church institutions by governments, and support by the government for church programs. How would you apply New Testament principles to these situations? Luke 20:25; Acts 4:19; 5:29; 1 Peter. 2:13, 14.

4. The Resurrection (Luke 20:27-44).

What practice of the Jews was used by the Sadducees to initiate the discussion on the resurrection? Luke 20:27-40; Ruth 3:9; 4:14.

For the Jews the overwhelmingly important point about marriage was procreation and the continuation of family and race. Jesus asked His questioners to consider a society where all will be children of God and immortal, and marriage to preserve the race will be unnecessary.

How does the guarantee of life after death relate to the covenant promise? Luke 20:37, 38; Gen 17:3-8; 1 Cor. 15:22.

5. Good Stewardship (Luke 20:45 to 21:4).

Laymen in leadership positions and church employees need to consider the words about devouring "widows' houses" (Luke 20:47). The good steward remembers the sacrifice (the widow's mite!) that frequently goes to make the activities of the church possible. Church funds are sacred.



III. THE COMING END (Luke 21:5-38).

Jesus spoke several times about the coming destruction of Jerusalem (Luke 13:35; 19:42-44). It had been destroyed before (2 Kings 25:9, 10). Matthew 24 makes it clear that Jesus' prophecy has a dual application—to both the coming judgment on Jerusalem and the final judgment. In this dis-

course we find Jesus saying indirectly that because the religious leaders had rejected God, the nation could have no divine protection.

1. Signs of the End (Luke 21:5-11).

REVIEW Matthew 24 for additional insights on this section of study.

If “the end does not follow immediately,” as Luke 21:9, NASB, says, what relevance is there to the signs listed in verses 9-11?

2. Persecution and Patience (Luke 21:12-24).

THINK IT THROUGH: How does God deal with persecution? How have Christ’s promises in Luke 21:11-19 been fulfilled in your life?

A key concept in Jesus’ teaching is endurance or patience (Luke 21:19). “By your endurance you will gain your lives” (NASB), He said. In the parable of the sower some keep the Word (Luke 8:15). Endurance has special importance to those who wait for the end (Dan. 12:12, 13; Rev. 14:12).

SEARCH AND LEARN: How did Jesus indicate in the following verses that there would be a period of time before His return?

1. Luke 21:9 _____
2. Luke 21:12 _____
3. Luke 21:19 _____
4. Luke 21:24 _____

Not only do Adventists believe that long time periods occur between the words of Jesus and His return, but also that He knew this and spoke accordingly. The great Reformers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries also believed this. But the passing of time has left us largely isolated in this belief. Some crowd every prophetic interpretation into the distant past (Preterism). Others place the fulfillments into a short period at the end of time (Futurism). Jesus and the New Testament writers expected a delay in human terms, but a speedy return in divine terms (2 Peter 3:8-10). We still live within that divine-human tension.



Although persecution will come in the last days, what promise protects God’s people during the seven last plagues? Psalm 91:4-8; Rev. 18:4, 5.

“Those who have sacrificed all for Christ are now secure, hidden as in the secret of the Lord’s pavilion. They have been tested, and before the world and the despisers of truth they have evinced their fidelity to Him who died

for them. . . . They have been suddenly delivered from the dark and terrible tyranny of men transformed to demons. Their faces, so lately pale, anxious, and haggard, are now aglow with wonder, faith, and love. Their voices rise in triumphant song: 'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.'"—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 638, 639.

3. The Last Signs (Luke 21:25-38).

In verses 25, 26 Jesus listed the signs that will immediately precede His return. These produce fear and perplexity in the world.

EVALUATE: Assess the differences in response to last events among God's faithful people (Luke 21:34, 36; Rev. 15:3, 4) and the unredeemed (Luke 21:25, 26; Rev. 6:14-17). What evidence do you see of these reactions in the church and in the unbelieving world?

4. The Last Generation (Luke 21:32, 33).

The cry of hope "Maranatha" ("our Lord comes") came from the lips of the earliest Christians. We echo it today. The last "generation" will see: (1) fearful signs and wonders (verses 25, 26); (2) "the times of the Gentiles" fulfilled (verse 24); (3) the coming of the Son of man (verse 27); (4) the judgment (verses 34, 35). Luke tells us that "all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple . . . to hear him" (verse 38). How much we need to hear Jesus now! How we need to cherish and love His words! They are life. They are truth. They are a safe guide.

FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:

1. The questions about the authority of Jesus occurred at His second cleansing of the temple. "Three years before, the rulers of the temple had been ashamed of their flight before the command of Jesus. They had since wondered at their own fears, and their unquestioning obedience to a single humble Man. . . . Yet they were now more terrified than before, and in greater haste to obey His command. . . . There were none who dared question His authority."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 591, 592.

For in-depth study of Jesus' discourse on the Mount of Olives, read *The Desire of Ages*, the chapter entitled "On the Mount of Olives," pages 627 through 636.

SUMMARY: The days before the trial gave Jesus the time and occasion to establish the basis of His authority, to meet the attacks of the chief priests, and to tell His disciples about the end and the signs of His coming.

APPLICATION

- How has the story of Jesus' life brought hope and salvation to me? Concentrate especially on the life He lived.
- What will help me keep faith in spite of the "cares of this life"?
- To what do I give priority in my witnessing? The saving love of Jesus? The signs of His coming? The different teachings of the church? Where should my priority lie?

Communion and the Cross

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Luke 22:1 through 23:49.



MEMORY TEXT: "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me" (Luke 22:29).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus memorialized the continuing communion between Himself and His disciples at the Last Supper. Through the cross, He fulfilled Scripture and opened the way of salvation for us all.

OVERVIEW: Luke 22:1—23:49

22:1-38 Toward the Final Crisis	22:39-71 Arrested	23:1-33 The trial	23:34-49 On the cross
The Passover and Last Supper; Disputes; Betrayal possible	Gethsemane; Betrayal; Peter's failure; The council	Before Pilate; Before Herod; Pilate and the mob; To Calvary	"Father, forgive"; "Remember me"; "Into thy hands"

INTRODUCTION: Luke was inspired to present Jesus as the One who came to seek and to save. How does he go about doing so?

- *By His origins.* The fact that the Holy Spirit overshadowed the virgin, Mary, at Jesus' conception makes Him both human and divine—the One through whom God brings salvation (Luke 1:35).
- *By the names of salvation He bears.* He is Jesus (Luke 2:21), Saviour (Luke 2:11), Christ (Luke 2:11), the Lord (Luke 2:11), the Holy One of God (Luke 4:34).
- *By His authority as the Son of Man* (Luke 5:24; 6:5; 12:8; 19:10).
- *By His relationship with the Father* (Luke 3:22; 9:35; 10:22).
- *By His works of healing* (Luke 5:12, 24; 8:48, 53, 54; 9:42).
- *By His teaching* (Luke 15:7; 22:29).
- *By His sinless life* (Luke 23:14, 15, 22).
- *By His death for our sins* (Luke 22:20; 23:33).
- *By His power over death and His resurrection* (Luke 24:3-6).

Jesus brought salvation while He lived on this earth. His life carries salvation. This means His pre-existent life, His earthly life, and His life at the

right hand of God. He was, is, and always will be Saviour of the world (Rev. 13:8). At the cross Jesus paid the price for our sins and bought us back from death. Yet His life itself had salvation within it and joins with His death to make salvation whole and eternal.



I. TOWARD THE FINAL CRISIS (Luke 22:1-38).

Jesus now moved on the path that would lead through suffering to death and glory. In doing so, He fulfilled the will of God, the prophecies of the Old Testament, and His own prediction.

1. Betrayal Planned (Luke 22:1-6).

Why did Jesus' sacrifice take place at the time of the Passover?

The Passover lamb prefigured "Christ our passover" who was to be "sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7). Jesus died on the cross about the time of the evening sacrifice and the slaying of the Passover lambs.

2. The Upper Room (Luke 22:7-23).

Quite an amount of preparation was put into getting ready for the Passover meal. Participants reclined during the meal; therefore a larger room was sought. Bitter herbs, special meat, and bread had to be arranged.

In what way does the Lord's Supper speak to us of Christ's power to preserve and deliver His faithful people in all ages? Luke 22:15-18; Ex. 12:12-14.

The communion meal occupies a scant four verses (Luke 22:17-20), yet in the Lord's Supper the sacrifice of Jesus finds symbolism, the fellowship we have in our Saviour finds expression, we share Christ with each other, we come for renewal, we look forward to the banquet table of the Lamb of God, and we share our hope in the return of the Lord. Read Paul's account in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 in order to round out the details.

How does the foreknowledge of Jesus regarding His own fate help us relate to suffering and difficulty? Luke 9:51; 22:22. (See Rom. 8:28.)



3. Disputes and Strife (Luke 22:24-30).

What is one way that Christians often fail their Lord? Luke 22:24. What steps did Jesus take to avert such disputes? John 13:12-17.

"Whenever this ordinance is rightly celebrated, the children of God are brought into a holy relationship, to help and bless each other. They covenant that the life shall be given to unselfish ministry. And this, not only for one another. Their field of labor is as wide as their Master's was. . . . Those who

have communed with Christ in the upper chamber will go forth to minister as He did.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 651.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Study Luke 22:28-30 in relation to other kingdom predictions. Note especially Daniel 2:44; 7:27; Revelation 15:3, 4. Review the context of the previous promise about the kingdom in Luke 12:31, 32.

Despite their past and future weaknesses, Jesus declared that the disciples had stood by Him in trial (Luke 22:28). Their devotion to Christ would be rewarded. Through His life of victory Jesus made the gift of the kingdom possible for them.

4. Satan Attacks (Luke 22:31-38).

At the beginning of the story Satan tempted Jesus and was defeated (Luke 4:1-12). Satan bided his time (Luke 4:13), waiting the moment to attack Jesus again.

What steps do you think Judas and Peter might have taken to prevent Satan overcoming them? Luke 22:3-6, 31-34. Compare James 1:13-15.



II. ARRESTED (Luke 22:39-71).

1. Gethsemane (Luke 22:39-46).

The details recorded by Luke alone of the Gospel writers rivet our attention on the horror in the garden. Luke alone tells us of sweat falling from Jesus as great drops of blood. He alone mentions an angel hastening to sustain the Saviour.

SEARCH AND LEARN: What associations did Jesus' reference to "the cup" carry with it? Psalm 11:6; Isa. 51:17. What was the will of God for Christ at that moment? Heb. 10:7, 10, 12.

A few hours before, Jesus had shared the cup of the new covenant with the disciples. Now He tasted the bitter cup of sorrow and darkness. Yet at this moment the victory came.

2. Betrayal (Luke 22:47-53).

In the Garden of Gethsemane the sad but marvelous prophecy of the suffering Servant (Isa. 53:4-9) merged with the victorious vision of the Son of man (Dan. 7:13). Jesus suffered as Servant of humankind and will appear in glory as King of kings.

In what ways might the betrayal be thought of as accomplishing the will of God and yet be the work of the powers of darkness? Luke 22:42, 53; John 12:31.

3. Peter on Trial (Luke 22:54-62).

Behind the accusations against Peter lurked Satan. He had seduced Judas; now he snared Peter. Jesus had declared that He would defend Peter against Satan's wiles (verse 32). The story of Acts shows how effective Jesus' defense was (Acts 5:17-32).

4. The Council (Luke 22:66-71).

SUMMARIZE in your own words the basic idea behind the three titles used to designate Jesus in verses 67-70:

Messiah (Christ) (verse 67) _____

Son of man (verse 69) _____

Son of God (verse 70) _____

Hidden within Jesus' words about the right hand of God (verse 69) lay the fulfillment of the promises about the descent of the Spirit, the advance of the gospel, His mediation at the throne of God, and, ultimately, the kingdom of glory. The council was unable to perceive any of this. They heard only words of "blasphemy."

**III. THE TRIAL (Luke 23:1-33).****Before Pilate and Herod (Luke 23:1-12).**

What charges did the council bring against Jesus? Luke 23:2. (See Luke 17:20; 19:38; 20:20; John 8:13-20.)

Jesus remained sinless and innocent while Jews hardened their hearts and Romans compromised.

What do we learn from Jesus' example about how we should relate to those who mock or persecute the followers of Jesus? Luke 23:9-11. (See 1 Peter 3:12-14, 17, 18.)

2. Pilate and the Mob (Luke 23:13-26).

Three times Pilate declared Jesus innocent (verses 4, 14, 22). Three times the council or the mob demanded His death (verses 18, 21, 23).

If God would not intervene to spare His beloved Son, then we should not expect Him to spare us from suffering.

NOTE Pilate's four attempts to rid himself of a decision he did not want to make, first by trying to get others to make it for him (John 18:31; Luke 23:7), then by offering alternatives (Mark 15:6; Luke 23:16).

How do all who sin share in the responsibility of those who condemned Christ to death? Heb. 6:6; 10:29.

3. To Calvary (Luke 23:26-33).

What does carrying the cross of Christ mean to a modern disciple? Luke 23:26; 9:23; Gal. 6:14.

How do both phases of the judgment—investigative (Rev. 3:5; 13:8) and executive (Rev. 20:15)—focus on the cross? In what way is the cross the center of hope for the repentant person? Rom. 4:24-5:2.

Do you come to the cross jeering or blinded or curious or penitent? It matters, for judgment centers in the cross.

THU IV. ON THE CROSS (Luke 23:34-49).

1. “Father, Forgive” (Luke 23:34-38).

“While the soldiers were doing their fearful work, Jesus prayed for His enemies, ‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.’ His mind passed from His own suffering to the sins of His persecutors, and the terrible retribution that would be theirs. No curses were called down upon the soldiers who were handling Him so roughly. No vengeance was invoked upon the priests and rulers, who were gloating over the accomplishment of their purpose. Christ pitied them in their ignorance and guilt. He breathed only a plea for their forgiveness.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 744.

NOTE that those who came to the cross called into question three aspects of Jesus’ ministry. The rulers questioned whether He could, in fact, be the chosen Messiah (verse 35). The soldiers laughed at the possibility of His ever being King (verses 36, 37). The criminal queried the very purpose of His mission (verse 39).

ILLUMINATION: “Christ could have come down from the cross. But it is because He would not save Himself that the sinner has hope of pardon and favor with God.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 749.

2. “Remember Me” (Luke 23:39-45).

“Merely from the Greek construction of the sentence in question it is impossible to determine whether the adverb ‘today’ modifies ‘I say’ or ‘you will be.’ Either is possible. . . . The only way of knowing which Christ meant is to discover scriptural answers to some other questions: (1) What is paradise? (2) Did Jesus go to paradise on the day of His crucifixion? (3) What did Jesus teach about the time when men would enter upon their reward in paradise?”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 877.

FOLLOW THROUGH: Discover your own answers for the three preceding questions and prepare to share them in class:

1. 2 Cor. 12:2-4; Rev. 2:7; 22:2.
2. John 20:17.
3. Matt. 25:31,34; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17; Rev. 22:12.

3. "Into Thy Hands" (Luke 23:46-48).

The cross both divides and ties together the ages of the world. Everything changed at the cross. Luke made this clear: (1) by recording the convulsions of nature (verse 45)—(note that similar convulsions mark the second coming in Luke 21:25), (2) by the Son's oneness with the Father in His death (verse 46), (3) by showing the way to the Father open for all (verse 45), (4) by salvation coming to a Gentile (verse 47), (5) by declaring Jesus sinless and innocent (verse 47), and (6) by the dismay of the Jewish crowd at their act (verse 48).

What significance does the Bible place on the passing away of the Jewish sacrificial system? Verse 45; Heb. 10:19, 20; 4:16.

ILLUMINATION: "All that He endured—the blood drops that flowed from His head, His hands, His feet, the agony that racked His frame, and the unutterable anguish that filled His soul at the hiding of His Father's face—speaks to each child of humanity, declaring, It is for thee that the Son of God consents to bear this burden of guilt; for thee He spoils the domain of death, and opens the gates of Paradise."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 755.

**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:**

1. Review Luke's Gospel, noting especially how his stories offer life, forgiveness, and salvation through Jesus Christ. When you study Acts you will note that the church picks up the same witness.

2. The chapters in *The Desire of Ages* dealing with the betrayal, the trial and the crucifixion are rich in insight and devotion. Read as much as you can from "Gethsemane," pp. 685-697; "Calvary," pp. 741-757; and "It Is Finished," pp. 758-764.

3. "With the issues of the conflict before Him, Christ's soul was filled with dread of separation from God. Satan told Him that if He became the surety for a sinful world, the separation would be eternal. He would be identified with Satan's kingdom, and would nevermore be one with God."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 687.

"That prayer of Christ for His enemies embraced the world. It took in every sinner that had lived or should live, from the beginning of the world to the end of time. Upon all rests the guilt of crucifying the Son of God. To all, forgiveness is freely offered."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 745.

SUMMARY: The innocent Jesus suffered the most shameful of deaths but thus accomplished the will of God in making salvation available to all.

APPLICATION

- Have I, this day, crucified Christ afresh? O Lord, forgive. Have I this day failed to confess You? O Lord, forgive. Have I, this day, centered my thoughts and actions on self? O Lord, forgive.
- The cross instructs us how to offer salvation to others. How would I help: (1) a person who cannot find employment; (2) a family who cannot find enough to eat; (3) a self-made millionaire?

Resurrection and Ascension

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Luke 23:50 through 24:53; Acts 1:1-26.



MEMORY TEXT: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" (Luke 24:26).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus' victory over death opened the future to the witness of the good news of salvation. His ascension to the throne of the Father brought the power of the Holy Spirit to all who believe in the Son of God and will glorify Him through the gifts received.

OVERVIEW: Luke 23:50—24:53; Acts 1:1-26

Luke 23:50—24:11	Luke 24:12-49	Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:1-11	Acts 1:12-26
Burial and Resurrection	Doubt and Belief	The Ascension	Waiting in Prayer
Sabbath in the tomb; The One who lives	The walk to Emmaus; "Touch Me and see"	Instruction in the kingdom; "This same Jesus"	At prayer together; Matthias chosen

INTRODUCTION: Luke's Gospel closes with the triumph of the resurrection and the ascension of the Son of man. The disciples, following the instruction of their Lord, waited for the Spirit.

The Acts of the Apostles continues the story of Jesus. In one sense, however, we might rightly call this book the Acts of the Holy Spirit. All that happens in Acts happens because Jesus is at God's right hand.

Luke also dedicates this book to Theophilus as part of his continuing historical record. Much evidence exists that Luke and Acts came from the one masterly mind, including:

1. Style and language.
2. Sympathy for a ministry that reaches all nations and transcends social barriers.
3. Defense of Jesus and the Christian church against false charges.
4. Agreement on details in both books.
5. Common themes in the two books.

But a new element enters in Acts. Luke talks of “we” and “us” (Acts 16:10—28:16). Luke accompanied Paul on many of his travels.

Luke wrote his Gospel about 58/59 A.D. and Acts about two or three years later. One of the reasons for dating Acts this early is that it carries no news of the death of either Paul or Peter, its two great human heroes. Neither does Luke record the destruction of Jerusalem.

Luke not only saw many things himself and had access to people who knew Jesus, he had opportunity to speak with some of the Twelve.

In Acts the Spirit gives the infant church power to fulfill its Lord’s command and devises the strategy by which, through the work of the growing church, the world eventually will acknowledge its King.



I. BURIAL AND RESURRECTION (Luke 23:50—24:11).

1. The Burial of Jesus (Luke 23:50-56).

While Matthew recorded that most of the Twelve fled Jesus’ trial and hid while Jesus suffered (Matt. 26:56), Luke recorded three expressions of faith and devotion among the observers of the tragedy. The thief received assurance (Luke 23:42, 43). The centurion praised God (verse 47). Finally, Joseph of Arimathaea ministered publicly to his Lord (verses 50-53).

How does Luke establish the precise location of the Sabbath within the weekly cycle? Luke 23:54—24:1.

NOTE how careful Luke is to designate details concerning the period of the burial and resurrection, especially those having to do with time:

- **Luke 23:54: “The preparation.”** “It refers to the day of the Jewish week immediately preceding the Sabbath (i.e. Thursday evening to Friday evening).”—I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (England: Paternoster Press, 1978), p. 881.
- **Luke 23:54: “The Sabbath drew on.”** Literally “shone forth.” Most likely a reference to the shining of the evening star, or possibly, the lighting of evening lamps.
- **Luke 24:1: “Very early in the morning.”** This suggests the “first dawn,” or the light before the sun actually rose.

In Luke’s record women show great tenderness and compassion toward the Lord as He carried out His arduous ministry (Luke 8:3; 10:38-40). The same concern brought the women to anoint Jesus (Luke 23:56). The devout and humble women became the bearers of the news of Jesus’ resurrection, just as Elisabeth and Mary had been part of the birth story.

2. The Resurrection (Luke 24:1-11).

SEARCH AND LEARN: Who are named as visiting the tomb and finding it empty? Luke 24:10, 12; John 20:1, 2; Mark 16:1.

These first witnesses to the resurrection must have been questioned time and again through the early years of the Christian church. The specific record of their names demonstrates how vital their evidence was.

ILLUMINATION: “Jesus refused to receive the homage of His people until He had the assurance that His sacrifice was accepted by the Father. He ascended to the heavenly courts, and from God Himself heard the assurance that His atonement for the sins of men had been ample, that through His blood all might gain eternal life”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 790.

“The only ground of our salvation is what God did in the death and resurrection of Jesus; everything depends on God, not on us. . . . Men who lived completely from what God had done for them learned to say: ‘I believe in what God did in Jesus’ death and resurrection’ and ‘I believe that Jesus died and rose again.’ ”—Eduard Schweizer, *Jesus* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1971), p. 96.



II. DOUBT AND BELIEF (Luke 24:12-49).

Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of man, the God of hope and history, the Messiah, now enters God’s presence (verses 26, 51).

How does the Gospel establish the continuing humanity of Jesus after His resurrection? Verses 30, 39-43.

Not too long after Jesus’ resurrection various false explanations were offered about His nature. He really was a spirit, some said. Or they claimed that what the disciples saw, in the 40 days after His resurrection, was a spirit. Later some were to say that Jesus was God masquerading as a human being. The first centuries of the Christian era witnessed a flourishing religious movement called Gnosticism, which sought to include Christ and Christianity in its teachings. It would not accept the humanity of Jesus. Luke and John made a point of refuting these speculations. (See John 20:27; 21:13; 1 John 4:2.)

ILLUMINATION: “As a man Christ ascended to heaven. As a man He is the substitute and surety for humanity. As a man He liveth to make intercession for us.”—E. G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1126.

1. The Gospel Commission (Luke 24:47).

What words of Jesus did Luke use to express the gospel commission? Luke 24:47. Note how this matches the theme of Luke and Acts. Luke 19:10; Acts 2:38.

COMPARE Luke 24:47 with the gospel commission in Matt. 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15, 16.

What lessons may we draw from Jesus' methods as He replied to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus? Luke 24:25-27, 32. How may we make the Scripture and circumstances effective in sharing the gospel?



2. The Importance of Fulfilled Prophecy (Luke 24:44-49).

Jesus made it clear that the authenticity of His mission and message rested upon His fulfillment of prophecy. His life as a historical person fulfilled what was "written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning" Him (verse 44).

What has God done to mark the way for His people as they wait for the day of Jesus' return? 2 Peter 1:19; Rev. 12:6; 14:6, 7.

We, who build our message upon a prophetic mission, likewise see ourselves as fulfilling prophecy. God marks the way for us through a series of historical events that fulfill prophecy. The years that pass by no more detract from a historic fulfillment of prophecy in our day than did the long years of waiting for the Messiah 2000 years ago.

III. THE ASCENSION (Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:1-11).

The marvelous story of how God wrought salvation in Jesus Christ had reached its climax. But it is not the end of Jesus' activity in our behalf. He ascended to the right hand of the Father, and the effects of His position of power and authority were at once evident on Earth.

He gave the promise that the disciples would be "endued with power" (Luke 24:49; compare 4:14). Jesus now stood by the throne, exercising His power for the completion of the plan God had set in motion by sending the Son.

NOTES:

Introduction to the Book of Acts

“Ye Shall Receive Power”

The book of Acts is the second part of a two-part history written by Luke. The Gospel Luke wrote deals with the origins of the church. Acts deals with the development of the church. The thread that ties the book of Acts together is the role of Christ and the Holy Spirit in the developing church. Christ, now at the right hand of God, continues to supply power to those who make up His church as He did while on this earth.

Promised in chapter 1, the Holy Spirit descends on the waiting disciples in chapter 2. Empowered by the reception of the Holy Spirit, the little church launches a great evangelistic thrust. The gospel expands in spite of persecution from without and problems from within the church. Miracles are wrought, Gentiles are converted, and the greatest of the persecutors becomes the missionary evangelist to the Greek and Roman world.

As he did in the Gospel, Luke continues to emphasize Christ as the Saviour of the world, the teaching of witnessing principles, the importance of prayer, and other concerns, such as that for groups that often are excluded by the societies in which they find themselves.

The close of the book of Acts is but the beginning of the acts of Christ's disciples. Chapters still are being written. The greatest outpouring of the Holy Spirit still awaits our readiness and reception. In our day the book of Acts will be completed; then Jesus will come. Thus, in a special sense, the book of Acts written by Luke is a primer of last day power and witness.

Acts: The Spread of the Gospel

Acts 1-7 To Jerusalem	Acts 8-12 To Judea and Samaria	Acts 13-28 To the Uttermost Part
The Ascension; Pentecost; The Jerusalem church	The church persecuted and extended	Paul's three missionary journeys, trial, and imprisonment

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SEARCH AND LEARN: Describe the ascension from the available Scripture records. Note especially where it occurred, who witnessed it and where Jesus went. (Draw from the following texts as needed: Luke 24:50, 51; Matt. 28:16-20; Mark 16:19, 20; Acts 1:4-11; Eph. 4:8-10.)

ILLUMINATION: All heaven was waiting to welcome the Saviour to the celestial courts. As He ascended, He led the way, and the multitude of captives set free at His resurrection followed. The heavenly host, with shouts and acclamations of praise and celestial song, attended the joyous train."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 833.

Jesus gave the gospel commission to the disciples; and He gave much more. The assurance with which Peter began his ministry proves how well grounded the disciples were after their 40-day period of instruction by Jesus. This period matches the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness under the tutelage of the Spirit (Luke 4:1). After that time the Son of man was ready to begin His work. At the end of the 40 days with the risen Lord the disciples were full of their mission and ready to go to every nation.

By what means are the ascension and the return of Christ linked to form the blessed hope of all Christians? Acts 1:5, 11; John 14:1-3, 16.

After the resurrection the interest in a literal, earthly kingdom gave way to the spiritual kingdom of God into which persons were invited, regardless of territory, race, or color. The promise of Jesus' return forms the background against which the disciples were to work and motivated them in their triumphal sweep out of Palestine to the ends of the world.

The angel visitors gently reproached the disciples for gazing after their departing Lord (Acts 1:11). Far better for them to hasten back to Jerusalem and prepare for the next event. The best way for us to express our longing for the return of Jesus is to work and witness.

How should we express our faith in Jesus' life, death, and mediation? 1 Peter 3:21, 22.

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IV. WAITING IN PRAYER (Acts 1:12-26).

Upon whom may we expect God to pour out His Spirit? Acts 1:14; 4:31.

Luke demonstrates that a praying church can succeed against all odds.

What did Jesus say about how the Holy Spirit would work for us? Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8.

In Luke the Spirit singles out individuals; in Acts the entire Christian movement is Spirit-inspired. In Luke, Christ, the Head, receives the Spirit. In Acts, the body of Christ, the church, is filled with the Spirit. In Luke, individuals are amazed observers of the Spirit's work. In Acts, the entire church receives Him. In Luke, the Spirit comes with the Lord's baptism (3:16). In Acts, the baptism of the Spirit occurs (2:17).

Acts 1:14 gives us the last glimpse of Mary, the mother of Jesus. She appeared out of obscurity to become the one chosen to bear the infant Lord, and now disappears without further trace. Mariolatry and Mariology had no part in apostolic Christianity. However, we should never ignore or downgrade this godly woman whom the Word pronounces "blessed," who guided the child Jesus through childhood and youth, and who twice felt the presence of the Spirit in special manifestations.

How would you describe the "ministry and apostleship" (Acts 1:25) to which Matthias was added? (See Luke 9:1-6; 22:29.)

A Jewish village or town needed 120 men in order to form its own self-governing community. The number indicated in Acts 1:15 gave such authority to this community of faith. Jesus called twelve disciples, most probably to correspond to the number of tribes in Israel (Rev. 21:12-14). The founding Twelve were to remain constant in faith and witness.

What is the basic essential to receiving the power of God for the accomplishment of His work?

"All who consecrate soul, body, and spirit to God will be constantly receiving a new endowment of physical and mental power. The inexhaustible supplies of heaven are at their command. . . . Through cooperation with Christ they are complete in Him, and in their human weakness they are enabled to do the deeds of Omnipotence"—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 827.

FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:

1. Two chapters in *The Desire of Ages* concentrate on the details of the resurrection. Review the chapters entitled "The Lord Is Risen" and "Why Weepst Thou?" (pp. 779-794).

2. Study the significance of the resurrection to the Christian as outlined in Romans 4:24-5:1; 1 Corinthians 15:12-27; and Revelation 1:18. How can we make the resurrection more real and more effective in our spiritual lives?

SUMMARY: Jesus fulfilled the divine will as He ascended to the right hand of the Father. From there He dispensed the gifts of the Spirit.

APPLICATION

- Life can be so complex and busy: how can I find time to be in "one accord" and "continue in prayer" in the bustle of daily living?
- If all are commanded to witness, how may I obey that command? What is my Jerusalem, my Judea, my Samaria?

The Spirit Descends

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Acts 2:1 through 4:12.



MEMORY TEXT: "Having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear" (Acts 2:33).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The deeds and teachings of Jesus continue as He sends the Holy Spirit to empower disciples as agents of and witnesses to their ascended Lord.

OVERVIEW: Acts 2:1—4:12			
Acts 2:1-13 Baptism of the Spirit	2:14-47 Peter's sermon	3:1-26 Faith that heals and saves	4:1-12 No other name
Tongues of fire; Tongues of men	The Spirit poured out; Jesus, Lord and Messiah; Numbers increase	The experience at the Gate; Beautiful The name of Jesus	Prison and release

INTRODUCTION: At least five significant ideas can be discovered in the book of Acts:

1. Acts carries into the Christian era the continuing saga of *the mighty acts of God* already known from the Old Testament and the deeds of Jesus. The message of salvation does not exist apart from the history that accompanied it. In the Christian hope there can be no faith unless real happenings have occurred on which to base that faith.

2. The church carries with it *the witness that Jesus is Saviour*. At the center of this witness the disciples proclaimed the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus. The blessings of salvation, forgiveness, and the Spirit flow from Jesus' authority at the right hand of God.

3. Despite initial success, *opposition dogged the early church*. First the Jews, then the Gentiles, and finally the Roman authorities persecuted the church. Luke took pains to declare that on no occasion were the attacks justified. The church consisted of reputable, well-intentioned citizens. Despite opposition the church spread and grew.

4. Acts establishes the *universal character of the gospel*. At first Jews

accepted in large numbers. But in the space of a few years, the gospel was preached to the Samaritans, and then to the Gentile world.

5. From Acts we learn much of the *organization and life* of the apostolic church. Although the Spirit fell on all, Acts makes clear that the church possessed organization and not all had the same gifts. Its life and witness were modeled on the ministry of Jesus.



I. BAPTISM OF THE SPIRIT (Acts 2:1-13).

1. Tongues of Fire (Acts 2:1-4).

In the early chapters of Acts the temple served as a focus for Christian activity. As we concluded our study of Luke we left the followers of Jesus full of joy and congregating in the temple (Luke 24:53). The upper room would have been close to the temple. From there the disciples went daily into the temple precincts after having been endowed with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:46).

How do the manifestations of the Spirit at Pentecost encourage us to expect the continuing role of the Spirit in the church? Luke 3:22; Acts 2:3; 1 Cor. 12:7.

In what way does the Spirit distribute gifts in order to equip the church for its task? 1 Cor. 12:4-11.

How was the gift of tongues manifested at Pentecost? Acts 2:4.

A variety of viewpoints has been advanced to explain the gift of tongues at Pentecost:

1. The disciples spoke in Greek which all those present understood. The miracle, if it exists at all, would be that ignorant Galileans spoke fluent Greek.

2. The crowd received the ability to understand what the disciples spoke even though what they said was not spoken in a language the crowd understood. Such a miracle would give the hearers ability to understand.

3. The disciples worshiped God in ecstatic tongues (similar to the tongues of 1 Cor. 14). Peter had the gift of interpretation so that all understood what the disciples said.

4. The disciples spoke in diverse foreign languages. Many commentators seem to think that this explanation seems to match the biblical record best.

ILLUMINATION: "In a miraculous manner [God] supplied the deficiency of the apostles. The Holy Spirit did for them that which they could not have accomplished for themselves in a lifetime. They could now proclaim the truths of the gospel abroad, speaking with accuracy the languages of those for whom they were laboring."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 39, 40.

2. Tongues of Men (Acts 2:5-13).

NOTE how widespread the nature of the audience available in Jerusalem was. (Check the locations on a Bible map if you have one.)

How do the reactions to the gift of tongues illustrate possible attitudes to the gift of the Spirit in the remnant church? Acts 2:12, 13.



II. PETER'S SERMON (Acts 2:14-47).

1. The Spirit Poured Out (Acts 2:14-21).

In Acts 2:17 why did Peter apply a "last day" prophecy to his times? How did the New Testament writers generally understand the term "last days"?

The early church regarded the period after the ascension of Christ as the beginning of the end time in which God would bring in everlasting righteousness and establish His kingdom on earth. However the New Testament also makes clear that these "last days" are indeterminate in length. We should not interpret statements such as Peter's to mean that the second coming was expected before 100 A.D. The New Testament is written in such a way that it accommodates satisfactorily the long time periods of Daniel and Revelation. Jesus Christ gathers the promises about the last days into Himself and fulfills them both in His intercession for us and in the promise of His return.

2. Jesus, Lord, and Messiah (Acts 2:22-36).

While Peter quotes Joel 2 in explaining the Spirit-inspired utterances of the followers of Jesus, his sermon made it plain that Jesus had sent the Spirit (Acts 2:33). Just as God sent the Son (John 3:16), so the Son sent the Spirit. In saying this we do not assign inferiority to the Son or Spirit, but, rather, describe the varying functions of the Godhead.

Peter had in front of him many who had cried, "Hosanna to the Son of David," who had also cried, "Barabbas," and finally yelled, "Crucify Him." His pointed remarks cut into the consciences of his hearers.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Match the following Old Testament references with quotations used by Peter in his sermon recorded in Acts 2:14-40:

Psalm 16:8-11 Acts 2: _____

Psalm 110:1 Acts 2: _____

Joel 2:28-32 Acts 2: _____

How did Peter later suggest that we should react to events surrounding the death and resurrection of Jesus? 1 Peter 1:3, 8-13. (Compare Acts 2:38.)

The New Testament does not argue the resurrection of Jesus; it declares it. For support it offers Old Testament predictions (as in Peter's sermon), the presence of living witnesses (as in 1 Cor. 15), and the change in a Christian's life (as in Rom. 6:3-6).

What do Peter's repeated references to Jesus as being at the right hand of God mean to us? (See Acts 2:25, 30, 33, 34.)

Jesus continues to bestow on His people the benefits of His atonement (Heb. 4:14, 15). He cares for the church in varying ages and different circumstances (Rev. 2, 3). At the right hand of God (a symbol of His authority) He acts as Judge. He sent the Spirit on the day of Pentecost—at His discretion and in accordance with the Old Testament sanctuary antitype. Likewise He chose the Day of Atonement at the close of the 2300-year prophecy to commence the final phase of His atoning ministry in accordance with the sanctuary type. Both the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost and the beginning of the judgment in 1844 fulfill sanctuary types, both have their authority in the Son at the right hand of the Father, and both have to do with sovereign acts of God within the history of the church.



3. Numbers Increase (Acts 2:37-47).

THINK IT THROUGH: How would you use Peter's appeal in Acts 2:37-39 as a model for your own witnessing? Look particularly at the how of repentance, the when of baptism, the which of the sins to be forgiven, and the how and when of the Spirit to be received.

Out of Pentecost came a great harvest of believers (verses 41, 47), a period of instruction and fellowship for those converted (verse 42), signs and wonders to confirm belief (verse 43), and a sharing of material blessings (verses 44, 45). Note the statistical report given in the book of Acts:

- 1:15—120 believers
- 2:41—Added about 3000
- 2:47—"The Lord added to the church daily"
- 4:4—"Many . . . believed; . . . about five thousand"
- 4:32—"The multitude of them that believed"
- 5:14—"Believers were the more added"
- 6:1—"The number of the disciples was multiplied"
- 6:7—"Multiplied in Jerusalem greatly"

How may we transport the features of the life of the early church into our own local churches? On the basis of Acts 2:42-47, determine what features of the early church might contribute to church growth today.

ILLUMINATION: "Those only who are constantly receiving fresh supplies of grace, will have power proportionate to their daily need and their ability to use that power."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 55.

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III. FAITH THAT HEALS AND SAVES (Acts 3:1-26).

1. The Experience at the Gate Beautiful (Acts 3:1-11).

Persecution came upon the apostles as a result of their using the name of Jesus Christ in a miracle. The leaders of Israel could no more accept a miracle in the name of Jesus than they could accept Jesus Himself.

How may we expect to tap the same sources of power that Peter and John did in the miracle performed at the Gate Beautiful?

Not only did powerful miracles attend the early work of Peter and John, but also the work of Paul (14:8-10). The church ministered in the same spirit and power as its Lord. As in the Gospel of Luke, grace and healing flowed from the Lord to the despised and outcast (Acts 3:2; Luke 18:35-43). Satan had fallen from his position of authority over mankind (Luke 10:18), and the kingdom had recovered from him his captives (Luke 4:18).

2. The Name of Jesus (Acts 3:12-26).

What significant name is used to designate the Lord in Acts 3:6?

NOTE that the pattern used in Luke's story in Acts 3 also appears in John 6:1-24; 25-59, where a long explanatory discourse follows Jesus' miracle.

The first sermons preached by early church workers showed that the Messiah should suffer. Remember how Jesus had to explain this carefully to the disciples. (See Luke 24:7, 26, 46.) Such a teaching about the Messiah startled the Jewish mind. It threatened the national aspirations on which the Jews based their false messianic expectations.

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3. Times of Refreshing (Acts 3:18-20).

"A certain time sequence is here set forth by Peter. He called on his hearers to 'repent' and 'be converted.' These acts, said he, would be followed by (1) the blotting out of their sins, (2) the coming of the 'times of refreshing,' and (3) the glorious advent of Jesus Christ."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 159.

To apply Acts 3:19 to the latter-day conversion of the Jewish nation runs counter to the clear statements of Jesus in which He declares that the day of the chosen nation had passed. Today we look for a mighty work of the Spirit that will eclipse Pentecost in the resulting harvest of souls, including Jews and people of all races and countries of origin.

ANALYZE: Review the two sermons of Peter in Acts 2 and 3, remembering that these instructed the early church both in doctrine and meth-

ods of witnessing. Note the differences caused by audience and occasion, the emphasis on the exaltation of Jesus, and an appeal for repentance.

IV. NO OTHER NAME (Acts 4:1-12).

The tremendous response to Peter's sermons created danger for the disciples. Because the rulers of the Jews realized that the movement could not otherwise be contained, they sought to restrain the disciples' work.

What challenging question does the Christian message meet as it faces those who fear its thrust and success? Acts 4:7. (Compare Matt. 16:19; 28:19, 20.)

Peter appealed to the rulers to cease their objections. But opposition continued, and continues still. Unbelieving people find no reason in their way of thinking to respond to what Christ can do for them.

What lessons can we learn from Peter's bold defense before the council? Acts 4:8-12.

THINK IT THROUGH: All of us must face the challenge of the statement of truth that Peter made. "No other name" exists whereby we find salvation. Have we made the name of Jesus the focus of our loyalty, devotion, and salvation?



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:

1. Read Ellen White's counsel regarding the Spirit in the chapter entitled "The Gift of the Spirit" in *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 47-56. Note this key passage: "Every worker who follows the example of Christ will be prepared to receive and use the power that God has promised to His church for the ripening of earth's harvest."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 56.

2. Many key Old Testament passages were used in the early sermons in Acts. Among others, the following are included: Joel 2:28-32 (see Acts 2:17-21); Psalm 16:8-11 (see Acts 2:25-28); Deuteronomy 18:15, 19 (see Acts 3:22, 23); and Psalm 2:1, 2 (see Acts 4:25, 26). A study of these passages will show how the early church applied Scripture.

SUMMARY: The Spirit has entered the life of the church, inspiring its message, convicting men and women of their need of repentance, and ensuring its continued success. Instead of assuming credit for all this, the church should give glory to the name of Jesus.

APPLICATION

- What spiritual gifts do I possess?
- What witness do I bear? And where? And when?
- What "other names" attract me away from total dependence on the name of Jesus?

The Growing Church

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Acts 4:13 through 5:42.



MEMORY TEXT: "Grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word" (Acts 4:29).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The gospel message prospers as its messengers rely on the divine presence and power and speak boldly in the name of their Lord.

OVERVIEW: Acts 4:13—5:42		
Acts 4:13-31 With All Boldness	4:32—5:11 One Heart One Soul	5:12-42 Conflict With Authority
The council confers; Praise to God	All things in common; Ananias and Sapphira	Prison and deliverance; God not man; Gamaliel

INTRODUCTION: It might be said that Luke wrote Acts to expound the truth that Jesus could not be Lord and Messiah unless His followers become witnesses engaging in continuing missionary effort. Jesus and the Spirit are the great gifts God has given to the church, but they are not given simply for the edification of believers. They also are given in order to make it possible to conduct the mission of the church.

The Spirit does not come to the church in order to make individual members "feel good" through receiving an emotional religious experience. In Acts He came to enliven the members so that they might witness to Jesus the Lord.

Not that such witnessing would follow an easy, untroubled path. Two emphases in Acts show that the church must expect to meet trouble when it undertakes its proper mission. Luke emphasizes prayer. We meet the praying church again in this lesson and learn why the church was driven to its knees. Luke also emphasizes divine intervention. While the Spirit came to give needed gifts and provide guidance, God repeatedly sent angels to guard and deliver His servants.

The church moved rapidly into different social and cultural situations. As the itinerant missionaries left Jerusalem for Samaria, moved on to cosmopolitan Antioch, invaded the world of the scattered Jewish nation, entered the heartlands of Greek thought, and knocked on the door of Caesar's palace, they faced social and cultural differences. Would the Christian message accommodate such changes? The answer Acts brings has encouraged the

church through the centuries on its worldwide mission. If all of what is recorded could happen in a matter of a score or so years, what need is there to worry about the ability of the church to meet further opportunities to witness?

**I. WITH ALL BOLDNESS (Acts 4:13-31).**

Luke uses “boldness” as one of his key words in explaining the success and attitudes of the early church. The council “observed the boldness of Peter and John” (Acts 4:13, NEB); the concerted voices of the early leaders of the church asked God to give them power to “speak thy word with all boldness” (verse 29); the prayer was answered, and they “spoke the word of God with boldness” (verse 31, NEB).

The Greek word translated “boldness” in this context means with openness and candor. That was how the apostles spoke against those who opposed them. They spoke publicly and candidly of the truth they knew.

Why is such preaching successful? Acts 4:13.

1. The Council Confers (Acts 4:13-22).

The healing at the Gate Beautiful provided a basis of confidence and progress for the early followers of Jesus. The Lord had promised to confirm His presence with signs (Mark 16:19, 20). Now the disciples could look back on a miracle of the same quality and public nature as those which marked Jesus’ ministry (Luke 5:17-20).

“Their teaching was a second edition of the teachings of Christ, the utterance of simple, grand truths that flashed light into darkened minds, and converted thousands in a day. The disciples began to understand that Christ was their Advocate in the heavenly courts, and that He was glorified. They could speak because the Holy Spirit gave them utterance.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1056.

When faced with irrefutable evidence of divine power, how did unconverted persons seek to turn aside from the demands of such evidence? Acts 4:17, 18; John 11:47-50.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Study again Jesus’ instruction and promises to the disciples in Luke 12:11, 12; 21:14, 15 concerning how they should react when faced by the authorities. How did the experience of Acts 4 and 5 fulfill Jesus’ promise?

**2. Praise to God (Acts 4:23-32).**

The apostles did not yield to threats. God sustained them through:

- The support of the people (verse 21).
- The obvious confusion of the religious leaders (verses 13-15).

- The understanding that their situation was a fulfillment of Scripture (verses 25, 26).
- A physical sign (verse 31).
- The filling of the Holy Spirit (verse 31).

What historical events did the disciples recall as they thought over what God had done for them? Acts 4:24-27.

Those who sought to destroy God's work were like the heathen Philistines (Psalm 2:1), even though they were the priestly leaders of the Jews (Acts 4:6). The leaders of the people formed what was in the eyes of the Jews an obscene alliance with Gentiles and the hated Herodians (verse 27). Apostasy cares little with whom it shares its bed (Rev. 17:5).

We can hear God speaking through Luke, seeking to have us join the faithful band of witnesses. Because he wants us to feel confident in meeting the variety of situations we must face in doing so, he cites examples of a variety of crises in which the early church and its members found themselves. By studying these experiences carefully we can better understand how God can help us.

Already he has offered both instruction and encouragement. We have learned about our:

- source of power (Acts 4:31);
- need for boldness (verse 13);
- need for the continuing presence of Christ (verse 13);
- recognition of the importance of prophecy and fulfillment in convicting people (3:24);
- need to participate in witness (4:31).

REVIEW the names used for Jesus in the book of Acts:

1:1—Jesus	2:30—Christ
1:6—Lord	2:36—Jesus, both Lord and Christ
1:21—Lord Jesus	2:38—Jesus Christ
2:22—Jesus of Nazareth a man approved of God	3:6—Jesus Christ of Nazareth
2:27; 3:14—Holy One	3:13—Son Jesus
	3:15—Prince of life

Based on your study of this list, how do you think the early church regarded the nature of Jesus?



II. ONE HEART, ONE SOUL (Acts 4:32—5:11).

A remarkable feeling of common purpose, unity, and brotherhood pervaded the early church. Yet, even in that setting, selfishness triumphed in at least one case.

1. Unity and Sharing (4:32-37).

What factors produced unity and accord in the early church? How may we in the church today experience a climate of unity? Acts 4:31-33.

Luke uses the expression "with one accord" five times to describe the unity of action and purpose in the church (Acts 1:14; 2:1; 2:46; 4:24; 5:12). It was a feature of those early days and provides a model for us to follow.

"Throughout our churches there is to be a reconversion and a reconsecration to service. Shall we not, in our work in the future, and in the gatherings we hold, be of *one accord*? Shall we not, wrestle with God in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to come into every heart? The presence of Christ, manifest among us, would cure the leprosy of unbelief that has made our service so weak and inefficient."—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 46.

How did Paul encourage the early church to show its unity? Phil. 2:1-4; Romans 15:1-7.

What may we learn about the use of material possessions from the attitude of the early church? Acts 4:32-37.

2. Selfishness and Deceit (Acts 5:1-11).

Just as the victorious armies of Israel had their Achan (Joshua 7) so the church had its Ananias and Sapphira. Acts already has noted Judas's greed (1:16-18). Luke constantly reminds us of the price of selfishness and how easily it can interfere with our salvation (Luke 12). Just as Israel had its Joshua to discern and expose Achan, so church leaders on all levels must stay on guard to defeat greed and selfishness wherever it appears.

THINK IT THROUGH: Consider the implications of the lies of Ananias and Sapphira, especially in the light of Jesus' warning about blasphemy (Acts 5:3, 9; Luke 12:10). In what ways did their actions differ from simple disobedience to the Word of God? How should we apply this experience to tithing and stewardship?

**III. CONFLICT WITH AUTHORITY (Acts 5:12-42).****1. Solomon's Porch (Acts 5:12-16).**

Now came the highlight of their witness. Solomon's Porch became the Jerusalem Evangelistic Center. What successful campaigns they held there!

What practical ministry enhances the evangelistic outreach of the church? Acts 5:15, 16.

The healing power manifested through Peter has its reflection in the health

care ministry of the Adventist Church. In the mission outreach of the church a typical approach is (1) offer health care; (2) start a branch Sabbath School or day school; (3) build a church; (4) open a community services center. Jesus authenticates this approach by example and by instruction.

The "shadow of Peter" had no more to do with the healing of the people than the "handkerchiefs" of Acts 19:12. Such expressions of faith find their modern counterpart in the quest for a Christian physician or hospital and in the call for anointing (James 5:14).

2. Angel Deliverance (Acts 5:17-26).

What issue caused the Sadducees to oppose the work of the church? Acts 5:17; Luke 20:27.

Jesus had continual conflict with the Pharisees for two main reasons. First, He did not accept "righteousness by legalistic regulation" as a way of finding acceptance with God. Second, He called to the kingdom persons whom the Pharisees regarded as unworthy.

The emphasis the disciples gave to the resurrection did not offend the Pharisees, who found such an explanation quite plausible. However, the Sadducees' opposition to Peter and their hounding of Paul centered on this issue.


How did angels intervene in the imprisonment of the apostles? Acts 5:19. Why should we not expect them to always do the same for us?

Luke gives us many illustrations of the presence and ministry of angels. Of the 51 references to angels in the four Gospels, Luke contains 24. Acts adds 21 more.

SEARCH AND LEARN: From such passages as Heb. 1:4-7, 13, 14; 2:2, 5, 7-9; Rev. 1:20 select two or three that will give you some background on angel ministry. Summarize below what you have learned:

From the actions of the leaders in the early church we can begin to understand the character of the people Jesus selected. They possessed great courage. It would have been safer to hide at home, but they went right back to preaching, despite the injunction of the rulers. What they did could only bring trouble later. But they worked from principle rather than feeling or convenience. Obedience to God's commands remained their top priority. They sought always to fulfill His will. They had on their side the unshakable certainty of firsthand witness.

3. Peter's Speech (Acts 5:27-32).

 **NOTE** the continued use of *name* (4:17, 18, 30; 5:28, 40, 41) to describe the authority behind the teaching and miracles of the apostles. The use of a

name carries great significance in the Word of God. "Then Moses said to God, 'If I go to the Israelites and tell them that the God of their forefathers has sent me to them, and they ask me his name, what shall I say?' God answered, 'I AM; that is who I am. Tell them the I AM has sent you to them' " (Ex. 3:13, 14, NEB). Repeatedly the Old Testament uses names to describe the action of God. Seemingly the rulers found it difficult even to mention Jesus' name. They referred to Him as "this man" (Acts 5:28).

ILLUMINATION: The council "consisted of three classes: (1) elders, that is representatives of the chief aristocratic families; (2) chief priests, that is retired high priests, and members of the four families which provided most high priests; . . . and (3) the scribes, mostly belonging to the party of the Pharisees."—*SDA Bible Dictionary*, p. 241.

How did Peter describe the characteristics of the "name" he preached? Acts 5:30-32.

Peter's brief statement has much of the character of a confession of faith. While not a creed, it summarized the belief of the early church in a way that must have been quite common.

NOTE the following in the interchange of verses 28-32:

- How the disciples had changed public opinion even though they were comparatively few in number (verses 27, 28).
- The fear of the Sanhedrin for their reputation (verse 28).
- How principle overcame fear (verse 29).
- How the disciples switched the legal situation from their being the accused (verse 28) to pointing out those who were truly guilty (verse 30). They did so on their authority as witnesses (verse 32). They numbered far more than the two or three witnesses (Matt. 18:16) required to bring accusation, yet their witness was not accepted by most of the rulers.

4. The Winds of Strife Held Back (Acts 5:33-42).

Parallels between the situation of the early church and the last days abound. In this passage the church regarded the escape from death as a signal for even greater witness. (Compare Rev. 7:1-3.)

Gamaliel was "a famous Hebrew scholar whose most illustrious pupil was Saul of Tarsus (Acts 22:3). . . . He was the first Jewish scholar given the title *Rabban*, 'our Master,' 'our Great One,' instead of the usual title *Rabbi*, 'my Master.' "—*SDA Bible Dictionary*, p. 402. Gamaliel thought that time would tell whether the disciples were teaching heresy.

What constancy does the Lord require of us when we are placed in difficult circumstances? Acts 5:41, 42.

For most of us, how small the opposition! How few the threats! Most of them come from counseling with our fears! If ever the Lord has given us a pattern to follow in our witness, Acts describes it. How the growth of the church would prosper if we followed His pattern!

FRI

FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:

1. In this lesson we learned that Luke ties his two works together with several common themes. Note some of these common themes:

- Right and wrong stewardship of possessions.
- Submission to God's will.
- Relationships to authorities.

You can add to this list by thinking back over the points Luke continues to make.

2. "Men and women consult their pleasure and gratify their taste, while they bring to God, almost unwittingly, a stinted offering. They forget that God will one day demand a strict account of how His goods have been used."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 75.

3. The chapter "Before the Sanhedrin" in *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 77-86, encourages faithfulness in the face of difficulty. "Although the apostles were miraculously delivered from prison, they were not safe from examination and punishment. . . . By sending an angel to deliver them, God had given them a token of His love, and an assurance of His presence. It was now their part to suffer for the sake of the One whose gospel they were preaching."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 81.

4. Review the different ways in which Peter and Paul expressed their personal reaction to trial and persecution: 1 Peter 2:13-25; 2 Cor. 11:22-30.

5. Review Acts 4 and 5 with a view to establishing principles under which the church today should operate when it meets conflict with (1) public opinion; (2) the authorities; and (3) unjust laws.

SUMMARY: God wishes to have His cause defended with vigor and honesty even though it puts the Christian at risk. We serve Him best when, like the apostles, we respond to trials and persecutions with faithful witnessing.

APPLICATION

- Make a list of times of difficulty you have experienced and how you reacted to them. On a scale of a low of one to a high of five, how would you grade your witness response?
- The experience of Ananias and Sapphira teaches how important our promises are. How am I relating to the stewardship of my tithe and offerings?
- Do I "obey God rather than men" when faced with social pressures or personal and private temptations?

Lessons for Third Quarter, 1987

Sabbath School members who have not received a copy of the Adult Lessons for the third quarter of 1987 will be helped by the following outline in studying the first two lessons. The title of this series is "Christ and His Growing Church."

First Lesson:

"TRUTH AT ALL COSTS"

MEMORY TEXT: Acts 7:56.

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Acts 6:1 through 8:3.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The church may expect guidance from the Spirit—both in dealing with internal situations and in meeting opposition from without—as it remains fearlessly devoted to its mission.

OUTLINE:

- I. The Deacons (Acts 6:1-7).
- II. Stephen's Sermon (Acts 7:1-29).
- III. Israel's Apostasies (Acts 7:30-50).
- IV. Martyrdom and Persecution (Acts 7:51-60; 8:1-3).

Second Lesson:

"THE SPIRIT LEADS ON"

MEMORY TEXT: Acts 9:15.

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Acts 8:4 through 9:31.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Even that which creates havoc or places persons under the control of evil forces and blind prejudice will yield before the onward thrust of God's just cause. The Lord provides and the Spirit guides.

OUTLINE:

- I. Philip and Simon (Acts 8:3-8).
- II. Philip and the Ethiopian (Acts 8:26-40).
- III. Paul Meets Jesus (Acts 9:1-9).

Lessons in Braille:

The regular Adult Sabbath School Lessons are available free each month in Braille and 16 ½ rpm records to blind and physically handicapped persons who cannot read normal ink print. This includes individuals who because of arthritis, multiple sclerosis, paralysis, accident, old age, and so forth, cannot hold or focus on normal ink-print publications. Contact the Christian Record Braille Foundation, Box 6097, Lincoln, NE 68506.

How Church Ministries Support the Church

Church ministries represents the hands and the feet as well as the heart of the church body. This work is carried out at the local church level by the members in cooperation with pastoral leadership. Their mission springs from and is motivated by a loving relationship with Jesus.

The Department of Church Ministries provides a support ministry to the church that is developed primarily through leadership training, the production of materials, and consultant services. It enables church members to recognize and use their spiritual gifts to strengthen the family of God and to carry the good news of a gracious God to their community and to the world.

Other objectives include:

1. Fostering a revival of serious study of the Bible and the illumination provided by the writings of Ellen White;
2. Engendering a wholesome appreciation for our Seventh-day Adventist heritage and a commitment to a simple, Christlike lifestyle;
3. Developing a coordinated, Biblically-based curriculum for all church ministries programs;
4. Re-emphasizing a world-view in our sense of mission;
5. Encouraging every-member participation in wholistic stewardship; and
6. Strengthening the Adventist home and meeting the particular needs of Adventist children and youth in today's world.

Sabbath School Fosters Bible Study and Missions

It is truer than it ever has been that "we need to search the Scriptures daily, that we may know the way of the Lord, and that we be not deceived by religious fallacies. The world is full of false theories and seductive spiritualistic ideas, which tend to destroy clear spiritual perception, and to lead away from truth and holiness. Especially at this time do we need to heed the warning, 'Let no man deceive you with vain words' (Eph. 5:6)."—Ellen White, *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 170.

The tragedy today is that even among those Christians who without question receive the Bible "as it is in truth, the word of God" (1 Thess. 2:13) so many neglect to follow the example of the Thessalonians and give it a chance to work "effectually" in them.

It is not so much that we do not feel the need, but too often we do not quite know how to go about getting the most out of the time we do spend with the Bible. Because we know it is "good for us" we make a valiant attempt to read as much as we can. But this kind of forced study does not do much for us. Only as we learn to discover for ourselves what God is trying to communicate to us and become thrilled about it will we take time to

dig below the picked-over surface of the Bible treasure chest. As we turn to the Bible we will find words to grow by every day. Our Sabbath School Bible book curriculum is designed to lead the church into in-depth Bible study that will result in this kind of spiritual growth.

Today, when our mission challenge is greater and there are more opportunities than ever before, mission interest and offerings seem to be waning. Emphasis on world missions needs more attention than ever before in Sabbath School. The excitement of our fast-expanding mission programs should generate ever-expanding mission support.

Home and Family Ministries Strengthens the Adventist Home

The capacity to form intimate relationships is shaped in the early years of life in one's family. Christian values and lifestyle are modeled and instilled there. Families therefore have a key role to play in the overall discipling of believers and are worthy of the special attention it takes to assist them in this crucial role.

The work of strengthening families has been with us since the days of the pioneers, fortified by such counsel from God's special messenger as: "The restoration and uplifting of humanity begins in the home. . . . The well-being of society, the success of the church, the prosperity of the nation, depend upon home influences."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 349.

"Our work for Christ is to begin with the family, in the home. . . . By many this home field has been shamefully neglected and it is time that divine resources and remedies were presented, that this state of evil may be corrected."—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp 429, 430.

But the home, though created by the hand and blessing of God, continues under attack. Divine ideals for family living scarcely can be found. Great crises, brought about by changing attitudes toward marriage and parenting, financial pressures, and the sexual revolution, for example, face many homes. Often, many Christian families appear to have lost their immunity to secularism. Troubled homes urgently need to have Christianity made real in their midst. Even those with spiritual strength need ongoing reinforcement.

The approach recommended by family life ministries is not primarily crisis-oriented. Through education, enrichment, counseling, and other church activities, it aims to provide families with spiritual nurture and instruction. It includes emotional and social needs in a wholistic approach to living. This aspect of church ministries includes preparing couples for marriage; caring for marriages through the various life cycles of early marriage, the middle years, and into the later years and retirement; helping parents to effectively discipline their children; meeting the needs of the single-parent family and the blended family; dealing with recovery from the grief of separation, divorce, and death; finding ways to help singles meet their family life needs; and exploring ways of healing for those who have suffered abuse from those who should have given them love.

A focus on family life can assist in revitalizing the church, helping to maintain its vitality and growth. The church that works with its members on a personal basis, touching individuals at points of need and helping them live more fulfilled lives is a church that creates strong bonds that are not broken easily.

Lay Activities Trains the Church for Service

New converts need to be in school. Their teachers are to be the pastor, the elders, and other members who have been trained.

"In every church the members should be so trained that they will devote time to the winning of souls to Christ. How can it be said of the church, 'Ye are the light of the world,' unless the members of the church are actually imparting light? Let those who have charge of the flock of Christ awake to their duty, and set many souls to work."—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 436.

What is the curriculum for the training school in our churches? "Its members should be taught:

1. how to give Bible readings,
2. how to conduct and teach Sabbath School classes,
3. how best to help the poor and
4. to care for the sick,
5. how to work for the unconverted.
6. There should be schools of health,
7. cooking schools, and
8. classes in various lines of Christian help work."—Adapted from *Christian Service*, p. 59.

"The best help that ministers can give the members of our churches is not sermonizing, but planning work for them."—*Christian Service*, p. 69.

Those in roles of leadership are not required to do all the work themselves but are to train others to serve the Lord.

John and Charles Wesley gathered a group of lay preachers around them. They met frequently for study, encouragement, and prayer. As a result there was a great revival in England. Jesus gathered twelve men around Him for instruction, prayer, and daily teaching. Those twelve went out and rocked the then-known world.

Before us lies the greatest challenge in the history of the world, a world that has gone beserk, is alienated from our Lord, and is intent on pleasure. We are to call out a people that will renounce the things of this world, turn their attention to the Lord, follow Him, serve Him, and prepare to meet Him in the clouds of glory.

This necessitates training. "Every church should be a training school for Christian workers."—*Christian Service*, p. 59.

Stewardship and Development Encourages Total-life Management

The Stewardship and Development section of the Church Ministries department encourages every-member participation in wholistic stewardship. "Wholistic stewardship" includes the total management of life under God's direction. God created life in six literal days by speaking the world into existence (Genesis 1:3-31; 2:1, 2; Psalm 33:6-9). God, as our Creator, Sustainer, Owner, and Redeemer, has a prior claim upon all we are and have. (See Col. 1:16, 17; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20.) God's prior claim is clearly expressed in the original gift God gave to man of "dominion" or stewardship (Gen. 1:26). This assignment to manage all forms of life under God's direction (Ps. 8:4-6) is a sacred and awesome responsibility (1 Cor. 4:1, 2). In recognition of our stewardship or managerial relationship to God we return to God the gifts of life, time, talent, and treasure. We do so not as mere duty, but rather as the response of love—Loving "him because he

first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

In the local church, stewardship and development is committed to year-round stewardship education and practice. The Stewardship-Finance Committee helps members recognize the correlation between the spiritual and financial plans of the church. The committee recommends a local Church Budget based on the church's spiritual and financial objectives for nurture and outreach.

In local conferences, unions, and the division/General Conference, Church Ministry Stewardship and Development consultants work with administrators and pastors in conducting training workshops in wholistic stewardship, tithe and offering education, and in coordinating the development of non-tithe funds for local churches, schools, and conferences/missions in implementing division self-support plans. Church Ministry Stewardship and Development consultants help make possible church growth and the fulfillment of the gospel commission world-wide.

Youth Ministries Challenges Today's Youth

"With such an army of workers as our youth, rightly trained, might furnish, how soon the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Saviour might be carried to the whole world."—*Education*, p. 271.

The inspired pen of Ellen White not only gave this challenge but suggested that it can best be met today by establishing training centers in every church. These training centers would provide youth with fellowship, recreation, nurture, spiritual uplift, and knowledge of how to carry the gospel to the world. Seventh-day Adventists responded by starting AY Societies and Pathfinder clubs.

Nothing is more precious than our young people. Not only do they represent the future of the church, but also its present. Their enthusiasm, high ideals, and commitment can be of great value to the church. Their potential cannot be disregarded. Most of the pioneers of the Advent Movement were very young when they began their work. James White was 21 years old when he responded to the challenge of proclaiming the second coming. Ellen White was 17 when the Lord called her to minister to the Advent Movement. John Loughborough, who gave 75 years of his life to the church, began preaching when he was 17 years of age. J. N. Andrews, the first Seventh-day Adventist missionary, started working for this cause when he was 21. Uriah Smith, editor of the *Review and Herald*, was only 20 when he initially joined the band of believers at Rochester, New York.

When these young people were given major responsibilities not only did they respond to the challenge but used their potential for the advancement of God's cause. Youth today will respond with the same dedication and enthusiasm. We can expect them to do much in advancing God's cause if we will give them opportunity for service.

The church is booming with programs like 1,000 Days of Reaping and Harvest 90. The evangelistic challenge is fantastic! However, there still remains a greater challenge—keeping our young people in the church. We lose far too many and something must be done to stop this loss. The

combined Church Ministries department has accepted the task of making everyone in the church conscious of the precious heritage we have in the youth and children of our church. Everything possible must be done to keep young people involved in all facets of church life.

Church Music Integrates the Church Program.

An Office of Church Music has been added to the Department of Church Ministries. The philosophy of this office is summarized in the following statement: "Music is one of God's great gifts to man and is one of the most important elements in a spiritual program. It is an avenue of communication with God, and 'is one of the most effective means of impressing the heart with spiritual truth.'—*Education*, page 168."—"Guidelines Toward a Seventh-day Adventist Philosophy of Music," p. 3.

Music should be integrated into the total church program, including all levels of worship, evangelism, and with our youth and children in the home. Objectives of the office of Church Music include:

1. To increase publicity relative to the ministry of music and its significance.

2. To revitalize interest in the singing of hymns with a positive approach to music ministry. "As a part of religious service, singing is as much an act of worship as is prayer."—*Education*, p. 168.

3. To encourage musicians to cooperate with pastors in spiritual leadership (develop a team approach).

4. To provide audio-visual material for churches, institutions, and homes.

5. To publish "how-to" materials for volunteer musicians (such as, how to teach new hymns).

6. To hold workshops, seminars, and hymn festivals; to encourage congregational singing, choir organization, and use of instruments.

7. To foster expression of creative abilities through music.

8. To guide youth in music appreciation and to a better understanding of church standards, worship, and entertainment.

Your prayers and cooperation are needed in the implementation of plans that will insure the growth and future success of the work delegated to the Office of Church Music.

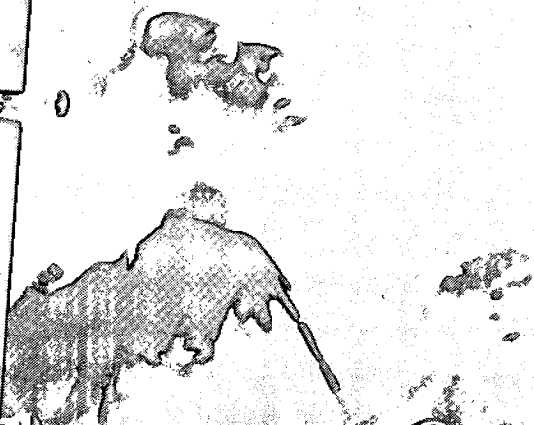
In the future the application sections of the quarterly will be devoted to specific practical applications of the Church Ministries objectives spelled out above. These applications will be designed to help those whose hearts are motivated by a loving relationship with Jesus to direct their hands and feet into service that will honor Him.

Adult

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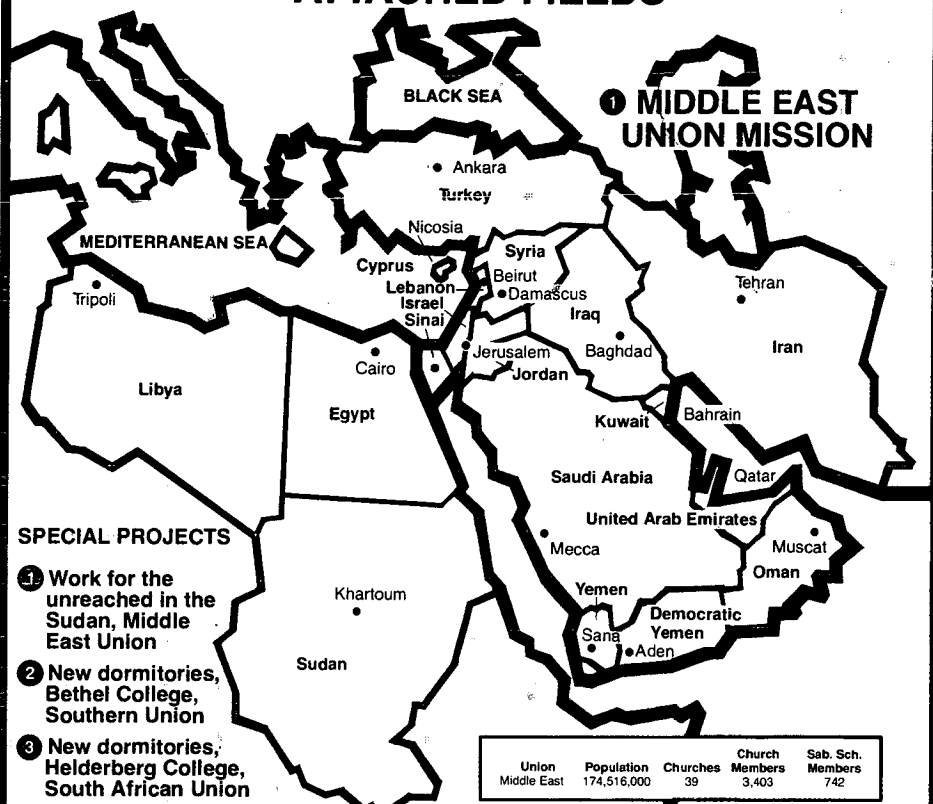
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1 MIDDLE EAST UNION MISSION

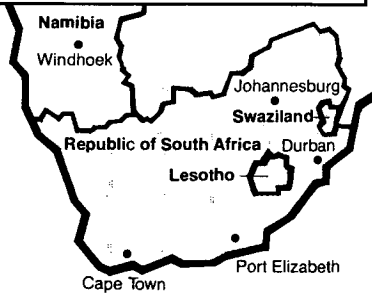
SPECIAL PROJECTS

- 1 Work for the unreached in the Sudan, Middle East Union
- 2 New dormitories, Bethel College, Southern Union
- 3 New dormitories, Helderberg College, South African Union

Union	Population	Churches	Church Members	Sab. Sch. Members
Middle East	174,516,000	39	3,403	742

2 SOUTHERN UNION MISSION

Union	Population	Churches	Church Members	Sab. Sch. Members
Southern	24,424,290	279	31,794	50,687



3 SOUTH AFRICAN UNION CONFERENCE

Union	Population	Churches	Church Members	Sab. Sch. Members
South African	9,525,063	182	20,404	16,908

