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SABBATH SCHOOL
LESSONS

Psalm 73-150

From Gloom to Glory



APRIL MAY JUNE 1992



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Contents

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Is Life Fair? | 8. Worship in Spirit and Truth |
| 2. Distress and Deliverance | 9. The Works of the Lord |
| 3. What Makes God's People Special? | 10. The Word of God |
| 4. From Death to Life | 11. King of Kings |
| 5. When the Going Gets Tough | 12. God Is Present With Me |
| 6. Our Earthly Pilgrimage | 13. Hallelujah! |
| 7. Good Homes, Stable Society | |

The Adult Sabbath School Lessons are prepared by the Department of Church Ministries of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The preparation of the lessons is under the general direction of a worldwide Sabbath School Lesson Committee, the members of which serve as consulting editors. The published lesson quarterly reflects the input of the committee and thus does not solely or necessarily represent the intent of the authors.

Editorial Office:	12501 Old Columbia Pike
	Silver Spring, MD 20904
Principal Contributor:	Edward E. White
Editor:	Erwin R. Gane
Associate Editor:	Lyndelle Chiomenti
Assistant Editor:	Charlotte Ishkanian
Art and Design:	Lars Justinen

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Adult Sabbath School Lessons (Standard Edition). (USPS 702-480.) Published quarterly by Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1350 North Kings Road, Nampa, ID 83687, U.S.A. One year subscription in U.S.A., \$5.85; single copy, \$3.25. One year subscription to countries outside U.S.A., \$8.85; single copy, \$3.25. All prices at U.S.A. exchange. Second-class postage at Nampa, ID. When a change of address is desired, please send both old and new addresses.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Adult Sabbath School Lessons (Standard Edition), P.O. Box 7000, Boise, ID 83707.

Editions in Braille available. See p. 97. Easy English Edition available.

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Adult Sabbath School Lessons (USPS 702-480)/No. 388/April-June 1992.

Introduction to Psalms 73-150

From Gloom to Glory

The 150 psalms contained in the book of Psalms are collected into five books. In a previous quarter we studied the first two of these books, which include psalms 1-72. From them 12 selected psalms were studied in depth.

The remaining three books contain 78 psalms. From these a number of psalms have been selected for our study this quarter. They are grouped under 13 different topics. Sabbath School students are encouraged to include in their reading those psalms not dealt with in the quarter's study. Because the psalms are expressions of the human religious instinct, they find answering chords in the past and present experiences of humanity.

"The communion with nature and with God, the care of his flocks, the perils and deliverances, the griefs and joys, of his lowly lot, were not only to mould the character of David and to influence his future life, but through the psalms of Israel's sweet singer they were in all coming ages to kindle love and faith in the hearts of God's people, bringing them nearer to the ever-loving heart of Him in whom all His creatures live."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 642.

Although David was the most frequent author of the psalms, other authors were involved. "Eight names of persons occurring in the superscriptions to the psalms appear to be the names of authors, contributors, compilers, musicians, or others associated with the composition, compilation, and use of the sacred lyrics. The names are David, Asaph, Korah, Moses, Heman, Ethan, Solomon, and Juduthun."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 616.

In this life there will be disappointments and misunderstandings, even between friends. Unkind criticism may reach our ears, calamity may strike our home or our loved ones, and sickness may lay us low and disheartened. Failure to overcome a besetting sin may plunge us into gloom. Satan has manifold ways to tempt us. "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33) are our Lord's words to His disciples. The psalms record both experiences of God's children and our heavenly Father's infinite love and compassion in providing resources to aid in defeating doubt and discouragement.

OVERVIEW—Psalms 73-150

Book III	Book IV	Book V
Psalms 73-89	Psalms 90-106	Psalms 107-150

Meet the Principal Contributor to This Quarter's Lessons

Dr. Edward E. White is a name synonymous with Adventist education. He taught and held administrative positions at Newbold College and Stanborough Secondary School in England, and at Avondale College in Australia. He served as education director of the Australasian (South Pacific) Division; and the Euro-African Division. In his retirement he teaches part time at Newbold College.

Dr. White attended Stanborough Park Missionary (Newbold) College and earned his Ph.D. in science from the University of London.

Writing and music are important avocations to Dr. White. He has written two music-related volumes, *Singing With Understanding* and the companion book to the *SDA Hymnal*, which he coauthored with Wayne Hooper. He has written two other sets of Sabbath School lessons and the companion book on 2 Timothy, entitled *The Prisoner Wouldn't Cry*, as well as numerous articles in the *Adventist Review* and *Ministry*.

Dr. White and his wife, Marjorie, are retired in Stanborough Park, England.

Check with your local Adventist Book Center for the companion book to the Sabbath School lessons.

Is Life Fair?



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Psalms 73, 77, and 94.

MEMORY TEXT: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee" (Psalm 73:25).

KEY THOUGHT. Why do the wicked prosper? Despite appearances, does evil really triumph?

THE COSMIC AND THE HUMAN VIEW. On a hot summer's day in December in the Southern Hemisphere, the writer was walking slowly home to lunch. Trudging toward me was one of my colleagues, carrying a heavy case. He exclaimed, "Brother, I don't understand it!" He explained that the president and secretary of the division had driven by without stopping to give him a ride home from the station.

At that moment a car came in the other direction and stopped in a cloud of dust. The secretary called to the worker, "Jump in, I'll drive you home!" My parting words to my tired friend were, "You'll understand it very soon now."

Later it was explained that the division secretary did not stop because he was rushing the president to an important appointment. Rather than stop, he returned and picked up his fellow worker, even though it was out of his own way.

Our lesson this week provides an answer to the countless *Whys?* that spring from our lips in times of difficulty.

THE STATE OF THE UNGODLY (Ps. 73:2-12; 94:1-7).

Upon whom are God's blessings bestowed? Matt. 5:45 (compare Acts 14:15-17).

Note: Throughout the quarterly, the references immediately following the question provide the answer. The references in parentheses are for those seeking additional biblical support.

God is the Father of every kindred, tribe, and nation, for He created them all. Of course, He selected the descendants of Abraham to be a chosen people who were to reveal His character and evangelize the world.

"The Jews held that God loved those who served Him—according to their view, those who fulfilled the requirements of the rabbis—and that all the rest of the world lay under His frown and curse. Not so, said Jesus; the whole world, the evil and the good, lies in the sunshine of His love. This truth you should have learned from nature itself; for God 'maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.' "*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 74.

What attitudes are adopted by those who do not recognize God's hand in their prosperity? Ps. 73:6-11; 94:3-7.

Having ignored God or argued Him out of existence, the ungodly attribute their prosperity to their own unaided efforts, and begin to swell with pride in their own achievements. Pride, violence, scoffing, and blasphemy are characteristic of their manner of life. "Their mouths lay claim to heaven, and their tongues take possession of the earth. . . . They say, 'How can God know? Does the Most High have knowledge?' " (Ps. 73:9-11, NIV).

Those professed believers who depend upon their own works for salvation are no closer to God than those who reject Him. (See Rom. 9:31, 32.) Unbelievers often claim to have no need of God, and some professed believers are virtually exclaiming: " 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing' " (Rev. 3:17, NIV).

When a successful professional young man was invited to accept Christ as his Saviour, he claimed that he had no need or desire for religion of any kind. How would you attempt to convince him otherwise?

THE RIGHTEOUS TROUBLED (Ps. 73:3; 77:1-9).

What reaction did the psalmist have when he saw the prosperity of the wicked? Ps. 73:3 (compare Gal. 5:19-21).

Envy is listed among the works of the flesh and disqualifies us for entry into the kingdom of God. This sin feasts on comparing our lot in life with that of our neighbor, taking account only of external things. Envy makes its way into families, as pointed out by Stephen the deacon, when he said that Jacob's sons sold Joseph into Egypt because they were moved with envy (Acts 7:9). Not only had Joseph received a special gift of a multicolored coat (see Gen. 37:31-34) but his dreams implied that his brothers were to be in submission to him (verse 8). "And his brethren envied him" (verse 11).

What New Testament counsel is given concerning comparisons? 2 Cor. 10:12, 18.

Comparisons are odious and lead to envy and false pride, even among believers. It was because the ancient Israelites envied the surrounding nations that they wanted a king of their own. (See 1 Sam. 8:5.) Their first king, Saul, fell prey to envy, and his heart was eaten out by this subtle sin. However, it was not the prosperity of the wicked that irked him; it was the triumph of the popular hero David.

What are some of the questions that trouble a soul in distress or discouragement? Does the Lord hear, ignore, or answer? Ps. 77:1-9.

"When he [the psalmist] meditated upon the difficulties and danger of life, they looked so forbidding that he thought himself abandoned by God because of his sins. He viewed his sin in such a strong light that he exclaimed, 'Will the Lord cast off for ever? will he be favorable no more?'

"But as he wept and prayed, he obtained a clearer view of the character and attributes of God."—Ellen G. White *Comments, SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1149.

The psalmist envied the prosperity of the wicked (Ps. 73:3). In what ways do Christian believers sometimes reveal their envy of nonbelievers? What is the cure for such envy?

GOD IN CONTROL (Ps. 73:17; 77:10-20).

Where did the psalmist find a solution to his problem? Ps. 73:16, 17; 77:10-13.

Quite naturally mankind takes an earthly view of the difficulties and perplexities of life. As long as we do this we will continue to ask questions that suggest that God does not care. But when the sufferer enters by faith into the sanctuary, God's dwelling place, where Christ ministers for His people, the human, earthly view gives place to the divine, cosmic view. It becomes apparent that the great controversy between Christ and Satan over the nature and character of God is the basic reason for human suffering. Demonic attempts to discredit God, resulting inevitably in opposition to Him, are the cause of "all our woe and loss of Eden." Yet God calms our fears and gives assurance of the final triumph of His eternal plan.

Why did the psalmist's memory of God's past blessings cause him concern? Ps. 77:3, 6, 10-12, 15-20.

Past blessings suggest present and future blessings. David remembered God's intervention in the past and was troubled because there seemed now to be complete inaction from heaven.

When Ezekiel and Isaiah were seeking assurance of God's control over the affairs of their own lives and over the affairs of Israel, they were given visions of God upon His throne. (See Eze. 1:26-28; Isa. 6:1-8.)

God is still in charge. "In the annals of human history the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires, appear as dependent on the will and prowess of man. The shaping of events seems, to a great degree, to be determined by his power, ambition, or caprice. But in the word of God the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, behind, above, and through all the play and counterplay of human interests and power and passions, the agencies of the all-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will."—*Education*, p. 173.

An event may cause you to question whether God is involved in your affairs. How can you maintain faith even when circumstances suggest that you are not being blessed by God?

THE FATE OF THE UNGODLY (Ps. 73:18, 19, 27; 94:20-23).

What kind of foundation do the wicked have? Ps. 73:18, 19, 27.

In his perplexity and envy of the prosperity of the wicked, the psalmist almost slipped (73:2; 94:18). Doubting, complaining, and divergence from the path of strict spiritual integrity greatly increase the chances of a spiritual fall. (See Jer. 23:10-12.)

Two different reactions to guilt. Both Peter and Judas were in slippery places after the Thursday evening of the Lord's Supper. Judas had passed the boundaries of grace in his decision to accept a bribe for the betrayal.

"At the Passover supper Jesus proved His divinity by revealing the traitor's purpose. He tenderly included Judas in the ministry to the disciples. But the last appeal of love was unheeded. Then the case of Judas was decided, and the feet that Jesus had washed went forth to the betrayer's work."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 720.

Peter also was on slippery ground. He invited the enemy to tempt him. When he denied Jesus, "the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter" (Luke 22:61).

"The sight of that pale, suffering face, those quivering lips, that look of compassion and forgiveness, pierced his heart like an arrow. Conscience was aroused. . . .

"On the very spot where Jesus had poured out His soul in agony to His Father, Peter fell upon his face, and wished that he might die."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 713.

What is God's part in the destruction of the wicked? Ps. 94:23 (compare Prov. 5:22, 23; Isa. 33:14, 15).

Jesus spoke of two pathways available to earthly travelers (Matt. 7:13, 14). To those who identify themselves with sin, God is "a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29; compare 10:26-30). Only those whose sins have been confessed and forgiven can exist in the presence of God's glory. The ungodly who cherish sin bring destruction on themselves; they are consumed with the sin that controls them.

Many people try to do what is right in life because they fear God's wrath. What would you recommend as an effective antidote for fear?

THE TRUST OF THE RIGHTEOUS (Ps. 73:20-26, 28; 94:8-19).

Why did the psalmist liken himself and others to a beast? Ps. 73:22; 94:8.

The New International Version translates these verses: "I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you" (Ps. 73:22). "Take heed, you senseless ones among the people; you fools, when will you become wise?" (Ps. 94:8). The Christian who has caught a glimpse of the divine standpoint from his visit to the sanctuary will have understanding, though limited, of God's ways. He will not be like an animal, which does not have the power of reason or a conception of the invisible God. He will realize that God fully understands, and he will trust Him completely.

Paul certainly had good human grounds for complaining of injustice and unfairness. (See 2 Cor. 11:18-30.) But by the power of Christ within he maintained contentment, despite the afflictions that overtook him. The poet and hymn-writer William Cowper (1731-1800) was often subject to severe depression and suicidal tendencies. But always there was a return to sanity and trust in divine providence. Under the title "Light Shining Out of Darkness" he composed the hymn "God Moves in a Mysterious Way" (*SDA Hymnal*, no. 107).

What contrast to "slippery places" does the triumphant and trusting psalmist describe? Ps. 94:22; 73:24, 26, 28.

The former despondent one now recognizes a helper (Ps. 94:17), a defender, and a solid rock on which he can stand firm. He now trusts Christ as a safe guide and the source of his strength. Instead of sliding to destruction, the believer, with the eye of faith, beholds future glory.

Truly God Is Good
God knows the way, He holds the key,
He guides us with unerring hand;
Sometime with tearless eyes we'll see;
Yes, there, up there, we'll understand.
—Maxwell N. Cornelius

How is trust in Christ developed? What steps would you recommend to a person who has allowed his or her trust to be undermined by the disappointments of life?

FURTHER STUDY: Read again Psalms 73, 77, and 94. Read from the chapter "From Jezreel to Horeb" in *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 162-166, and "What to Do With Doubt" in *Steps to Christ*, pp. 105-113.

To strengthen your faith. "Above the distractions of earth He sits enthroned; all things are open to His divine survey; and from His great and calm eternity He orders that which His providence sees best."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 417.

To kindle fresh hope. "All the perplexities of life's experience will then be made plain. Where to us have appeared only confusion and disappointment, broken purposes and thwarted plans, will be seen a grand, overruling, victorious purpose, a divine harmony."—*Education*, p. 305.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. At various times throughout history, the Lord has allowed rulers to come to power who have discriminated against those trying to serve God. In the face of such circumstances, how do you explain God's control over historical events?
2. Church members or leaders who make a considerable profession of godliness sometimes are found to be untrue. Why would the Lord allow His church to be troubled by false brothers and sisters? How should we relate ourselves to the presence of such people among us?
3. Human perception of truth and of right and wrong is sometimes distorted. When involved in a disagreement in the home or in the church, is it wise or unwise to question one's own judgment? Suppose the issue involves what you are convinced is established truth. How should you relate to those who disagree with you?

SUMMARY: God "is the sure retreat and rock of refuge of His people, and the destroyer of all who do iniquity. Let us firmly believe that underlying all history is a principle of righteousness, and that, whatever appearances may be to the contrary, wrong cannot ultimately win, and right cannot ultimately lose. If that belief was held centuries before Christ, surely we should hold it who live in the light of Calvary."—W. Graham Scroggie, *Know Your Bible: The Psalms* (London: Pickering & Inglis, Ltd., 1950), vol. 2, p. 271.

Distress and Deliverance



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Psalms 74, 76, 80, 102, 126, 137.

MEMORY TEXT: "Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come" (Psalm 102:13).

KEY THOUGHT. Even though distress comes to both individuals and nations, the Christian has faith and hope in a powerful God of love, who will save *from* trouble, or *in* trouble.

OUR SURVIVAL KIT. On June 2, 1960, an eight-year-old boy was found sitting on a rock three quarters of a mile from Torton Lake in Manitoba, Canada. The plane in which he and his father had been flying had crashed. For 15 days the boy had waited beside the wrecked and burned plane in which his father had been instantly killed. The boy's emaciated condition showed that starvation would shortly have overtaken him. There was no need for him to be hungry, for near the plane was a survival kit containing 24 days' rations. It had been thrown clear when the plane crashed, but the lad was unaware of what it contained.

Many people today are lost in the wilderness of doubt and fear, and their starved souls suffer from malnutrition while right beside them is a survival kit. The Bible contains the daily spiritual rations we all need, but we often are unaware that it can satisfy our soul hunger. In times of personal or national disaster, there is deliverance in a trusting dependence upon God and His Word.

THE DISTRESS OF ISRAEL (Psalm 80).

Psalm 80 depicts a time of great distress for Israel. The psalmist prays that his people will be restored to God's favor.

How does the poet describe his country and its former glory? Ps. 80:8-11.

"The Jews had always regarded the vine as the most noble of plants, and a type of all that was powerful, excellent, and fruitful. Israel had been represented as a vine which God had planted in the Promised Land."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 675. Its territory had extended from the Mediterranean Sea to the Euphrates (verse 11) and north to Lebanon, noted for its cedars (verse 10).

In one of Jesus' parables, God's people were likened to a barren fig tree (Luke 13:6-9). The apostle Paul represented them by an olive tree with some branches cut off, and other wild olive branches grafted in (Rom. 11:17-24).

What was the condition of the country when the psalmist wrote? Ps. 80:5, 6, 12, 13, 16.

The images of broken hedges and the fruit being devoured suggest that an invading army had marched over their frontiers, destroying the crops and slaughtering the people. Hezekiah quoted from this psalm as part of his prayer after spreading the boastful letter from Sennacherib before the Lord. (See 2 Kings 19:9-19; *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 355-359.)

Notice the repetition in the prayer and the increasingly insistent plea for God to turn the hearts of the people to Himself and to reverse their fortunes. (See Ps. 80:3, 4, 7, 14, 19.) The repeated request that God would turn the people toward Himself was an acknowledgment of their spiritual failure. Repentance results in the renewed blessing of the Lord. "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land" (2 Chron. 7:14, NIV).

What instances of personal, national, or church distress can you cite in which humble dependence upon God resulted in a reversal of the situation?

THE FALL OF JERUSALEM (Psalm 74).

Describe the calamities that occurred during the Babylonian attack on Jerusalem. Ps. 74:3, 4, 7, 8 (compare 79:1-4, 11; 2 Kings 25:7, 9, 10, 13-15).

It was bad enough for the Jews to see their countrymen slain and the city burned, but the greatest disaster was the defilement of the temple and other places of worship. How could they now approach their Lord?

Attacked by their foes, the people appealed for the Lord's intervention. "Why have you rejected us forever, O God? Why does your anger smolder against the sheep of your pasture?" (Ps. 74:1, NIV; compare verses 10, 11; 79:5, 10). They could have answered their own question. They misunderstood God's character, believing that because He was their God, He would have to be on their side. They failed to understand that God can help and heal only those who wish to be changed. Consistently, leaders and people had ignored God's appeals for revival and reformation.

How did the defeated people try to encourage themselves? Ps. 74:2, 12-17.

In particular the people remembered God's mighty works in destroying the Egyptian pursuers of their forebears and in making a path through the Red Sea, and later through the Jordan River. Even greater was His work of Creation and His rulership as king over all the earth.

They identified the Babylonian invaders as enemies, not merely of the Jews, but of God Himself, blaspheming His name, and bringing reproach upon His character.

Ask yourself. Can I expect God to shelter me from spiritual and physical foes if I have not committed my will to Him? Under what circumstances will He protect me? Why does God sometimes choose not to protect His servants from those who would do them physical harm?

"Angels help and protect those who walk humbly before God. Never will our Lord betray one who trusts in Him. As His children draw near to Him for protection from evil, in pity and love He lifts up for them a standard against the enemy."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 571.

HOPE IN PERSONAL CAPTIVITY (Psalm 102).

What was the writer's affliction and complaint? Ps. 102:3-11, 23, 24.

Not only is the psalmist a prisoner in a foreign land, reproached continually by his captors, but he is also stricken with a disease that appears to be fatal. When he remembers to eat bread, it tastes like ashes in his mouth. His prospect of living is like Isaiah's description of grass: "The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the Lord blows on them. Surely the people are grass" (Isa. 40:7, NIV).

The change from the first person after Psalm 102:11 implies that the writer believed the prophecy that the captivity under Babylon would last 70 years. (See Jer. 25:11, 12; 29:14.) But he expected to die before the return to Jerusalem.

The faith of the overwhelmed psalmist shines through his depression, as he looks into the future, assumes the prophetic mantle, and portrays the glory of a restored Zion (Ps. 102:3-11, 13-17, 23, 24.) He was thinking of a rebuilt Jerusalem, which did take place to an extent under Ezra and Nehemiah and contemporary prophets.

The New Jerusalem, however, is yet to come, when the Lord Himself shall appear in glory and fulfill His grand purpose of exterminating sin and establishing everlasting righteousness (verse 22; compare Rev. 21:1-3).

What bearing does this psalm have on the present generation? Ps. 102:18, 24-28.

The glorious appearing of the Lord as King of kings has been the hope of every generation. Because hope anticipates facts, it strengthens faith. Past experiences mirror future ones.

Christ is the I AM, who exists from eternity (John 8:58). His power is unlimited. His created works (in particular the earth) will one day be destroyed to make way for a new creation. The writer to the Hebrews quotes Psalm 102:25-27 in chapter 1:10-12 in the context of a discussion of Christ's eternal existence.

Prayer: In my affliction, O Lord, help me to look into the future, when all Thy promises will meet their fulfillment.

HOPE IN NATIONAL CAPTIVITY (Psalm 137).

A tale of two cities. The psalmist prays for retribution to come upon the enemies of God's people. However, the chief message of the psalm is the remorse of a sinful-but-now-repentant people, and their passionate devotion to their national heritage. It is a tale also of two cities, symbolic of the spiritual victory of Zion, the bride of Christ, over Babylon, the great whore. (See Rev. 21:2; 17:5.)

Note the basic cause of the Jews' being held captive in Babylon. 2 Chron. 36:14-21.

Apostasy, rebellion, and unbelief by unholy people had brought retribution upon the nation. Nevertheless, among the exiles were some faithful ones who remained loyal to God's commandments.

Why could not the captives sing songs of Zion while still in Babylon? Apart from their remembrance of Jerusalem, what else did they recall? Ps. 137:2-4, 7-9.

"The dark years of destruction and death marking the end of the kingdom of Judah would have brought despair to the stoutest heart had it not been for the encouragements in the prophetic utterances of God's messengers. Through Jeremiah in Jerusalem, through Daniel in the court of Babylon, through Ezekiel on the banks of the Chebar, the Lord in mercy made clear His eternal purpose, and gave assurance of His willingness to fulfill to His chosen people the promises recorded in the writings of Moses."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 464.

The meaning of Psalm 137:9. "The murder of innocent children, though customary in ancient warfare, was one of the cruelest and most abhorrent of all practices (see 2 Kings 8:12; Isa. 13:16; Hosea 10:14). In view of the fact that such stern treatment had been meted out by the Babylonians (see Jer. 51:24), the psalmist is simply enunciating a law of life—'as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee' (Obadiah 15; cf. Matt. 7:2)."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 923.

Cite examples that show that evil intentions of the wicked often bring upon themselves the result they have planned for others.

DELIVERANCE (Psalms 126, 76).

After the trying times for Judah had been relieved by the Lord, what was their reaction? Ps. 126:1-3.

A permanent witness. Not only did the Jews praise God for His miraculous working, but the neighboring heathen nations were convinced that Jehovah had been operating on their behalf. "The nations surrounding Israel were constantly reminded of God's miracle-working power on behalf of His chosen people. God designed that such demonstrations of power should be the means of acquainting the heathen with the true God."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 912.

This lesson places Psalm 126 in the context of the ominous Assyrian invasion under Sennacherib and his almost unbelievable failure after Judah had been laid waste and the city of Jerusalem surrounded. (See Isa. 37:33, 36.)

Just as the Lord brought back Job's prosperity, so did He rescue His praying people from the Assyrian army.

How is this astonishing deliverance described in Psalm 76? Ps. 76:1-3, 5, 6, 12.

The event that turned the tide against the invading Assyrian army was Hezekiah's earnest prayer. "Now, O Lord our God, deliver us from his [Sennacherib's] hand, so that all kingdoms on earth may know that you alone, O Lord, are God" (Isa. 37:20, NIV). Through Isaiah, God sent an immediate response to Hezekiah: "Because you have prayed to me concerning Sennacherib king of Assyria, this is the word the Lord has spoken against him: . . . He will not enter this city or shoot an arrow here" (Isa. 37:21, 22, 33, NIV).

The Lord fulfilled His own prediction, and the psalmist exclaimed: "Valiant men lie plundered, they sleep their last sleep; not one of the warriors can lift his hands. At your rebuke, O God of Jacob, both horse and chariot lie still" (Ps. 76:5, 6, NIV).

"The pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the scepter of Egypt shall depart away." Zechariah 10:11. This is true not only of the nations that arrayed themselves against God in ancient times, but also of nations today who fail of fulfilling the divine purpose."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 366.

How would you apply Psalm 126:5, 6 today and to circumstances that will exist in the future?

FURTHER STUDY: Read Psalm 79. Read the accounts of the siege of Jerusalem in Hezekiah's reign in 2 Kings 18:9-37; 19. Also read Prophets and Kings, p. 339 and chapter 30, "Deliverance From Assyria."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. When spiritual foes surround us, how can we have the faith of Isaiah and Hezekiah?
2. Why is a knowledge of history, both secular and biblical, helpful in the Christian walk?
3. What aspects of this week's lesson can you apply to the experiences of God's people immediately before the coming of Jesus?

SUMMARY: We are not playthings of Satan. He does bring distress upon us, sometimes because of our own foolishness. But we have a mighty God who has reduced this powerful evil angel to the status of a fallen foe. Our plea for help, for strength, for victory will bring divine assistance and ultimate joy.

***Don't ask that dollar where it went;
Tell it where to go!***

—H. D. Singleton



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What Makes God's People Special?



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Psalms 78, 105, 106, 136.

MEMORY TEXT: "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:11, 12).

KEY THOUGHT. The experiences of ancient Israel are a challenge, a warning, and an inspiration to all of God's children in their earthly pilgrimage to the heavenly Canaan.

THE RISE AND FALL OF EMPIRES. We can learn much from the history of Israel and other nations. The rise and fall of past empires illustrate the sorry cycle of increasing power that undermines the foundations of good government. A nation is then easy prey for its ambitious successor, which takes the supremacy.

"The history of nations that one after another have occupied their allotted time and place, unconsciously witnessing to the truth of which they themselves knew not the meaning, speaks to us. To every nation and to every individual of today God has assigned a place in His great plan. Today men and nations are being measured by the plummet in the hand of Him who makes no mistake. All are by their own choice deciding their destiny, and God is overruling all for the accomplishment of His purposes."—*Education*, p. 178.

THE PURPOSE OF HISTORY (Psalm 78).

What motivation prompted the Israelites to pass on their history to their descendants? Ps. 78:4-8 (compare Ex. 10:2; Deut. 4:9, 10; 6:6-9, 20).

God instructed Moses and the generation that left Egypt that they should keep fresh in their minds the events of the Exodus. Not only were they to relate the facts to their children and grandchildren but also they were to explain their meaning.

Israelite history was not to glorify Moses, Joshua, and others; it was recorded so that the people would observe the law that Moses received from God and copy their leader's outstanding quality of meekness (Num. 12:3). They were to remember that the sacred ark, where the Lord met with them, would not save an unholy people (Ps. 78:60). Their king, chosen by God, was a shepherd who fed his people (verses 70-72), not a king who was a mighty warrior in his own strength and who gained victory by his own power over the Philistines.

What outstanding events did the psalmist recall in his summary of Israel's history?

Ps. 78:9-11, 61-67 _____

Ps. 78:12, 13, 43-51 _____

Ps. 78:14-29, 52-55 _____

The history recorded in Psalm 78 does not list events in chronological order. The psalm ends with the settlement in Palestine and the establishment of the monarchy, but with no mention of Saul. Significantly it does not fail to recount the people's rebellion, lust, stubbornness, and unbelief.

What a distressing response Israel made to all God's care for their needs, both physical and spiritual! (See Ps. 78:8, 10, 11, 17, 19, 22, 32, 40-42, 56-58.) Even their professed repentance often lacked genuine sincerity. (See Ps. 78:34-37.) Flattering words and an insincere or unsteady heart compound the evil instead of correcting it.

What attitudes manifested by Israel throughout the history recorded in Psalm 78 have you adopted at times in your own experience? How may such attitudes be corrected?

HOW GOD TREATED ISRAEL (Psalm 105).

The first 15 verses of Psalm 105 were composed by David and sung as part of the ceremony when the ark of the covenant was transferred to Jerusalem. (See 1 Chron. 16:1, 2, 7-22.)

What period of history does this psalm cover? Ps. 105:8, 9, 42-44.

Verse 11 quotes the promise of the land of Canaan, and verse 44 records the fulfillment of the promise. The patriarchs Isaac and Jacob are mentioned, and prominence is given to Joseph, who proved faithful under trial. Most of the plagues of Egypt are referred to, and a brief account is given of Israel's wilderness experience. In all a total of about 450 years is covered.

Psalm 105 is a hymn of praise to God's grace, His promises, His protection, and His miracles (see verses 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 14, 15, 39-44).

What was God's final purpose for Israel in settling them in Canaan? Ps. 105:7-11, 45.

Situated at the crossroads of the chief trade routes, Israel would be in contact with other nations north, south, and east. If they had remained true to God's statutes, they would have been blessed materially, as well as spiritually. Jehovah would have been recognized as infinitely superior to the gods of wood and stone worshiped by the heathen.

The covenant constantly renewed. Notice that God's everlasting covenant of grace was given to "a thousand generations" (Ps. 105:8). The same means of salvation offered to Adam, to Eve, and to Abraham were extended to mankind throughout the Old Testament period. At Sinai the Lord offered Israel the same wonderful terms—His everlasting covenant of salvation by faith in the Messiah to come. (See Ex. 19:5; Gal. 3:15-17.) Deuteronomy 5:3 emphasizes that personal fellowship with God, under the terms of the everlasting covenant, must be enjoyed by all generations for themselves. We cannot be saved by the spiritual experience of our fathers.

What evidence could you give that God works for His people in modern times just as dramatically as He worked for ancient Israel? Is the same everlasting covenant for us?

HOW ISRAEL TREATED GOD (Psalm 106).

Although this psalm begins and ends with Hallelujah, much of its contents is not intended to evoke praise. It is in complete contrast to the preceding psalm, which begins and ends in the same way. (The Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint [LXX], transfers the last word of Psalm 104 to Psalm 105.) Psalm 106, like 105, recounts the history of Israel, adding some details and omitting others.

Write down some of the words used to tell of Israel's sins. Ps. 106:6, 7, 13, 14, 16, 19.

The Red Sea miracle called forth praise, but it soon vanished (verse 13). The miserable catalog of Israel's sin, again not chronologically arranged, includes the worship of the golden calf (verses 19-23), Korah's rebellion (verses 16-18; compare Num. 16:1-35), and the apostasy on the borders of Moab (Ps. 106:28-31; compare Num. 25:1-8). The people were partly to blame for Moses' momentary and tragic lapse (Ps. 106:32, 33). Their unbelief in God's ability to give them victory over the giants of Canaan denied them the privilege of entering the Promised Land (Ps. 106:24-27; compare Num. 13:31-14:1-13).

What was the Lord's reaction to the people's disobedience? Ps. 106:8-10, 43-46 (compare verses 23, 26, 27, 40, 41).

We must remember that mercy and justice go hand in hand. (See Ps. 101:1.) The availability of mercy does not mean that a sinner can presumptuously continue sinning.

Compare the confession of Psalm 106:6 with the last two verses, 47 and 48. True confession brings forgiveness and help from the Lord. Praise Him for His tender mercy! "Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:18, 19, NIV).

How would you explain God's mercy to a habitual sinner? Would you present it as unlimited? How would you explain to such persons that, even though God can forgive all their sins, they will be lost if they do not repent?

GOD'S MERCY (Psalm 136).

This psalm is part of Jewish liturgy, known to them as the Great Hallel. It is suitable for antiphonal singing or reading, with the refrain being sung or recited by the congregation in response to the first half of each verse presented by the cantor or the choir.

What different titles are given to God? Ps. 136:1-3, 26.

"The LORD" is a translation of *Yahweh*, the Eternal One, past, present, and future. "God of gods" refers to His creative power and sovereignty. "Lord of lords" signifies His rulership and authority. "God of heaven" identifies Him as the all-powerful One.

History recalled. Notice that the psalmist begins his history at a time before there was a Jew, even before Adam was created. In verses 5-9 he refers to some of the days of Creation and praises God's mercy (love, NIV). God showed great kindness to mankind by providing him a favorable habitat.

What historical incidents also show God's mercy? Ps. 136:10-22.

We can understand God's saving providence and tender care in leading Israel dry-shod through the Red Sea and nurturing them in health throughout their desert wanderings. But how do we associate the slaying of Egypt's firstborn, the drowning of the Egyptians, and the slaughter of the Amorites with mercy?

This earth is the stage of the universe on which the great controversy between Christ and Satan, between good and evil, is now being waged. Paul says that "we have been made a spectacle [a theater] to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men" (1 Cor. 4:9, NIV).

In His destruction of unrepentant human beings who have transgressed beyond their day of grace, the Almighty is exercising another aspect of His mercy. He cuts out the malignant cells in order to save the rest of the body.

Recall God's mercies in your personal life, His mercies extended to your family and church. What are the physical, psychological, and spiritual benefits of praise?

A RENEWED ISRAEL (1 Cor. 10:1-13).

What bearing does Israelite history have on the Christian church today? 1 Cor. 10:1-13.

"The experience of Israel, referred to in the above words by the apostle [1 Cor. 10:1-5], and as recorded in the one hundred fifth and one hundred sixth psalms, contains lessons of warning that the people of God in these last days especially need to study. I urge that these chapters be read at least once every week."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 98.

Who constitute spiritual Israel? The brief history of the Red Sea crossing and some sad experiences of transgression in the wilderness were not well known to the Corinthian church. In this wicked city were Jews who had been converted to Christ (Acts 18:1, 2), but also non-Jews who had not been schooled in the history of the Jewish nation. Together they constituted "spiritual Israel."

"Paul's efforts in Corinth were not without fruit. Many turned from the worship of idols to serve the living God, and a large church was enrolled under the banner of Christ. Some were rescued from among the most dissipated of the Gentiles and became monuments of the mercy of God."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 252.

This was in harmony with God's original plan and with Paul's obedience to it. In the same city he had said: "From henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles" (Acts 18:6).

A broader meaning, therefore, was to be given to the word *Israel*. It would now include all who by faith accepted Christ as the Saviour. The early Jerusalem council recognized this. (See Acts 15:17.)

Paul himself, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, gives a clear statement: "Salvation is come unto the Gentiles" (Rom. 11:11). To the Gentiles he writes: "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29; compare Rom. 3:29).

Those who make the Word of God sure in their lives are now the spiritual successor to God's original chosen people. Israel's history has vital lessons for the remnant church, standing, as it does, on the border of the Promised Land.

Ask yourself: Am I so engrossed in the history of Israel that I overlook the fact that it is His story? Do I profit from the lessons to be learned from the experience of God's people in the past?

FURTHER STUDY: Study Stephen's defense in relation to the subject of this week's lesson: Acts 7:1-53. Read *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 98-103 and *Testimonies*, vol. 8, on "Forgetfulness," pp. 107-122.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What positive and negative parallels can you draw between the experiences of ancient Israel and the experiences of the last-day church?
2. Because praise for God is a manifestation of faith, do you think it would be beneficial to introduce more praise into our worship services? How would you suggest we go about this?

SUMMARY: Today's church must share the experiences of the past with its new and younger members. God's miraculous providences in the leadership of His people will strengthen their faith in this movement and encourage them to hold fast to what Christ gave us.

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From Death to Life



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Psalms 86, 88, 130.

MEMORY TEXT: "Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption" (Psalm 130:7).

KEY THOUGHT. Even though all Christians suffer despair at times, there is hope in Christ. Eternal life in and through Christ is our glorious hope.

THE HOPEFUL AND THE HOPELESS. The thieves on either side of the crucified Son of God represent two classes of people in our world today, the hopeful and the hopeless.

"Both the men who were crucified with Jesus had at first railed upon Him; and one under his suffering only became more desperate and defiant. But not so with his companion. This man was not a hardened criminal. . . .

"The Holy Spirit illuminates his mind, and little by little the chain of evidence is joined together. . . . Hope is mingled with anguish in his voice as the helpless, dying soul casts himself upon a dying Saviour. 'Lord, remember me,' he cries, 'when thou comest into thy kingdom.'

"Quickly the answer came. Soft and melodious the tone, full of love, compassion, and power the words: Verily I say unto thee today, Thou shalt be with me in paradise."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 749, 750.

The experience of this repentant thief illustrates the lesson for this week, and holds out to every soul the promise of fellowship with Christ in Paradise.

DARK DESPAIR (Ps. 88:1-9).

What specific troubles resulted in the despondent tone of this psalm? Ps. 88:3, 4, 7, 8.

Not only is the writer in exceedingly poor physical health, he has also lost the comforting presence of his friends. Worse still, he is burdened by his sin and detects no answer to his prayers. Verse 8 may suggest leprosy, which would isolate the sufferer, or there may have been only a suspicion of this contagious disease.

Review a New Testament example of a person in a similar predicament. Mark 2:1-12 (compare the parallel scriptures, Matt. 9:2-8; Luke 5:18-26).

"Like the leper, this paralytic had lost all hope of recovery. His disease was the result of a life of sin, and his sufferings were embittered by remorse. . . .

"The palsied man was entirely helpless, and, seeing no prospect of aid from any quarter, he had sunk into despair. Then he heard of the wonderful works of Jesus. He was told that others, as sinful and helpless as he, had been healed; even lepers had been cleansed. And the friends who reported these things encouraged him to believe that he too might be cured if he could be carried to Jesus. . . . He feared that the pure Physician would not tolerate him in His presence.

"Yet it was not physical restoration he desired so much as relief from the burden of sin. If he could see Jesus, and receive the assurance of forgiveness and peace with Heaven, he would be content to live or die, according to God's will."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 267.

William Cowper, the highly introspective English poet, had many occasions when he was troubled. At a time when his close friend Mrs. Mary Unwin was very ill, he wrote the hymn "O for a Closer Walk" (*SDA Hymnal*, no. 315). Cowper hated his sin: "I hate the sins that made Thee mourn, / And drove Thee from my breast." But he sought strength from Christ to separate from his dearest idol.

You are asked to visit an AIDS victim who is bedridden and close to death. What would you say to him? What would you read from the Bible? Where would you place the emphasis—on the possibility of physical healing, or on the hope of eternal life through Christ?

DEATH'S APPROACH (Ps. 88:10-18).

Note the clues to restoration and recovery given in the words of the psalmist. Ps. 88:1, 2, 9, 13.

A soul is never hopeless as long as he continues to pray. His prayer is not only "in the morning," or "daily," but also "day and night." The word *prevent* in verse 13 has the old meaning of the word, "to come before" or "to precede." (Compare 1 Thess. 4:15.)

What good reason does the sufferer give for his desire to live? Ps. 88:10-12 (compare Isa. 38:17-19).

The psalmist had come to the edge of the abyss and looked down into its dismal depths, but on the brink he clung to God with the hope that he could live.

An example of God's willingness to respond. "In the midst of his prosperous reign King Hezekiah was suddenly stricken with a fatal malady. 'Sick unto death,' his case was beyond the power of man to help. And the last vestige of hope seemed removed when the prophet Isaiah appeared before him with the message, 'Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live.' Isaiah 38:1.

"The outlook seemed utterly dark; yet the king could still pray to the One who had hitherto been his 'refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.' Psalm 46:1. . . .

"The dying ruler had served his God faithfully, and had strengthened the confidence of the people in Jehovah as their Supreme Ruler. And, like David, he could now plead:

Let my prayer come before thee:
Incline thine ear unto my cry;
For my soul is full of troubles:
And my life draweth nigh unto the grave.

Psalm 88:2, 3. . . .

"He whose 'compassions fail not,' heard the prayer of His servant."—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 340, 341.

If you have passed through the dark valley of trial and have felt deserted, what gave you the courage to carry on? Underline the influence that gave the greatest relief: prayer, Bible reading, the support of loved ones, divine leading, a counselor, the Holy Spirit's comfort.

CONFESSION (Ps. 130:1-3).

What dilemma confronts the sinner who appeals to the Sinless One? Ps. 130:3.

This cry of distress is common to humanity. It is a desperate expression of a drowning person, or of one sinking slowly into a quicksand where every effort for survival only results in more imminent danger. Somebody must help the sinner, but the only one able to deliver is One who abhors sin.

Saved to serve. John Newton (1725-1807), author of the hymn "Amazing Grace" (*SDA Hymnal*, no. 108), plunged into the depths of sin, and from being captain of a slave ship, fell into the degrading position of being a virtual slave himself to an unscrupulous slave dealer. His conscience was never completely stifled. Recovering from a malignant fever in West Africa, then known as "the white man's grave," he read Thomas à Kempis's book *The Imitation of Christ*. After his deliverance in 1748 from a terrible storm at sea, he gave his life to Christ. His cry from the depths of despair echoed that of the psalmist, and he began a new life.

How did David recognize the true nature of sin? Ps. 51:4 (compare 2 Sam. 12:13; 24:10).

"In the time of his greatest outward triumph, David was in the greatest peril, and met his most humiliating defeat."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 716. After his adultery with Bathsheba, he prayed to God: "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned" (Ps. 51:4).

But had not David sinned against Bathsheba, against her parents, her grandfather Ahithophel, and against Uriah and Joab? Nevertheless, his sin against his Creator was the most heinous.

"All wrong done to others reaches back from the injured one to God. David had committed a grievous sin, toward both Uriah and Bathsheba, and he keenly felt this. But infinitely greater was his sin against God."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 722.

His repentance was deep and sincere. While God forgave him, the scars and the inevitable fruits of transgression were not removed. When Jesus comes, David will reap in full the spiritual harvest of divine forgiveness.

What are the dangers involved in holding on to feelings of guilt after God has forgiven you? Can you illustrate?

FORGIVENESS (Ps. 130:4; 86).

How soon after David's confession did the Lord grant him forgiveness? 2 Sam. 12:13; Ps. 51:17.

David's willing acknowledgement of his sin, and his sacrifice of "a broken and a contrite heart," immediately received the inexpressible gift of God's mercy and lovingkindness. In the parable of the Pharisee and the publican (Luke 18:9-14), the publican, conscience-stricken and humble, uttered a very short prayer for mercy. In contrast, the Pharisee made a long prayer "with himself," exalting his own so-called righteousness, praising himself that he was not unjust or sin-stained like the publican. (See Rom. 10:3.)

The publican did not have to wait until he reached home before he was made righteous in God's sight, for he "went down to his house justified" (Luke 18:14).

What reaction does God's forgiveness arouse in the sinner? Ps. 130:4, 5; 86:5-7, 10, 12-15.

The fear mentioned in Psalm 130:4 is the awe awakened by the comprehension that a sinless God can pardon so freely. The Father gave His Son to die in order that whosoever believes in Him might escape sin's penalty and inherit everlasting life. "Amazing grace! how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see."

Saved by grace. John Newton never forgot his early life of sin and his rescue from it. His dying words were: "My memory is nearly gone, but I remember two things—that I am a great sinner, and that Jesus Christ is a great Saviour." His epitaph, composed by himself, hangs in the church where he is buried. It reads: "John Newton, clerk, once an infidel and libertine; a servant of slaves in Africa; was, by the rich mercy of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, preserved, restored, pardoned, and appointed to preach the faith he had long laboured to destroy."

The prophet Isaiah states that God's ability to forgive and cleanse demonstrates His glory (Isa. 42:7, 8; 48:10, 11). He stresses that it was the Lord's nature to be gracious and merciful, and that the returning sinner is abundantly pardoned (Isa. 55:7).

How can we glorify God's name? Does repeating the same sin and accepting God's mercy and pardon glorify Him?

REDEMPTION (Ps. 130:5-8).

What is the close association between redemption and hope? Ps. 130:5-8 (compare Rom. 8:23, 24).

Redemption is in the past in the sense that Christ has bought us back and we are His children by adoption. It is present because we enjoy present deliverance from sin. But it is also future in the sense that He has not yet come. This prospect of the Second Advent is a "blessed hope" (Titus 2:13, 14).

Who are "they that watch for the morning"? Ps. 130:5, 6.

The identification of the watchers is not as important as their attitude of hopefulness. The psalmist could be thinking of the sentinels who were keeping guard on the city wall, weary perhaps in their vigil, and hopeful that the eastern sky would soon light up to mark the end of their turn of duty. Or the allusion may be to the Levites on duty by night (Ps. 134:1) in the temple, who wait for the morning dawn.

Are we eagerly waiting for the glorious appearing of our Saviour, watching the signs of His coming, and keeping this hope alive in our hearts?

What does it mean to wait for the Lord? Ps. 130:5, 6; 37:7.

The parallelism (a feature of Hebrew poetry) in verse 6 shows that watching is associated with waiting. Its meaning is explained in Psalm 37:7: "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him." It is the same as "wait on," which occurs frequently in the Psalms. (See Ps. 25:3, 5, 21; 27:14.)

We need God's guiding hand, counsel from His Word, before taking any forward step. Our lives must be in harmony with His will. As willing servants of the Lord Jesus Christ (see Rom. 6:17, 18), are we eagerly watching for the dawn of the day of our release?

In what practical ways has your life been affected by your determination to watch and wait for the coming of Jesus? Can you detect some aspects of your lifestyle that are inconsistent with waiting and watching?

FURTHER STUDY: Read again Psalms 86, 88, and 130. Read the last half of the chapters titled, "Asking to Give" in *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 145-149, and "God's People Delivered" in *The Great Controversy*, pp. 644-652.

"Christ did not fail, neither was He discouraged, and His followers are to manifest a faith of the same enduring nature. They are to live as He lived, and work as He worked, because they depend on Him as the great Master Worker. Courage, energy, and perseverance they must possess. Though apparent impossibilities obstruct their way, by His grace they are to go forward. Instead of deploring difficulties, they are called upon to surmount them. They are to despair of nothing, and to hope for everything. With the golden chain of His matchless love Christ has bound them to the throne of God. It is His purpose that the highest influence in the universe, emanating from the source of all power, shall be theirs. They are to have power to resist evil, power that neither earth, nor death, nor hell can master, power that will enable them to overcome as Christ overcame."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 679, 680.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. John's wife has passed away after a terrible struggle with cancer. As he suffers grief and loneliness, how can you bring him comfort, emotional support, and spiritual reinforcement?
2. Jean has had an affair. Her husband has divorced her, and she is spurned by many of her friends. How would you minister to her? What approach could be harmful rather than helpful?

SUMMARY: Humanity is doomed to death because of sin. Praise God, an escape route has been provided! If we repent and confess our sins, Christ will forgive us and change us. He holds out the sure and certain hope of eternal life, and sends His Holy Spirit to dwell within us.

When the Going Gets Tough



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Psalms 83, 90, 91, 107.

MEMORY TEXT: "Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" (Psalm 107:8).

KEY THOUGHT. In an imperfect world, the stronghold of Satan, there is trouble of every kind. But the stronger arm of the Lord is always near to protect and to deliver.

GOD INTERVENES. Isaac Watts, the noted hymn-writer, was a Dissenter, or Nonconformist; he was not a member of the Church of England. An entry for March 1, 1710, in his personal diary tells that the mob rose and pulled down the pews and galleries of six meetinghouses of Dissenters, but were dispersed by the guards at 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning.

In 1714 the Schism Bill was passed, which would have closed every school and academy in England unless it was licensed by a bishop and conformed to Anglican ritual. The bill received the royal assent on June 25 and was due to be enforced on August 1. But Queen Anne died on August 1.

George I, as he was later known, had been designated as Anne's successor. The Dissenters were spared their worst fears as the Schism Bill was never put into operation. At this time Isaac Watts wrote one of his five paraphrases of the ninetieth psalm, the hymn "O God, Our Help in Ages Past," a hymn that is used to this day on memorial occasions.

THREAT TO EXISTENCE (Psalm 83).

What heathen nations had allied themselves against Israel, and what was their intention? Ps. 83:2-8.

While the psalmist does not locate his psalm in history, it evidently refers to the time of Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 20), when the Ammonites, Moabites, and others (verses 1, 10), massed "a great multitude" (verse 2) to fight against Judah. Their intention to exterminate them as a nation (Ps. 83:4) is stated in 2 Chronicles 20:11.

The book *Prophets and Kings* (pp. 198-200) quotes 2 Chronicles 20:1-13 and almost immediately adds Psalm 83 in its entirety.

Jehoshaphat "was well prepared to meet almost any foe; yet in this crisis he put not his trust in the arm of flesh. Not by disciplined armies and fenced cities, but by a living faith in the God of Israel, could he hope to gain the victory over these heathen who boasted of their power to humble Judah in the eyes of the nations."—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 198, 199.

Judah was the remnant of God's chosen people, and warfare against them was warfare against their Protector (Ps. 83:2, 5, 12). This explains to some extent the prayer of verses 9-15, in which the psalmist recalls the victory of Barak and Deborah over the Canaanites (Judges 4:2, 22-24), and of Gideon over the Midianites (Judges 7:25; 8:12, 21).

What was Jehoshaphat's reason for invoking the Lord's judgments on his enemies? Ps. 83:16-18 (compare 2 Chron. 20:29, 30).

The ultimate objective is that God's name may be exalted, and that sinners may be converted. In actual fact these enemies of Israel fell to fighting each other (2 Chron. 20:23). Their aim of wiping Israel off the map recoiled upon their own heads. (See Prov. 26:27.)

Who or what is your greatest enemy? The person who is jealous of you? Someone who would harm you physically? The friend who tries to lead you into sin? Your own disposition? The thoughts you cannot control? The unseen demons who attempt to manipulate you?

How do you deal with these enemies? How do you appropriate God's power to overcome them?

LOST; IMPRISONED (Ps. 107:1-15).

This psalm is notable for its repetition of a cry for help (verses 6, 13, 19, 28), the Lord's answer (verses 7, 14, 20, 29), and the desire that the rescued ones would show their gratitude (verses 8, 15, 21, 31). The scene changes from desert to prison, from sickness to shipwreck.

What notable experiences of Israel showed God's goodness and mercy? Ps. 107:1-5, 7.

We must not only *feel* grateful; we are admonished to *express* our gratitude. While the Exodus multitude experienced hardship in a waterless and foodless desert, their cries were heard. "There was not one feeble person among their tribes" (Ps. 105:37; compare Neh. 9:21).

Be thankful, even for difficulties. "Let us talk . . . of the great power of God to bind up all our interests with His own. Tell of the matchless power of Christ, and speak of His glory. All heaven is interested in our salvation. . . . Have we not reason to be thankful every moment, thankful even when there are apparent difficulties in our pathway?"—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 253, 254.

"In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thess. 5:18).

What spiritual significance is there in darkness and bonds? Ps. 107:10-14.

In ancient times prisons were usually underground, hence dark and damp, and prisoners were fettered and manacled. (See Acts 12:4, 6; Ps. 105:18.) Our Lord's ministry, among other things, was to deliver the captives and to release the bruised (Luke 4:18). We have no record of the Lord's opening prison doors for incarcerated criminals during His earthly ministry, but we do have numerous examples of sinners having their chains of sin broken.

Israel's rebellion against God (Ps. 107:11) brought them into physical bondage, so they were prisoners both physically and spiritually. However, their cry of repentance brought the Lord to break their bonds and to lead them out of darkness (verse 14).

Note any difficulties you have faced this week from which you have learned something positive.

POOR HEALTH: STORM-TOSSED (Ps. 107:17-31).

A vicious circle. Sickness of the body sometimes brings discouragement and doubt, which lead to sickness of the soul. Sickness of the soul leads to carelessness and ungodliness, which often cause mental and physical illness and a continuation of the ruinous cycle.

Note the association of the complaint in Psalm 107:17, 18 with the remedy indicated in Psalm 103:3.

The story of the paralytic told by the physician Luke shows how the Great Physician heals both body and soul. (See Luke 5:24-26.)

"In simple faith he accepted the words of Jesus as the boon of new life. He urged no further request, but lay in blissful silence, too happy for words. The light of heaven irradiated his countenance, and the people looked with awe upon the scene."

"The healing of the body was an evidence of the power that had renewed the heart."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 268, 270.

What are the "sacrifices of thanksgiving" (Ps. 107:22) for Christians who do not slay and offer animal sacrifices? Heb. 13:15 (compare Hosea 14:2; Ps. 119:108).

"Let praise and thanksgiving be expressed in song. When tempted, instead of giving utterance to our feelings, let us by faith lift up a song of thanksgiving to God. Song is a weapon that we can always use against discouragement. As we thus open the heart to the sunlight of the Saviour's presence, we shall have health and His blessing."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 254.

The seaman's distress (Ps. 107:25-27) recalls an incident in the New Testament. See Mark 6:45-51.

The storm took their minds off their disappointment with Jesus' unwillingness to become king. (See John 6:15-20.) The Lord used their distress as a means of awakening them to a realization of their total dependence upon Him. (See *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 378, 380.)

Can you illustrate from your personal experience how physical illness or danger draws you closer to Christ?

THE LORD'S GOODNESS (Ps. 107:32-43).

Describe some of the blessings the Lord bestows. Ps. 107:35-38, 41. Why does the Lord sometimes withdraw His blessings? Verses 33, 34, 39, 40.

The contrasts are dramatic—rivers turned to wilderness and wilderness to standing water; water springs converted to dry ground and vice versa; fruitful land reduced to barrenness, and fields and vineyards made to yield fruit; the poor exalted, the princes brought low. The positive actions are the direct blessings of the Lord that cause the righteous to rejoice. The negative ones are also blessings, designed to turn the wicked from their iniquity. In all these apparent contradictions, the man endowed with wisdom will discern the lovingkindness of the Lord (verse 43).

God uses nature. "As distant as this may be for us, the Bible holds that He [God] uses nature to accomplish His moral judgments. For example, Elijah proclaims to wicked King Ahab, 'As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word' (1 Kings 17:1). Thus, for the psalmist, morality affects both personal health and material prosperity (see vv. 17-18). We may assert that the sins of the church have also produced barrenness—the absence of God's powerful Spirit and of the life-giving washing of His Word. . . .

"When we repent of our sins and return to the Lord today, we are made secure and prosperous. . . . Churches that are experiencing the blessing of God are churches that have gone through a deep cleansing. Out of this a fresh spiritual hunger has developed, which only God can satisfy. . . .

"Even before the return of the Lord, we too can expect to see the oppressors of God's people fall under His judgment and the poor who trust in Him exalted. No wonder the gospel is spreading like wildfire among the poor in the Third World today."—Donald M. Williams, *The Communicator's Commentary, Psalms 73-150* (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1989), pp. 285, 286.

What will the outpouring of the Holy Spirit do for God's people? Joel 2:23-27.

In what material ways have you been blessed since you decided to serve Christ? In your times of material hardship, have you been conscious of spiritual blessings?

THE LORD'S PROTECTION (Psalm 91).

Time of trouble. "The present is a time of overwhelming interest to all living. Rulers and statesmen, men who occupy positions of trust and authority, thinking men and women of all classes, have their attention fixed upon the events taking place about us. They are watching the strained, restless relations that exist among the nations. They observe the intensity that is taking possession of every earthly element, and they recognize that something great and decisive is about to take place—that the world is on the verge of a stupendous crisis. . . . A storm is gathering, ready to burst upon the earth; and when God shall bid His angels loose the winds, there will be such a scene of strife as no pen can picture."—*Education*, pp. 179, 180.

Where can God's people find protection in this time of trouble? Ps. 91:1-4, 9, 14-16.

"God's commandment-keeping people stand under the broad shield of Omnipotence."—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 120.

Four names for divinity are used in the two opening verses of this psalm: Most High; Almighty; the LORD; God. Our Lord is supreme, powerful, eternal, and great. Two of these names are repeated in verse 9. With the supreme Protector on our side, do we need to feel insecure or apprehensive about the future?

What additional protection is promised? Ps. 91:11-13; 34:7.

Notice that these verses were quoted, in part, by Satan when he tempted Jesus after His baptism. (See Matt. 4:6, Mark 1:13, Luke 4:10, 11.) Jesus knew that as long as He relied upon His Father He would keep Him from falling. Because of His complete reliance on the Father, Jesus was given complete victory over the temptations of the evil one. This same victory may be ours.

In the time of trouble just preceding Christ's second advent, what assurance of safety will believers have? Ps. 91:5-8, 14-16. (See *The Great Controversy*, p. 634.)

What happens when I place myself unnecessarily in the way of temptation? How could I expect Satan to react?

FURTHER STUDY: Read Psalms 90 and 121. Read also *The Great Controversy*, chapter 39, "The Time of Trouble," pp. 613-634.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why do you think the Lord allows a time of trouble to come upon the world *after* the final decision has been made as to who will be saved and who will be lost? Why doesn't Jesus come immediately after that decision is made in the pre-advent judgment?
2. Looking back over your life, what explanations can you give for the Lord's allowing you to pass through certain trials and difficulties?

SUMMARY: Whatever difficulty, threat, or disaster may come into your experience—sickness, persecution, or frustration—you can be sure your heavenly Father knows all about it. His infinite wisdom and power will support and deliver in the hour of need.



Southern Asia Division of

Seventh-day Adventists

P.O. BOX 2, HCF, HOORUR 625 110, INDIA. CABLE: ADVENTIST. TELEEX: 436 250 SDA IN TEL: 2230, 2708, 3710.

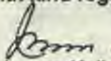
May 28, 1990

Elder Don Gilbert, Treasurer
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Dear Don:

We have just received the 1989 4th Quarter 13th Sabbath Offering which amounts to \$424,350.00. This is the largest amount that the Southern Asia Division has ever received from the Members of the World Church. Please pass on our thanks to our Brethren around the World on our behalf for the liberal offering they have given.

With kind regards,


Johnson Koilpillai, Treasurer

If you did it once, you can do it again!

Our Earthly Pilgrimage



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Psalms 120, 122-124, 132.

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

KEY THOUGHT. For Christians this earth is not their home—their citizenship is in heaven, and this life is a pilgrimage to attain that goal.

THE HOME OF THE SAVED. Thomas Rawson Taylor was born in Yorkshire, England, in 1807, the son of a minister. After leaving school he worked in a merchant's office, and then with a printer. He then answered the call to the ministry and trained for the Congregational pastorate. In 1830 he was appointed to a church in Sheffield. The following January ill health compelled him to transfer to his former training college, where he taught classics. Illness dogged his steps there also, and he was compelled to hand in his resignation.

He wrote several hymns, the most well-known of which, written during his last illness, anticipated his early death. It was titled "Heaven Is My Home." Taylor died in 1835, at age 27, ending his short earthly pilgrimage with the firm hope of finding his real home in the eternal fatherland.

This week's lesson encourages us to look beyond the present to the joys of the heavenly kingdom.

DAVID A PILGRIM (Psalm 120).

What circumstances led to the writing of Psalm 120? Ps. 120:1, 6, 7.

David was well aware of Saul's inconsistent behavior and of his insincere promises. David dodged Saul's javelin twice (1 Sam. 18:11) and escaped unknowingly Saul's plot to kill him by means of the Philistines (verses 17, 25). Sensing Saul's enmity (verse 29), David trusted Jonathan (1 Sam. 19:1, 2), avoided the maniac's javelin once more (verse 10), and lived in constant fear (1 Sam. 20:1). He unburdened his soul to Samuel (1 Sam. 19:18). When Jonathan also was the object of one of his father's outrageous attacks, he "knew that it was determined of his father to slay David" (1 Sam. 20:32, 33).

Hunted by his enemy, David sang. David "knew that Samuel's death had broken another bond of restraint from the actions of Saul, and he felt less secure than when the prophet lived. While the attention of Saul was engaged in mourning for the death of Samuel, David took the opportunity to seek a place of greater security; so he fled to the wilderness of Paran. It was here that he composed the one hundred and twentieth and twenty-first psalms. In these desolate wilds, realizing that the prophet was dead, and the king was his enemy, he sang."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 664.

How powerful an organ is the tongue? Ps. 120:2-5 (compare James 3:1-14; Ps. 55:21).

David prayed that he would not be untrue to his word as Saul had been. Surrounded by enemies who were ready to deliver him and his men to Saul, David felt that he was in the midst of untrustworthy heathen. (See 1 Sam. 23:12, 19, 20.) Meshech, a tribe descended from one of the sons of Japheth (Gen. 10:2), was in the far north, and the tribe of Kedar, descended from a grandson of Hagar and Abraham (Gen. 25:13), dwelt east of the Jordan. Neither of them was visited by David. He speaks poetically as if he were surrounded by these godless people.

The apostle Paul, like David, experienced "perils among false brethren" (2 Cor. 11:26). How do you handle situations of this kind? How would you recommend that false brethren should be treated?

PILGRIMAGE TO JERUSALEM (Psalm 122).

Annual feasts. Three times a year all able-bodied Israelite males were to go to Shiloh, later Jerusalem, bringing an offering to the sanctuary. As they neared the place of worship, "the grand Hebrew psalms were chanted. . . . At the sound of the signal trumpet, with the music of cymbals, the chorus of thanksgiving arose."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 538. (Then follow quotations from Ps. 122:1-6; 125:1, 2; and 122:7.)

Why was the psalmist glad to worship at Jerusalem? Ps. 122:1, 3, 5, 7.

The word *compact* (verse 3) comes from the Hebrew meaning "to be united," "to be joined with." "Some see in this an allusion to the gathering of God's people for spiritual fellowship."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 909. The city was also the center of government (verse 5); it was to be a city of peace (*shalom*). As the spiritual and civil center of the nation, Jerusalem was to ensure both spiritual and material prosperity.

What symbolism did the pilgrims see in the geographical position of Jerusalem? Ps. 125:1, 2.

The sanctuary on Mount Moriah, later the site of Solomon's temple, was on a high ridge surrounded by steep valleys south, east, and west. But beyond these valleys were higher mountains; for example, the Mount of Olives. The circling mountains reminded the pilgrims of the Lord's protecting hand (Ex. 34:24).

What promise is even more sure than the figure of the surrounding mountains? Isa. 54:10-13.

Habakkuk 3:6 says that "everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow." But he adds: "His ways are everlasting." So when "every mountain and island" are "moved out of their places" (Rev. 6:14), God's kindness will not depart from His people.

In your pilgrimage to the heavenly Jerusalem, what sentiments expressed by David are especially meaningful to you?

ISRAEL'S DISTRESSING PILGRIMAGE (Psalm 123).

For an illustration of the kind of situation that would lead faithful people to pray in the words of Psalm 123:3, 4, read 2 Kings 18:17-26.

The New International Version translates Psalm 123:3, 4: "Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us, for we have endured much contempt. We have endured much ridicule from the proud, much contempt from the arrogant."

Rabshakeh scorned Hezekiah's possible ally Egypt as a broken reed, then chided him for trusting in the Lord, whose altars he had taken away (2 Kings 18:4), and even claimed that this same Lord had told him to destroy Jerusalem (verse 25). Moreover, he refused to deliver his scornful diatribe in Syrian or Aramaic, but spoke in Hebrew so that the common people could get his message also. He sarcastically offered to supply 2,000 horses if the Jews had men enough to ride them! (See 2 Kings 18:23.)

In any distress, where should we turn our eyes? Ps. 123:1, 2 (compare Isa. 37:1-8).

Hezekiah's reaction to the blasphemous scorn poured upon him and his people was to discard his royal robes and put on robes of mourning, and then to consult the prophet Isaiah. (See Isa. 37:1, 2.)

Lean on God for guidance and wisdom. "God's everlasting arm encircles the soul that turns to Him for aid, however feeble that soul may be. The precious things of the hills shall perish, but the soul that lives for God shall abide with Him. 'The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.' 1 John 2:17. The city of God will open its golden gates to receive him who learned while on earth to lean on God for guidance and wisdom, for comfort and hope, amid loss and affliction. The songs of the angels will welcome him there, and for him the tree of life shall yield its fruit."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 99, 100. (See Isa. 54:10.)

A fellow believer comes to you with the story that the people he works with during the week make fun of his religious convictions and try to undermine his efficiency on the job. What counsel would you give?

ISRAEL'S DELIVERANCE (Psalm 124).

While the context of Psalm 124 cannot be identified, it certainly could have been sung most enthusiastically by Hezekiah when the apparently victorious Assyrian army was slain without a sword being raised or an arrow shot. Psalm 124 is a perfect answer to the distraught plea of the previous psalm.

How had Jerusalem been defended? Ps. 124:1, 2, 8 (compare Isa. 37:33-35).

The Assyrian ruler had boasted that the Lord had told him to destroy Jerusalem (Isa. 36:10). While God had used him to punish Judah (Isa. 10:5), the invaders intended to go farther than the Lord intended. The axe was then boasting against the axe-man (Isa. 10:15), and the Assyrians found themselves fighting against God, with inevitable disaster resulting from their folly (Isa. 10:16, 17).

How did the Lord defend His faithful apostles in the early church? Acts 5:17-42.

Gamaliel, teacher of the apostle Paul, uttered some wise words to his fellow Pharisees when he recognized the Holy Spirit at work in the apostles. God is ever ready to defend His servants.

What significance do you see in the description of the Lord in Psalm 124:8?

The rapacious Assyrians were not unlike the Babylonians who swallowed up (Jer. 51:34) their enemies like voracious beasts. But the Creator can easily cut the ropes of the trap, just as easily as the angel of the resurrection rolled the heavy stone from the grave of Christ. (See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 780.)

No wonder the apostle Paul answered his own rhetorical question, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31), with such resounding confidence (verses 32-34).

Is there any difference in Assyrians fighting against God, Jewish leaders fighting against God's apostles, and my exerting my own desires contrary to God's revealed will? How can a rebellious attitude be overcome?

THE PILGRIM'S REST (Psalm 132).

God's dwelling place. Because the ark was the outward symbol of God's presence, many times He is addressed as dwelling or sitting "between the cherubim" (Ps. 80:1; 99:1). Moses was assured of God's presence in the words "And there will I meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims" (Ex. 25:22; compare 30:6). The ark was housed in a temporary structure from the time of Joshua to the time of Solomon.

What was David's desire and why was it not approved by God? Ps. 132:1-5 (compare 2 Sam. 7:5-7, 12, 13; 1 Chron. 22:7-10.)

"Though the cherished purpose of his heart had been denied, David received the message with gratitude."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 712. He was glad that the Lord had promised to use his son to build the temple.

What indicated the end of the pilgrimage of the children of Israel? Ps. 132:6-10, 13, 14 (compare 2 Chron. 6:41, 42).

Psalm 132:8-10 expresses the same thought as 2 Chronicles 6:41, 42. The latter are the closing words of the prayer that Solomon offered at the dedication of the temple, which was intended to be God's dwelling place forever. (See 2 Chron. 6:12, 13; 7:1.) The probability is that Solomon himself was the author of the psalm.

What condition was associated with the Lord's promise? Ps. 132:12, 13.

Unfortunately, David's line was not obedient to God's covenant. The promise will be fulfilled when the Lamb will stand in Zion, "the heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb. 12:22), with the firstfruits of those redeemed (Rev. 14:1, 4). The pilgrimage of humanity will then come to a triumphant end. (See Ps. 132:14; Rev. 21:3; 22:4.)

In what ways are the principles of God's covenant manifested in your manner of life? (See Heb. 8:10-12.) Are you confident that when the pilgrimage ends you will have a place with the redeemed?

FURTHER STUDY: Compare the similar themes in the following pairs of psalms: 120 and 131; 122 and 125; 124 and 129. Read *The Great Controversy*, "God's People Delivered," pp. 644-652; "The Controversy Ended," pp. 674-678; and *Education*, "The School of the Hereafter," pp. 304-307.

The prospect for the redeemed. "And the years of eternity, as they roll, will bring richer and still more glorious revelations of God and of Christ. As knowledge is progressive, so will love, reverence, and happiness increase. The more men learn of God, the greater will be their admiration of His character. As Jesus opens before them the riches of redemption and the amazing achievements in the great controversy with Satan, the hearts of the ransomed thrill with more fervent devotion, and with more rapturous joy they sweep the harps of gold; and ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of voices unite to swell the mighty chorus of praise."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 678.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What prospect for the redeemed do you find most exciting? Why?
2. How would you go about explaining to a nonreligious person God's control and direction of human affairs? In light of the apparent international confusion throughout history, how would you explain to such a person that God's purposes have been consistently fulfilled and will reach a victorious conclusion?
3. Comparing the Seventh-day Adventist Church with ancient Israel, what aspects of Israel's experience do you think most resemble the experience of the modern church?

SUMMARY: Although we are all citizens of some country, our real, eternal citizenship is in heaven. In Christ we are "fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household" (Eph. 2:19, NIV). Our life on earth is a pilgrimage, a journey along the narrow path that leads to life eternal and the inestimable privilege of seeing Christ face to face in the land of eternal peace.

Good Homes, Stable Society



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Psalms 101, 127, 128, 133, 144.

MEMORY TEXT: "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain" (Psalm 127:1).

KEY THOUGHT. Even though sin has disrupted God's original plan for the family, by serving the Lord, families can be a stabilizing factor in an imperfect society.

"BE IT EVER SO HUMBLE, THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME." These words were written by John Howard Payne, who was born in New York in 1791. He took up the precarious career of a playwright and went to England in 1813.

His work did not bring him sufficient means of support. He went to France but did not achieve success there. In 1822 he was stranded in Paris, discouraged and almost penniless. Recalling his early days at home, he committed his thoughts to rhyme and wrote the words of his now-famous song "Home, Sweet Home," which was part of an operetta performed seven months later in London.

All who have traveled to or lived in a country not their own will have experienced the sentiments evoked by the thought of home. While time may cloud the memory somewhat, home is recalled as a place of peace, relaxation, and security. How much more so is the heavenly home that Jesus is preparing for them that love Him!

THE IDEAL HOME (Psalm 127).

Match each of the following ideas in Proverbs with a verse from Psalm 127.

Prov. 21:30, 31 Safety _____

Prov. 3:24 Sleep _____

Prov. 17:6 Children _____

Prov. 27:11 Defense _____

The superscription of Psalm 127 attributes the writing "for Solomon," but this may also be translated "of Solomon."

What two memorials did the Lord preserve from the first home on earth? Gen. 2:3, 15, 18, 23, 24. Why?

"The Garden of Eden was a representation of what God desired the whole earth to become, and it was His purpose that, as the human family increased in numbers, they should establish other homes and schools like the one He had given. Thus in the course of time the whole earth might be occupied with homes and schools where the words and the works of God should be studied, and where the students should thus be fitted more and more fully to reflect, throughout endless ages, the light of the knowledge of His glory."—*Education*, p. 22. "In Eden, God set up the memorial of His work of creation, in placing His blessing upon the seventh day. The Sabbath was committed to Adam, the father and representative of the whole human family."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 48.

Since marriage and the Sabbath are the object of Satan's attack, particular attention should be directed to their preservation.

How only can we achieve a happy home? Ps. 127:1, 2.

Notice three things that are "in vain." These plainly teach us that while human effort must be expended, it will be frustrated unless the Lord approves and directs it. Building a structure without God is disastrous.

How can you bring your family closer to the divine ideal?

FATHERHOOD (Ps. 128:1, 2).

What is one indispensable characteristic of a good father? Ps. 128:1 (compare Gen. 18:19; Deut. 6:6, 7).

The blessing of Psalm 128:1 is especially addressed to fathers.

"God called Abraham to be a teacher of His word, He chose him to be the father of a great nation, because He saw that Abraham would instruct his children and his household in the principles of God's law. And that which gave power to Abraham's teaching was the influence of his own life."—*Education*, p. 187.

Wherever Abraham went he built an altar to the Lord and led his family in worship. (See Gen. 12:7, 8; 13:18.) Those periods of worship exerted an enormous influence on members of his own household and on unbelieving neighbors. "Like the patriarchs of old, those who profess to love God should erect an altar to the Lord wherever they pitch their tent. If ever there was a time when every house should be a house of prayer, it is now. Fathers and mothers should often lift up their hearts to God in humble supplication for themselves and their children. Let the father, as priest of the household, lay upon the altar of God the morning and evening sacrifice, while the wife and children unite in prayer and praise. In such a household Jesus will love to tarry."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 144.

In what other way should a husband and father provide for his wife and family? Ps. 128:2 (compare Gen. 2:15; 3:19).

"At the creation, labor was appointed as a blessing. It meant development, power, happiness. The changed condition of the earth through the curse of sin has brought a change in the conditions of labor; yet though now attended with anxiety, weariness, and pain, it is still a source of happiness and development. And it is a safeguard against temptation. Its discipline places a check on self-indulgence, and promotes industry, purity, and firmness. Thus it becomes a part of God's great plan for our recovery from the Fall."—*Education*, p. 214.

A good husband and father will cherish the noble characteristics specified in Psalm 15. How does your life measure up to the Bible standard?

MOTHERHOOD (Ps. 128:3; Prov. 31:10-31).

What illustration is used to indicate woman's position in the home? Ps. 128:3.

The grapevine needs support, and with this support it becomes fruitful.

"In life's toilsome way let the husband and father 'lead on softly,' as the companion of his journey is able to endure. Amidst the world's eager rush for wealth and power, let him learn to stay his steps, to comfort and support the one who is called to walk by his side. . . . Let the husband aid his wife by his sympathy and unflinching affection. If he wishes to keep her fresh and glad, so that she will be as sunshine in the home, let him help her bear her burdens."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 374.

What is Solomon's description of the ideal wife? Prov. 31:10-31. What great rewards are there for faithful mothers? Prov. 31:11, 28, 30, 31 (compare Ex. 2:2, 3, 9, 10; Heb. 11:23).

The Scriptures contain outstanding examples of mothers who prepared their children in early years to do exploits for God and His work. Jochebed is not mentioned by name in the great faith chapter (Hebrews 11), nor in Exodus 2. An obscure slave in Egypt, she was a woman of tremendous faith. "By faith Moses" (Heb. 11:23)—but this verse refers to his mother's faith. (Compare the influence of Hannah on the infant Samuel [1 Sam. 1:20, 22], and Elizabeth's influence on John [Luke 1:57, 76].)

Mothers work with God. "The mother's work often seems to her an unimportant service. It is a work that is rarely appreciated. . . . She feels that she has accomplished nothing. But it is not so. Heavenly angels watch the care-worn mother, noting the burdens she carries day by day. . . .

"It is hers, with the help of God, to develop in a human soul the likeness of the divine. The mother who appreciates this will regard her opportunities as priceless. Earnestly will she seek, in her own character and by her methods of training, to present before her children the highest ideal."—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 376-378.

To what extent is the Bible ideal met in your home? If you are a mother, what kind of influence do you have on your family?

CHILDREN (Ps. 128:3-6; 144:11, 12, 15; 127:5).

What simile is used to describe children? Ps. 128:3.

The olive tree was one of Israel's delights, but notice that the children are not branches, but trees; young people not yet out of the family nest, and yet ready soon for an independent existence.

What other similes refer to children? Ps. 144:12.

This verse is quoted in *Counsels to Teachers*, page 496, with special application to character development, exemplified by Joseph and Daniel. Sons are to be dependable, steadfast under trial, immovable as a rock, masters and not slaves of circumstances. Daughters are to be spiritually as firm as cornerstones. The sons are to be princes, and the daughters princesses, living in the palace of the queen, their mother, and the king, their father.

The role of teachers. "Teachers are to do more for their students than to impart a knowledge of books. Their position as guide and instructor of the youth is most responsible, for to them is given the work of molding mind and character. Those who undertake this work should possess well-balanced, symmetrical characters. They should be refined in manner, neat in dress, careful in all their habits; and they should have that true Christian courtesy that wins confidence and respect. The teacher should be himself what he wishes his students to become."—*Counsels to Teachers*, p. 65.

In what way may children honor their parents (see Ex. 20:12)? Ps. 127:4, 5.

"The open space at the gate of the city was the place where questions under dispute were settled (see Gen. 19:1; Isa. 29:21; Amos 5:12). These sons were not ashamed to plead their father's cause. They stood ready to defend him against any false charges. A large family has its cares, but it has also its rewards."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 913.

If you are a parent, what are the major influences in the lives of your children? What are you doing to ensure that God's plan will be fulfilled in their lives?

UNITY IN THE HOME (Psalms 101, 133).

At a low point in David's experience, when he found a secure hiding place from Saul in the cave of Adullam, God sent family members to comfort him. (See 1 Sam. 22:1.)

How did David express his pleasure in reuniting with his family? Ps. 133:1.

Unity brings joy. "In the cave of Adullam the family were united in sympathy and affection. The son of Jesse could make melody with voice and harp as he sang, 'Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!' Psalm 133:1. He had tasted the bitterness of distrust on the part of his own brothers; and the harmony that had taken the place of discord brought joy to the exile's heart."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 658.

What vows of David fostered family harmony? Ps. 101:1-8 (compare 1 Sam. 18:5, 14, 30).

David resolved to see no evil and to associate with no evil persons. "The vows of David, recorded in the 101st psalm, should be the vows of all upon whom rest the responsibilities of guarding the influences of the home."—*Counsels to Teachers*, p. 119.

What two images does David use to describe the unity of the family? Ps. 133:2, 3.

The holy anointing oil did not remain on Aaron's head and beard. It spread over his garments, as well. It was inclusive, signifying a grouping together in unity. So also with the dew, which condenses in the cold night air and spreads its sweetness all around; it is not confined to one spot but is "as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass" (Micah 5:7).

Unity is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, who in scripture is represented as both oil and dew (Isa. 61:1; Hosea 14:5). Such a unity leaps over all cultural, social, language, and racial barriers, bringing believers in Christ into the "household of God" (Eph. 2:18, 19).

If your family or church is not enjoying unity, what steps would you recommend to help make it possible?

FURTHER STUDY: Study 1 Peter 2:5-12. Is a spiritual house built up of physical people? What are the major characteristics of Christ's household? Read in *The Ministry of Healing*, "Ministry of the Home" and "The Builders of the Home," pp. 349-362.

Unity in Christ. "The cause of division and discord in families and in the church is separation from Christ. To come near to Christ is to come near to one another. The secret of true unity in the church and in the family is not diplomacy, not management, not a superhuman effort to overcome difficulties—though there will be much of this to do—but union with Christ.

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

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

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. One son in a family of four children feels that his parents have greater love and respect for his brother and two sisters. Giving that reason, he is turning away from his parents' religion. What steps could you take to reconcile the young man to his parents and to God?
2. A young woman in your Sabbath School class is a new believer. Her father is dead, and her mother is opposed to her new-found faith. How would you attempt to help this young woman find a sense of acceptance in the church? What would you do to help stabilize her faith and enable her to feel that she is part of a loving family?
3. A member of your own family is skeptical about some aspects of the Advent message. All your attempts to present the evidence seem to have been unavailing. You sense that the unity of your family is at stake. How would you plan to work on this problem? What should be your attitude to this family member if none of your efforts are successful?

SUMMARY: The home is the foundational unit of society and of the church. The prosperity and happiness of society depend on the prosperity and happiness of the home. This in turn depends on God-fearing fathers, mothers, and children.

Worship in Spirit and Truth



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Psalms 84, 103, 134.

MEMORY TEXT: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

KEY THOUGHT. Worship is intimate communion with the Creator, acknowledging His love, offering Him gratitude and praise.

FAITHFUL WORSHIPERS. In 1916 the British government required compulsory military service for all fit men in a certain age group. Fourteen young Seventh-day Adventists, who were classified as conscientious objectors and assigned to a labor corps in France, refused to work on Sabbath. They were court-martialed, given six months' hard labor, and finally placed in solitary confinement. In an attempt to break their spirits, the governor of the prison told each man separately that, because his companions had agreed to work on the Sabbath, he too should forget his foolish obstinacy. Each man refused to work on God's holy day. Led back to his cell, he thought that the others were working on the Sabbath. But one of the men in an end cell began whistling softly the well-known hymn "The Lord Is My Light"; then "why should I fear?"—a hymn inspired by Psalm 27:1. The man in the cell opposite softly whistled the next few bars. In this way the tune was passed on to each cell, so that each prisoner rejoiced that his friends had stood firm. They discovered that God can be worshiped in spirit and truth, whatever the circumstances.

WORSHIP IN EXILE (Ps. 84:1-4).

This psalm was written by David while in exile and unable to worship in the sanctuary. It is divided into three parts: (1) David describes his actual situation, exiled from worship. (2) He imagines himself on his way to Zion to worship with others. (3) He describes the arrival at the sanctuary. There are three blessings in this short psalm, one in each section: at the end of section 1 (verse 4), at the beginning of section 2 (verse 5), and at the end of section 3 (verse 12).

Although exiled from the place of worship, what was David's great longing? Ps. 84:1, 2.

David likened his longing to that of the hunted deer, weary and weak with thirst. (See Ps. 42:1.) How often we fail to recognize our blessings until deprived of them! Freedom to attend worship in God's house can be taken for granted. But when sickness, persecution, or other handicaps bar us from this privilege, we can understand David's yearning.

What unusual contrast does David make concerning "visitors" to the sanctuary? Ps. 84:3.

Isaac Watts, in a paraphrase of Psalm 84, emphasizes this thought in a quaint but impressive way:

The sparrow chooses where to rest,
And for her young provides a nest:
But will my God to sparrows grant
That pleasure which his children want?
—*The Psalms of David* (London: J. Haddon, 1861),
p. 45.

The first blessing in the psalm. Those whose daily work was to serve in the sanctuary were the recipients of the first blessing (Ps. 84:4). Several functions were necessary for the daily sanctuary routine. There were porters at the gates; treasurers; those who cared for vessels; overseers of flour, oil, wine, and incense; preparers of the shewbread, and providers of the music. (See 1 Chron. 9:22-33.)

How important is Sabbath School and church attendance to you? Do you share the psalmist's love for "the courts of the Lord"? What would increase your appreciation of church services?

THE INSPIRATION OF WORSHIP (Ps. 84:5-8).

What is the psalm's second blessing, and why is it so vital to our spiritual life? Ps. 84:5-8.

David satisfies himself to some extent concerning his longing by thinking of the pilgrim, one who relies upon God for strength for the journey to the place of worship. Isaac Watts paraphrases it thus: "Blessed are the men whose hearts are set to find the way to Sion's gate."

But it is not a path completely strewn with roses, for the pilgrims come to the valley of Baca. "*Baca*, evidently the singular of the word translated 'balsam trees' or (NEB) 'aspens' (2 Sa. 5:23), is thought to indicate a tree or shrub which grows in arid places; hence NEB, 'the thirsty valley.' "—Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1975), p. 305. The context suggests the weeping of a group of tired pilgrims. Blessed indeed are those who, weary with the journey, find pure water springing from a refreshing fountain. With renewed vigor they proceed on their journey, from strength to strength.

How did God encourage the apostle Paul on his journey to Rome? How effective is personal encouragement? Acts 28:15.

"It was with a heavy heart that Paul went forward to his long-expected visit to the world's metropolis [Rome]. . . .

"As they make their way through the crowds that throng the great thoroughfare, the gray-haired old man, chained with a group of hardened-looking criminals, receives many a glance of scorn and is made the subject of many a rude, mocking jest.

"Suddenly a cry of joy is heard, and a man springs from the passing throng and falls upon the prisoner's neck, embracing him with tears and rejoicing, as a son would welcome a long-absent father. Again and again is the scene repeated. . . .

"In the midst of the weeping, sympathizing company of believers, who were not ashamed of his bonds, the apostle praised God aloud. The cloud of sadness that had rested upon his spirit was swept away."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 448, 449.

Describe an occasion when, feeling that life had lost its meaning, you were inspired by encouragement.

CONGREGATIONAL WORSHIP (Ps. 84:9-12; 103).

Who receives the third benediction of the psalm? Ps. 84:12.

Trust is based on evidence. God has shown Himself to be trustworthy. The expression "trust in the Lord" occurs nearly 60 times in the book of Psalms, apart from many other times in the Scriptures. Isaiah gives one reason for trust: "Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength" (Isa. 26:4, literally "rock of ages"; compare Isa. 12:2). Who could fear, when the Lord is on his side?

The traveler has arrived in the sanctuary and gives vent to exultant joy as he joins others in praise and thanksgiving. This joy is put into words in Psalm 103.

How many complaints are there in Psalm 103? Note the references to forgiveness and mercy.

This psalm has 22 verses, the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet. But this spontaneous burst of ecstasy from the heart is not an academic acrostic. Its structure is a progression from the individual worshiper (1-5) to the children of Israel (6-18), from its national origins (7), to a final outburst of praise that reaches to the heavens and its inhabitants (19-22).

Enumerate the blessings for which we should thank God. Ps. 103:3-6, 8-13.

"Dr. Alexander Whyte loved this Psalm, and few could interpret it as he did. In these verses, he said, we have the Law Court—*forgiveth all thine iniquities*: the Hospital—*healeth all thy diseases*: the Slave Market—*redeemeth thy life from destruction*: the Throne Room—*crowneth thee with lovingkindness*: and the Banquet Hall—*satisfieth thy mouth with good things*."—W. G. Scroggie, *Know Your Bible: The Psalms* (London: Pickering & Inglis Ltd., 1950), vol. 3, p. 24. We can add: the Transplant Clinic—*strength renewed like the eagle's*.

How can you still feel guilty for confessed sins after reading Psalm 103:3, 12? What does the Lord do with our guilt?

PLACE OF WORSHIP (Ex. 3:1-6; John 4:24).

What is the essential prerequisite for a place of worship? John 4:24 (compare Ex. 3:1-6).

Worship is usually associated with fellow believers assembled in one place, and indeed this is most appropriate. But worship is not confined to a building, nor to a grouping of people.

Outdoor worship. "The backside of the desert" (Ex. 3:1) is an unlikely place and is in stark contrast, say, to Solomon's temple, Westminster Abbey in London, and other noted sanctuaries. Moses found a place of worship made holy by the presence of God.

Likewise, Jacob, a fugitive from Esau's wrath, "felt that he was an outcast," and "he was so utterly lonely that he felt the need of protection from God as he had never felt it before."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 183. "He had a solemn sense that God was with him. An unseen presence filled the solitude."—p. 187. He confessed: "Surely the Lord is in this place" (Gen. 28:16). He commemorated it by naming it *Bethel* (verse 17; Hebrew for "house of God").

The same truth was underlined by Stephen in his defense. After referring to Solomon's temple, he said: "The most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands" (Acts 7:48) and then quoted Isaiah 66:1.

What advantage is there in corporate worship? Heb. 10:24, 25.

Worship is not merely a private matter. The mutual encouragement gained by each believer is especially needed toward the end of time.

Blessings of corporate worship. "We sustain a loss when we neglect the privilege of associating together to strengthen and encourage one another in the service of God. The truths of His word lose their vividness and importance in our minds. Our hearts cease to be enlightened and aroused by the sanctifying influence, and we decline in spirituality."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 541.

List the special advantages of worship in Sabbath School. What is your responsibility to the success of your Sabbath School?

CONTINUOUS WORSHIP (Psalm 134).

John Ellerton in his hymn "The Day Thou Gavest" points out the happy thought that on a round world Christians are raising continuous praise to God. "While earth rolls onward into light," morning hymns continually rise in different countries. In this sense the church "through all the world her watch is keeping."—*The New Advent Hymnal* (England: Stanborough Press Ltd.), no. 323.

How was continuous worship maintained in the sanctuary? Ps. 134:1.

Large numbers of priests and Levites were required for the upkeep and daily services of the sanctuary. (See 1 Chronicles 9.) They were "very able men for the work of the service of the house of God" (1 Chron. 9:13), which was all a part of worship. Some of them "lodged round about the house of God" (verse 27), but the singers "were employed in that work day and night" (verse 33).

Psalm 134, the three-verse psalm, describes the ending of the day, when worshipers are leaving the sanctuary before the porters close the gates for the night. They turn to look at the Levites still in the temple who have come on night duty and sing the words of the first two verses. In return, the watchers of the night sing a blessing on the congregation from their Creator.

In what way other than bringing financial gifts can Christians offer sacrifices? Ps. 119:108 (compare Heb. 13:15).

Praise was David's "freewill offering."

"As the children of Israel celebrated the deliverance that God had wrought for their fathers, and His miraculous preservation of them during their journeyings from Egypt, so should we gratefully call to mind the various ways He has devised for bringing us out from the world, and from the darkness of error, into the precious light of His grace and truth."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 541.

"Morning, noon, and night, let gratitude as a sweet perfume ascend to heaven."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 253.

When you are depressed and discouraged, try praising the Lord for His mercies. You will be surprised at the physical, psychological, and spiritual blessings you will receive.

FURTHER STUDY: Read again Psalms 84, 103, 134. Read a portion of the chapters entitled "Mind Cure" in *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 251-254, and "Rejoicing in the Lord" in *Steps to Christ*, pp. 115-126.

Pray for the Holy Spirit. "A mere attendance upon all the meetings that are held will not in itself bring a blessing to the soul. . . . At every meeting we attend our prayers should ascend, that at this very time God will impart warmth and moisture to our souls. As we seek God for the Holy Spirit, it will work in us meekness, humbleness of mind, a conscious dependence upon God for the perfecting latter rain. If we pray for the blessing in faith, we shall receive it as God has promised."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 508, 509.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What suggestions can you offer to make our congregational worship services more meaningful?
2. Why is Bible study such a vital part of private and corporate worship?
3. What are the differences between worship and entertainment?
4. How should emotion be a part of worship? What is helpful and what is harmful? Who should be the judge?

SUMMARY: Humanity has a spiritual capacity, as well as an intellectual one, and it finds expression in the worship of the Creator. Worship can be alone in spiritual meditation, study, and prayer, but also with fellow believers. Worship involves offering praise that glorifies God and fills our souls with the awareness of His presence.

The Works of the Lord



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Psalms 92, 100, 104, 111.

MEMORY TEXT: "Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture" (Psalm 100:3).

KEY THOUGHT. The name *Seventh-day Adventist* designates the origin and destiny of mankind. Creation in seven literal days terminating with the Sabbath reveals our origin; the second advent of Christ reveals our destiny.

GOD'S CARE FOR HIS CREATION. "With the rise of the Enlightenment [eighteenth century], philosophers supposed that nature ran itself by laws of cause and effect. A rational God had created a rational world to be understood by rational people. . . . It was as if God were a celestial clock maker who had made the perfect timepiece, wound it up, and then stepped out to let it run. Any interference would upset or stop the clock. This philosophy, it was supposed, gave great glory to God. The perfection and order of all things mirrored His perfection and order. In fact, however, it made God irrelevant. He was reduced to a 'first cause' and man was left, if not to run the show, then at least to understand the show by his autonomous reason.

"In fact, the God of the Bible shows His intensive care for this planet. This is the thesis of Psalm 104."—Donald M. Williams, *The Communicator's Commentary, Psalms 73-150* (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1989), p. 241.

INANIMATE NATURE (Ps. 104:1-9, 19, 20).

From what source does the psalmist draw as a basis for his account of Creation? Ps. 104:1-9, 19, 20; Gen. 1:1-19.

Psalm 104 is a poetic account, and as such does not cover all the details of Genesis 1. No clue is given in the psalm as to the time taken for the work of Creation, but there can be no question that the days mentioned in Genesis 1 are identical with our 24-hour days, each consisting of an evening and a morning, darkness and light.

In our period of history, when evolutionary ideas are so widely held and propagated, the orderly succession of the week, an arbitrary number of seven days, based on no astronomical measurement as are the year, the month, and the day, is an evidence that helps to support the verity of the biblical account of fiat Creation. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made" (Ps. 33:6-9).

What is the vital difference between "God in nature" and "God is nature"? Ps. 104:24; Rom. 1:20.

The first statement is creationism; the second is pantheism. "God's handiwork in nature is not God Himself in nature. The things of nature are an expression of God's character and power; but we are not to regard nature as God. . . . The thing made is not the maker. It is not the work, but the workman, that is counted worthy of honor. So while nature is an expression of God's thought, it is not nature, but the God of nature, that is to be exalted."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 413.

How can the inconsistencies and contradictions of nature be harmonized with nature's benevolent God? Matt. 13:24-30; Isa. 65:25.

Fires and floods, earthquakes in various places, erupting volcanoes, and raging hurricanes are not characteristics of a perfect world. "Nature, red in tooth and claw," is the way the poet Tennyson puts it. God's enemy Satan made the degenerative difference. "The earth, marred and defiled by sin, reflects but dimly the Creator's glory. It is true that His object lessons are not obliterated. . . . Nature still speaks of her Creator. Yet these revelations are partial and imperfect."—*Education*, p. 17.

ANIMATE NATURE (Ps. 104:10-18, 21-30).

The mystery of life. Great advances were made in biology when the long-held idea of spontaneous generation was finally abandoned in favor of the dictum that only life begets life. The life possessed by plants and animals differentiates them from all non-living substances.

How did life begin on this earth? Ps. 104:30; Gen. 1:26, 30; 2:7.

The biblical definition of a "living soul" (Gen. 2:7), which implies that souls can die, is: dust + God's spirit = living soul. When God's breath is removed, living creatures die (Ps. 104:29; Eze. 18:4).

After the invention of the microscope, Robert Hooke in 1665 noticed that the bark from a cork tree consisted of comparatively large compartments, which he called cells, after the barren, empty cells of a monastery. A century and a half later, it was found that all animal and plant life consisted of cells. Plant cells usually have tough walls, whereas animal cells have thin membranes. Further study of what was erroneously called the simple cell led to amazing discoveries of the large spiral molecules of DNA and RNA. They contain "coded information" that directs the development and multiplication of the different cells in the living body as the organism itself grows and develops.

With his limited knowledge of life, David was able to say: "I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Ps. 139:14).

Can nature sustain itself? Heb. 1:3 (compare Col. 1:16, 17; Acts 17:28).

"But the power of God is still exercised in upholding the objects of His creation. It is not because the mechanism once set in motion continues to act by its own inherent energy that the pulse beats, and breath follows breath. Every breath, every pulsation of the heart, is an evidence of the care of Him in whom we live and move and have our being. . . .

"The hand that sustains the worlds in space, the hand that holds in their orderly arrangement and tireless activity all things throughout the universe of God, is the hand that was nailed to the cross for us."—*Education*, pp. 131, 132.

How do you daily acknowledge Christ's sustaining power?

THE CROWNING WORK (Psalms 100; 104:23, 30-35).

In what way is man superior to the animals? Ps. 8:5-8; Gen. 1:26, 28; 9:2.

Logicians, uninfluenced by Scripture, have defined man as a rational animal, thus placing him in a larger category of living creatures and showing also his distinctive quality. Man also has spiritual qualities that arise from his religious instincts.

"Above all lower orders of being, God designed that man, the crowning work of His creation, should express His thought and reveal His glory."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 415. (See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 45.)

The Septuagint translates Psalm 8:5, "a little lower than God," for the Hebrew word *Elohim*. Man is but a speck in the universe. Yet he was created in God's image, able to think and to worship; hence, the most marvelous work of God's creation. He alone of living, earthbound creatures is able to appreciate his Maker.

Knowledge and humility. "He who studies most deeply into the mysteries of nature will realize most fully his own ignorance and weakness. He will realize that there are . . . vast fields of truth lying before him unentered. He will be ready to say, with Newton, 'I seem to myself to have been like a child on the seashore finding pebbles and shells, while the great ocean of truth lay undiscovered before me.'"—*Education*, p. 133.

What other aspect of the Creator contrasts with His power? Ps. 100:3.

Greatness is not always associated with gentleness, nor power with kindness. But the Almighty has all the characteristics of a shepherd. Even though "all we like sheep have gone astray" (Isa. 53:6), the Good Shepherd searches for His lost sheep and lays down His life in defending them (John 10:11; Luke 15:4). Jesus Christ is Creator, Shepherd, and Redeemer.

What should be the response of the creature to the Creator? Ps. 100:1-5; 104:33-35.

Our reaction should be to praise God with a happy song.

CREATION'S MEMORIAL (Psalm 92).

The superscription of Psalm 92 reminds us that this is a song for the Sabbath day. It is still chanted in modern synagogues on the Sabbath.

What indications in the psalm make it an appropriate song for the Sabbath? Ps. 92:4, 5.

The Sabbath commandment (Ex. 20:8-11) specifically calls on us to remember that this day is a memorial to God's creative power.

Communion with the Creator. "The Sabbath calls our thoughts to nature, and brings us into communion with the Creator. . . . And as we behold His power in nature we find comfort, for the word that created all things is that which speaks life to the soul."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 281, 282.

The Sabbath is not a time for idleness; it enables us to enter into deeper communion with our Maker. Not only does the Sabbath remind us of His creative power, but it also points us to His redemptive power.

How does the apostle Paul contrast the material and the spiritual? 2 Cor. 4:16-18.

The "light affliction," or physical suffering and spiritual anguish, that the apostle endured is amplified further in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28. This heavy burden that pressed upon him from conversion to death faded into insignificance compared with his vision of the Saviour and the crown of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:8).

What promise is given to those who serve the Lord? Ps. 92:12-15.

We should be found in the house of the Lord on the Sabbath day. There we can learn more of our Rock, of His saving power, of His coming again, of His will for our lives, of His presence with us by His Spirit. He can make us as enduring as the palm tree, for we can reach our roots down to the springs of living water.

How would you answer a neighbor who asks you what Sabbathkeeping does for you?

UNCHANGED COMMANDMENT (Psalm 111).

Half the verses of Psalm 111 mention *work* or *works*, reminding us of the first Sabbath, when "God ended his work" (Gen. 2:2) and rested.

What suggestions are there in the psalm that recall the giving of the law at Sinai? Ps. 111:4, 5, 7, 9.

There are other wonderful works of the Lord besides Creation, such as His deliverance of His people from Egyptian slavery, the giving of manna in the desert for 40 years, His role in the conquest of the Promised Land, and His deliverance of His people from captivity. The Passover was a festival of remembrance. But the reference to the *covenant* recalls Sinai and the giving of the Decalogue. The word *remember* occurs only once in the Decalogue, in the commandment to keep the Sabbath.

What was Christ's attitude to the Sabbath? Matt. 5:17-19 (compare Luke 4:16; Mark 1:21; 2:27, 28).

Christ endorsed the law of God, which included the Sabbath commandment. He deplored and condemned the human restrictions that had been added by the scribes and doctors of the law, which cluttered the day of rest with more and more uninspired traditions. The Sabbath was not made first and man later for him to accommodate himself to it. Man was created on the sixth day and the Sabbath on the seventh day to be a blessing to him.

"In the days of Christ the Sabbath had become so perverted that its observance reflected the character of selfish and arbitrary men rather than the character of the loving heavenly Father. . . . [The rabbis] led the people to look upon God as a tyrant, and to think that the observance of the Sabbath, as He required it, made man hardhearted and cruel. It was the work of Christ to clear away these misconceptions. Although the rabbis followed Him with merciless hostility, He did not even appear to conform to their requirements, but went straight forward, keeping the Sabbath according to the law of God."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 284.

The hours between Friday sunset and Saturday sunset are God's holy time. How do you act and think in the hours between Sabbaths?

FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: On Jesus' attitude to the Sabbath, study Matthew 24:20 in context. Read in *Education*, "God in Nature," pp. 99-101, and "Science and the Bible," pp. 128-134; and in *The Ministry of Healing*, "A True Knowledge of God," pp. 409-426.

A sign of re-creation. "The value of the Sabbath as a means of education is beyond estimate. Whatever of ours God claims from us, He returns again, enriched, transfigured, with His own glory. . . . The Sabbath is a sign of creative and redeeming power; it points to God as the source of life and knowledge; it recalls man's primeval glory, and thus witnesses to God's purpose to re-create us in His own image. The Sabbath and the family were alike instituted in Eden, and in God's purpose they are indissolubly linked together. On this day more than on any other, it is possible for us to live the life of Eden."—*Education*, p. 250.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. On what basis do you accept the doctrine of Creation by God's word rather than the theory of evolution?
2. In your observance of the Sabbath, how do you make provision for meeting the Lord of the Sabbath? What makes the difference between nominal Sabbath observance and Sabbath-keeping of the kind that God has in mind for us?
3. What is the relationship between Sabbath observance and the experience of righteousness by faith? How do you answer the argument that those who keep the Sabbath are legalists?

SUMMARY: The weekly Sabbath comes to us from God. It was given as a memorial of His perfect Creation. Faithful observance of the Sabbath marks a people who will receive the seal of God. It implies acceptance of God's plan of re-creation, or redemption, when sin and sinners will be destroyed forever, and perfect harmony, peace, and rest will be restored to redeemed mankind.

The Word of God



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Psalm 119.

MEMORY TEXT: "I cried unto thee; save me, and I shall keep thy testimonies" (Psalm 119:146).

KEY THOUGHT. God's standard of righteousness for His people is expressed in all the instruction contained in holy Scripture. This standard is reached only by total dependence upon the Lord. Such dependence results in a life of purity and joyful service for God and humanity.

VARIETY IN REPETITION. Psalm 119 is the longest psalm and the longest chapter in the Bible. It is arranged in 22 sections, each containing eight verses. Each verse, generally speaking, is a couplet of two sentences that parallel each other. The psalm is an acrostic. There are only 22 consonants in the Hebrew alphabet, and this psalm consists of 22 groups of eight verses, one group for each letter. Each verse in a group begins with the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

There are several words occurring frequently in Psalm 119, each one referring to an aspect of God's Word: *law, judgments, precepts, statutes, commandments*. The whole psalm is a guide to holy living.

The psalmist seeks power from God to obey His law. He does not become righteous because of his own unaided efforts. His delight in the law stems from his relationship with God. The central message of the psalm is similar to that of Paul's Epistle to the Romans. (See Rom. 3:31.)

THE WORD OF GOD (Ps. 119:25).

The *word* (or *words*) of God is referred to a total of 42 times in Psalm 119 and is one of the seven words most frequently occurring in the King James Version of the psalm.

For one dead in sin, what effect does the word of God have? Ps. 119:25, 50, 107, 154 (compare Eph. 2:5).

To quicken is to revive, to put new life into—an apt description of the change brought about by the new birth. The Lord saves us by the new-birth experience. The living word of God empowers the afflicted person to follow God's law. The standard set in verse 1 is achieved only by those who seek and rely upon the wisdom and power of the Lord. The "blameless" are those "who walk in the law of the Lord" (Ps. 119:1, RSV) by dependence upon His power.

"The creative energy that called the worlds into existence is in the word of God. This word imparts power; it begets life. . . . It transforms the nature and recreates the soul in the image of God."—*Education*, p. 126.

What virtue is inspired by the word of God? Ps. 119:42, 49, 74, 81, 114, 116, 147 (compare Rom. 8:24, 25; Titus 2:13; 1 Peter 3:15).

The believer who has covenant fellowship with God constantly trusts and hopes for both present salvation from sin and ultimate salvation when Jesus comes.

Joseph Bates, a pioneer of the Advent movement, signed his letters, "Yours in the blessed hope, J. Bates." Those who by Christ's indwelling in their hearts are living in obedience to His law will realize the fruition of their hopes at the Advent. (See Rom. 8:1-4.)

The power of the Word. Our Lord gave us a clear demonstration of the life of victory when He answered Satan from the Scriptures. Man's spiritual life is sustained by the Word of God.

"When assailed by temptation, look not to circumstances or to the weakness of self, but to the power of the word. All its strength is yours."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 123.

What is our part in the battle with sin? When you are tempted, how do you ensure that you will overcome? What prayer do you pray? How do the words of Scripture help?

LAW AND COMMANDMENTS (Ps. 119:77).

The word *law*, or *torah*, is used 25 times in the psalm. Its meaning is instruction, and its function is to teach. Hence the emphasis on "not forgetting." The "law" incorporates all the instruction of God's Word.

Is God's instruction burdensome? What attitude does it call forth? Ps. 119:70, 77, 92, 97, 113 (compare Ps. 19:9, 10; 1 John 5:3).

David was the author of this psalm. (See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 398.) He knew that only the Word of God reveals our destiny and the means of achieving it.

"If we study the word of God with an interest, and pray to understand it, new beauties will be seen in every line. God will reveal precious truth so clearly that the mind will derive sincere pleasure and have a continual feast as its comforting and sublime truths are unfolded."—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 338.

By what means do we keep God's law? What practical difference should His law make to our lives? Ps. 119:34, 43, 44, 51, 55, 61, 109, 153.

God gives to the earnest seeker the strength and wisdom to obey His law. The Holy Spirit imparts the necessary power to live in accord with God's will. (See Rom. 8:5-11.)

Obedience to God's law ennoble and elevates. "Their obedience to the law of God would make them [Israel] marvels of prosperity before the nations of the world. He who could give them wisdom and skill in all cunning work would continue to be their teacher, and would ennoble and elevate them through obedience to His laws."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 288.

The "commandments" are mentioned 22 times in this psalm. The psalmist respected *all* God's commandments (Ps. 119:6). "Christ taught His hearers that the law of God is not so many separate precepts, some of which are of great importance, while others are of small importance and may with impunity be ignored. Our Lord presents the first four and the last six commandments as a divine whole, and teaches that love to God will be shown by obedience to all His commandments."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 607.

JUDGMENTS

The word *judgment* occurs in Psalm 119, 22 times in the plural and five times in the singular. It refers essentially to a judicial verdict that is not necessarily condemnatory.

What is David's assessment of God's judgments? Ps. 119:39, 62, 75, 137, 160, 164 (compare Rev. 16:7; 19:2).

The psalmist's praise ascends seven times during the day and even at midnight for the correctness of God's verdicts.

This assessment is confirmed at the end of the pre-advent judgment by a voice from the heavenly temple (Rev. 19:1, 2). In the process of condemning antitypical Babylon, the Lord vindicates His faithful people who have received the gift of Christ's righteousness (verses 7, 8).

What is the twofold aspect of judgment? (1) Ps. 119:75, 84, 120; and (2) Ps. 119:43, 52, 149 (compare Isa. 26:9).

Eternal death that results from sin is a righteous judgment of God. (See Rev. 20:11-15.) Erring saints, who understand God's purpose of destroying sinners eternally, see in it His loving intention of turning them from their wrong ways. Others tremble at the inevitability of God's wrath on their continued disobedience.

"How frequently we hear of earthquakes and tornadoes, of destruction by fire and flood, with great loss of life and property! Apparently these calamities are capricious outbreaks of disorganized, unregulated forces of nature, wholly beyond the control of man; but in them all, God's purpose may be read. They are among the agencies by which He seeks to arouse men and women to a sense of their danger."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 277.

God's faithfulness and love lead Him to pronounce judgments that engender hope, comfort, help in daily life, and a longing desire for righteousness. God's judgments for such faithful worthies as Daniel and Joseph involved vindication from the attacks of their enemies. In this sense, God's judgments are His merciful decisions to support and defend His beleaguered people.

How would you compare your attitude toward God's judgments with David's? (See Ps. 119:7, 66, 108.) Why are God's judgments so vital to each of us?

TESTIMONIES

The Hebrew words translated "testimony" come from the root meaning "to reiterate," and hence "to witness." There are 22 uses of this word in Psalm 119, all plural except one, in verse 88. The same word is used in Numbers 17:7 to refer to the tabernacle of "witness." The tabernacle housed the ark, into which the Lord's testimony was placed (Ex. 25:16). The testimony or witness was the law, written on tables of stone (Deut. 10:5).

God testifies to His character in His law of ten commandments, and more clearly in the life of His Son, Jesus Christ, whose works bear witness of Him (John 5:36).

What reaction did the psalmist have to the testimonies of God? Ps. 119:2, 22, 31, 36, 46. What effects follow the keeping of God's testimonies? Ps. 119:14, 24, 111, 119.

"Beyond the inner veil was the holy of holies, where centered the symbolic service of atonement and intercession, and which formed the connecting link between heaven and earth. In this apartment was the ark. . . . It was made as a depository for the tables of stone, upon which God Himself had inscribed the Ten Commandments. Hence it was called the ark of God's testament, or the ark of the covenant, since the Ten Commandments were the basis of the covenant made between God and Israel."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 348.

Note some of the agreements or covenants that were associated with the word *testimony* or *witness*. Gen. 21:30; 31:44, 48; Joshua 24:27.

Human agreements or covenants were sometimes witnessed to by some kind of outward sign or symbol. God's law, the basis of His agreement with mankind (Ex. 24:8), was written on tables of stone as a testimony or witness to the everlasting covenant between Him and His people (Ex. 25:21). The same testimony is written on the hearts of believers who have entered into fellowship with God. (See Deut. 6:4-6; Heb. 8:10.)

Have you entered into a covenant relationship with Christ? Are you keeping all the commandments of God? How have you found this to be possible? How would you explain to a non-believer the means by which God's law can be kept?

STATUTES AND PRECEPTS

Statutes are mentioned 22 times in this psalm. A statute is "a specific, fixed requirement, usually a divine decree as in Ex 27:21; 29:28."—*SDA Bible Dictionary*, article, "Statute."

What prayer is reiterated concerning the statutes? Ps. 119:12, 26, 33, 64, 80 (compare Ps. 119:5, 8, 48).

Israel's kings were to teach God's statutes. "Directions were given that he who should sit on the throne of Israel should 'write him a copy' of the statutes of Jehovah. . . .

"With these warnings Solomon was familiar, and for a time he heeded them. His greatest desire was to live and rule in accordance with the statutes given at Sinai. His manner of conducting the affairs of the kingdom was in striking contrast with the customs of the nations of his time—nations who feared not God and whose rulers trampled underfoot His holy law."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 52.

What claims do God's precepts have upon us? Ps. 119:4, 15, 69, 78. What benefits do we receive when we observe God's precepts? Ps. 119:27, 45, 63, 93, 94, 100.

Study the following five passages and consider how the context enriches the meaning of the word *precepts*. Note who gave the precepts:

Neh. 9:14 _____

Jer. 35:18 _____

Dan. 9:5 _____

Mark 10:5 _____

Heb. 9:19 _____

A precept is something appointed or mandated and carries with it the idea of teaching. God's laws are His testimonies, commandments, statutes, and precepts. Psalm 119 uses these terms to underline the importance of entering into fellowship with God. True happiness is found only in following the Lord's precepts.

FURTHER STUDY: Read through Psalm 119 again, comparing its message with that of the book of Romans. Read "The Knowledge Received Through God's Word" in *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 458-466; "Bible Teaching and Study" in *Education*, pp. 185-192.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. When and how did you discover that power to obey God's law does not result from your unaided efforts, but from receiving Christ's power by faith?
2. What has obedience to God's law by faith in Christ done for you personally? What and where would you be today if you had not accepted the will of God as stated in His law?

SUMMARY: God's law, commandments, and statutes are not burdensome. The secret is to have them in the heart, which will be a delight and make it a pleasure to obey them.

*Don't ask that dollar where it went;
Tell it where to go!*

— H. D. Singleton



Send your dollars off for this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath projects on the back cover. *Twenty-five percent of the offering will support these projects.*

King of Kings



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Psalms 93, 96, 97, 99, 110

MEMORY TEXT: "For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the Lord made the heavens" (Psalm 96:5).

KEY THOUGHT. Had ancient Israel proved loyal to God, other nations would have asked Him to be their King, too, and would have joined in the new song to their Creator, Defender, and Holy One.

EXCHANGING A king FOR A KING. In 1620 the Pilgrim Fathers left Europe to start a new life in the New World. Although it was a hard, pioneering experience, especially during their first winter, their consciences were at last free. They had gone to seek a home in a land where there was neither king nor pope, no civil or religious dictator, and they celebrated their first harvest by a service of thanksgiving to God, without hindrance from parliament or church. In those days the countries of Europe had their monarchs, and the prevailing religion was largely Roman Catholic, with an authoritarian pope. While we may not have experienced the control of an authoritarian ruler, history still reminds us of their almost unlimited powers over their subjects, who were often cruelly abused both in civil and religious matters. But the King of kings is unique. He has unlimited and absolute power, which is never abused. He is kind, gracious, and merciful, and His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom of peace.

CREATOR KING (Psalm 93).

What qualities are associated with divine royalty? Ps. 93:1, 2, 5.

Earthly kings and queens are addressed as Your Majesty. This title is derived from the Latin word *magnus*, meaning "great." The Lord, who is the greatest of monarchs, is clothed with underived strength. He created all things and is before all things (Col. 1:17), both in time and position; He is the Eternal One, transcending time and space, holy and trustworthy.

How ineffective is opposition to the Lord? Ps. 93:3, 4 (compare Isa. 8:7, 8; 17:12, 13; Jer. 46:7, 8, 10).

While it is true that God sets bounds to the sea (Ps. 104:9), there is also a symbolic meaning to floods (or rivers) and seas. With the Lord's permission, the Assyrian king descended with his armies upon Judah, and Isaiah likened him to a destructive torrent. "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed" (Job 38:11).

Jeremiah likens Egypt to a flood of waters in its attack against Nebuchadnezzar, but the assault was in vain because the Egyptians were in opposition to the Lord of hosts (Jer. 46:10, 11).

"No water can swallow the ship where lies the Master of ocean, and earth, and skies; / They all shall sweetly obey My will."—Mary A. Baker, *The Church Hymnal*, no. 677. (Mark 4:37-41.)

What other characteristics of the great King are represented in Psalm 95:1, 5-7?

He is our Saviour, solid and trustworthy as a rock; His hand made and holds the earth; He created human beings and cares for them as a shepherd does his sheep.

Because God's chosen people refused to acknowledge His loving qualities, even after He had provided for them for many years, the Lord withdrew His blessings (Ps. 95:8-11). What a warning to us who have been so blessed in these last days!

Why is our understanding of God's character so important to the manner in which we relate to Him?

PROTECTOR KING (Psalm 97).

In Psalm 97, the psalmist speaks of both his own people (verse 8) and the Gentiles, over whom the Lord's reign extends. The Lord is King of all the earth (verses 1, 5).

Describe some details of God's glory. Ps. 97:2-6.

External manifestations such as clouds, thunder, lightning, smoke, fire, and earthquake are awesome events that call attention to spiritual realities. (See Ex. 19:16, 18.) Righteousness and judgment (Ps. 97:2, 6, 8) are qualities of the King that reveal His glory. Because of His holy character, He protects His people by His presence, which is a consuming fire to their enemies (verse 3).

What quality should distinguish the servants of the righteous God? Ps. 97:9-12.

Righteousness is the opposite of evil; verse 10 marks the contrast. God's servants love Him and hate evil. The great controversy between Christ and Satan is fought in the heart of each person.

Righteousness and uprightness of heart (verse 11) are not earned by good works. When the aged and childless Abraham believed God's word that his seed would be as numerous as the stars above, "he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:6). The apostle Paul expands this principle in Galatians 3. He shows that non-Jews are part of God's family by virtue of their faith in Christ, who is our righteousness. (See Gal. 3:6, 7, 9, 14.)

Those who are seeking truth will discover that "light is sown for the righteous" (Ps. 97:11). Step by step a safe path for their feet will be revealed. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Ps. 119:105). Psalm 97 likens light to seeds that spring up to pierce the darkness as the pilgrim approaches.

"The word of God is plain to all who study it with a prayerful heart. Every truly honest soul will come to the light of truth. 'Light is sown for the righteous.' Psalm 97:11."—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 521, 522.

Mary is not a committed Christian. She cannot understand how God can make bad people good. How would you explain to her the meaning of righteousness and the means by which a believer in Christ becomes righteous?

HOLY KING (Psalm 99).

In Psalm 99 the word *holy* occurs four times: Both God and the place of His abode are described as holy.

The psalm begins by referring to the King who "sitteth between the cherubims" (verse 1). The golden cherubim were placed facing each other over the golden mercy seat that covered the ark containing the tables of stone (Ex. 25:10, 11, 16-22). This was housed in the Most Holy Place of the sanctuary (Ex. 26:33, 34).

Enumerate some aspects of God's character that we should remember when worshipping. Ps. 99:2-5.

Why does vengeance follow forgiveness? Ps. 99:6-8.

The common bond between Moses, Aaron, and Samuel is that all were intercessors. Moses was willing to renounce his own prospect of eternal life in order to save his people (Ex. 32:32). After the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, the high priest Aaron "stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed" (Num. 16:48). Samuel prayed for the people when they confessed their sins at Mizpeh (1 Sam. 7:8-12), and the Philistines were routed.

But none was perfect, and each needed the Lord's forgiveness, which was readily given, although retribution and the effect of their wrongdoing took their natural course. Moses usurped God's authority at Meribah (Deut. 32:51), Aaron succumbed to intense pressure at Sinai (Ex. 32:21-24), and Samuel appointed his sons as judges (1 Sam. 8:1, 3-5) at the expense of good government.

God honored these men for their obedience (Ps. 99:7), forgave their sins (verse 8), but did not remove the consequences and scars caused by sin.

Note the emphasis on worship and its association with holiness. Ps. 99:3, 5, 9.

With Father, Son, and Holy Spirit preparing a holy city (Rev. 21:2), how could unholy beings possibly enter there? "Holiness is not rapture; it is the result of surrendering all to God; it is doing the will of our heavenly Father."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 149.

COMING KING (Psalms 96, 98).

Both psalms 96 and 98 extend beyond the parochial vision of "the house of Israel" to embrace "all the earth."

What is the significance of the expression "new song" in Psalm 96:1? 1 Chron. 16:23-33; Ps. 98:1.

Psalm 96 is almost identical with the second half of the psalm prepared by David as the ark was brought from the house of Obed-edom to the tent in Jerusalem. (See 1 Chron. 13:13, 14.) The new song celebrated a new experience, the establishment of the ark, God's earthly meeting place in Jerusalem, which He had chosen (2 Chron. 6:6). David's new song was prophetic of the "new song" (Rev. 5:9) heard by the revelator in his vision of those redeemed from earth to become kings and priests in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 5:10).

How widespread was to be the influence and effect of Psalms 96 and 98? Ps. 96:1, 3, 9, 13; 98:2-4, 9.

Again the prophetic note is stressed, reminding us that God's people are not one isolated, chosen race. While the heathen worship idols, they should be told that the Lord is the powerful Creator, and that their gods are not gods at all. God's name is mentioned 11 times in the 13 verses of Psalm 96, and six times in the nine verses of Psalm 98. The heathen have to know "that the Lord reigneth" (96:10), and that He is "the Lord, the King" (98:6).

What special reason is given for the exultant praise that climaxes both psalms? Ps. 96:11-13; 98:4-9.

Here is happiness expressed by musical instruments, by human voices, by mountains echoing the sound of praise, by the waves of the sea as the breakers crash on the shore; all in overwhelming joy at the prospect of the coming King who shall judge the earth in righteousness, equity, and truth. This is a prophecy of the second advent of Christ, when He comes in glory, bringing His reward with Him.

What do you consider the most effective means by which unbelievers can be made aware of the glory of God's character?

PRIEST KING (Psalm 110).

Compare scripture with scripture. The New Testament helps with the interpretation of Psalm 110, for Matthew, Mark, and Luke all tell the story of the awkward question posed by Jesus, which put the Pharisees to silence (Matt. 22:41-46; Mark 12:35-37; Luke 20:41-44).

The sermon on the day of Pentecost also cited the second part of verse 1 as fulfilled prophecy after the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:34, 35). The letter to the Hebrews speaks of Christ's office as a priest (Heb. 5:6; 7:17, 21), quoting Psalm 110:4.

Why were the Pharisees unable or unwilling to answer Christ's question about Psalm 110:1? Matt. 22:43-46.

The crux of Jesus' argument is the identity of the *Son of David*. "This was the title which prophecy had given to the Messiah. When Jesus revealed His divinity by His mighty miracles, when He healed the sick and raised the dead, the people had inquired among themselves, 'Is not this the Son of David?' "—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 608. (See Matt. 12:23.)

The Canaanite woman addressed Jesus as "Lord, thou son of David" (Matt. 15:22). The blind beggar Bartimaeus of Jericho in calling to Jesus addressed Him as "son of David" (Mark 10:47). So did the two other blind men in Galilee who "followed him, crying, and saying, Thou son of David, have mercy on us" (Matt. 9:27). On the occasion of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, even the children were "crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David" (Matt. 21:15). They were echoing the cry of the multitude who accompanied Christ's procession (verse 9). They were fulfilling the prophecy of Psalm 118:25, 26. The word *hosanna* is an abbreviated form meaning "save now," or "save, I pray." (Compare Luke 1:32.)

"But many who called Jesus the Son of David did not recognize His divinity. They did not understand that the Son of David was also the Son of God."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 609.

What is implied by the "right hand" position? Ps. 110:1-3, 5-7 (compare Matt. 26:64; Eph. 1:20-22; Rev. 3:21).

What is the significance to you personally of the divinity and high priestly ministry of Jesus Christ? What does His work since the cross have to do with our salvation?

FURTHER STUDY: On the deity and work of Jesus Christ, study: John 5:18; 8:56-59; Heb. 8:1, 2; Rev. 3:21; 20:4. Read *The Desire of Ages*, "Thy King Cometh," pp. 569-579.

Love will conquer. "With joy unutterable, rulers and principalities and powers acknowledge the supremacy of the Prince of life. The angel host prostrate themselves before Him, while the glad shout fills all the courts of heaven, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.' Rev. 5:12.

"Songs of triumph mingle with the music from angel harps, till heaven seems to overflow with joy and praise. Love has conquered. The lost is found. Heaven rings with voices in lofty strains proclaiming, 'Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.' Rev. 5:13."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 834, 835.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In what practical ways can Christians reflect the holiness of God to the world today?
2. In what ways do the high priestly ministry and divinity of Jesus Christ have personal significance to your daily living?
3. What steps can you take to ensure the reception of the daily gift of Christ's holiness? What could keep you from receiving it?

SUMMARY: The King who made us and gave us life protects us in our battle with Satan and sin; He aids us in our path to holiness and intercedes for us before the throne. He crowns His work by taking us to a restored Eden at His second coming.

God Is Present With Me



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Psalms 139, 142, 143.

MEMORY TEXT: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23, 24).

KEY THOUGHT. Sin cannot exist in the presence of our ever-present, infinitely loving heavenly Father.

INSPIRATION. In his retirement years, the famous Quaker poet, John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892), lost his eyesight. On one occasion, just after sunset, a neighbor's little girl called in to visit this kind old gentleman, and the poet asked her to read something to him. There was no light in the house, and it was only twilight outside, so it was impossible to read. However, the little girl pretended to read as she recited part of Whittier's well-known poem "Eternal Goodness," which she had learned.

I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care.

Whittier said what beautiful lines they were and asked who had written them. The little girl exclaimed, "Why, you did, Mr. Whittier." The poet's measured response, typical of this humble Christian gentleman, was: "Did I? Then God must have given them to me, for I could never have written them without His help."

GOD KNOWS (Ps. 139:1-6).

How intimate is God's knowledge of the affairs of our lives? Ps. 139:1-6 (compare Acts 10:1-9).

When God instructed Cornelius to send for Peter, He knew that the apostle was at Joppa, lodging with Simon, a tanner. This would have been sufficient information for the servants of Cornelius to locate a tannery, but to remove all doubt, additional information—the house was on the coastline. Furthermore, God revealed to Peter that the delegation consisted of three men (Acts 10:7, 19). Inspiration confirmed to both parties the divine origin of the message.

"The explicitness of these directions, in which was named even the occupation of the man with whom Peter was staying, shows that Heaven is acquainted with the history and business of men in every station of life. God is familiar with the experience and work of the humble laborer, as well as with that of the king upon his throne."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 133, 134.

Why did God's knowledge of the Ethiopian eunuch have such a beneficial result? Acts 8:5, 26-40.

God knew that Philip the deacon was in Samaria, and that the treasurer of Queen Candace of Ethiopia had worshiped in Jerusalem and was returning home along the Jerusalem-Gaza desert road (Acts 8:5, 26-40).

"By the ministration of the Holy Spirit the Lord brought him [the Ethiopian] into touch with one who could lead him to the light."

"An angel guided Philip to the one who was seeking for light and who was ready to receive the gospel, and today angels will guide the footsteps of those workers who will allow the Holy Spirit to sanctify their tongues and refine and ennoble their hearts. The angel sent to Philip could himself have done the work for the Ethiopian, but this is not God's way of working. It is His plan that men are to work for their fellow men."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 107, 109.

In what ways is God impressing you to share the light you have with others, doing the work angels are expecting you to do? In your work for others, how can you be sure that you are being guided by the Lord and not by your own interests and inclinations?

GOD SEES (Ps. 139:7-12).

What is God's relation to space? Why is it impossible to escape from His presence? Ps. 139:7-10.

God's omnipresence transcends space. We cannot escape Him, even if we flee to the most isolated places of earth.

Adam and Eve in their transgression "hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden" (Gen. 3:8). God's question, "Where art thou?" does not mean that the guilty pair were invisible to Him.

God's comforting presence. As Psalm 139:10 indicates, this sense of omnipresence is actually very comforting. Even if we have wandered away, His eye sees and His hand guides. Hagar, carrying unborn Ishmael and facing a most uncertain future, could flee from Sarah's hard dealings, but not from God's all-seeing eye. (See Gen. 16:6-9.) She realized His presence at the fountain of water where the angel found her. As was often the custom in those days, a name was given to commemorate the event: Beer-la-hai-roi (Gen. 16:14), which means "well of the living One who sees me."

While God does see our mistakes and transgression, He also sees the yearning soul and the desire of the heart, our aspirations, our fears and weaknesses. (See Ps. 103:14.)

"Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord" (Jonah 1:3). Fortunately for Jonah, the Lord saw his plight, heard his desperate prayer, and gave him a second opportunity to be His messenger of hope.

In Scripture what does darkness symbolize (Ps. 139:11, 12)? Eph. 6:12.

Isaiah depicts a dramatic contrast when he describes the fall of Lucifer, Satan (Isa. 14:12, 15). The former lightbearer was cast out of heaven and is now "the prince of this world" (John 14:30), a world of darkness. This is in sharp contrast to the kingdom of Him who is "the light of the world" (John 8:12), who "hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col. 1:13; see also 2 Cor. 4:4).

What difference does it make to us that God, to whom the darkest night is still light, is fully aware of all our foibles?

GOD CREATES (Ps. 139:13-18).

As a shepherd boy, David would have had firsthand knowledge of conception and birth during the lambing season. The slaying of sacrificial animals would have given him some elementary facts of anatomy.

How did David refer to his knowledge of biology? Ps. 139:14.

Today, with detailed knowledge of the human body, we can echo David's expression a thousandfold. As one example, consider that essential organ—the heart. Each day it contracts 100,000 times, forcing blood through arteries, capillaries, and veins. For a life span of 70 years this amazing organ pumps approximately 2.5 billion times, sending thousands of tons of blood through the body.

"Anyone who can contemplate the eye of a housefly, the mechanics of human finger movement, the camouflage of a moth, or the building of every kind of matter from variations in arrangement of proton and electron, and then maintain that all this design happened without a designer, happened by sheer, blind accident—such a person believes in a miracle far more astounding than any in the Bible. To regard man, with his arts and aspirations, his awareness of himself and of his universe, his emotions and his morals, his very ability to conceive an idea so grand as that of God, to regard this creature as merely a form of life somewhat higher on the evolutionary ladder than the others, is to create questions more profound than was answered."—H. G. Coffin, *Origin by Design* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1983), quoted from D. R. Klein, "Is There a Substitute for God?" *Reader's Digest* (March 1970), p. 55.

What particular insights are mentioned by David in Psalm 139:13, 15, 16? What further grand acclamation does he make? Verses 17, 18.

David is so overwhelmed with wonder at God's masterpiece of creation as seen in the human body, that he is drawn to express the infinite wisdom and greatness of the Lord's mind.

Since the Lord has given us such wonderfully constructed bodies, what obligation do we have to cooperate with Him by keeping them in good working order? How would you suggest that we do this?

GOD HEARS (Ps. 139:4; Gen. 21:14-20).

After Hagar's return to her place of service in Abraham's household, she remained there with her son Ishmael for 13 years. But then, with the birth of Isaac, trouble arose in the encampment, for here was a true heir to the patriarch's wealth. Now Ishmael "was suddenly set aside; and in their disappointment, mother and son hated the child of Sarah. The general rejoicing increased their jealousy, until Ishmael dared openly to mock the heir of God's promise. Sarah saw in Ishmael's turbulent disposition a perpetual source of discord, and she appealed to Abraham, urging that Hagar and Ishmael be sent away from the encampment. The patriarch was thrown into great distress. How could he banish Ishmael his son, still dearly beloved?"—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 146.

When Ishmael was dying of thirst, who heard his cry? Gen. 21:17.

The lad had already been prophetically named following conception at the time of Hagar's willful departure from the camp because of Sarah's harsh treatment (Gen. 16:11); his name means "God hears."

Why is God sometimes unwilling to hear? Isa. 59:1, 2 (compare Ps. 34:15-17).

Sin separates us from God, and though His ear is open, He will not hear the prayer of the hypocrite. The apostle Peter (1 Peter 3:12) quotes almost word for word from Psalm 34:15, 16.

Comfort in affliction. "At all times and in all places, in all sorrows and in all afflictions, when the outlook seems dark and the future perplexing, and we feel helpless and alone, the Comforter will be sent in answer to the prayer of faith. Circumstances may separate us from every earthly friend; but no circumstance, no distance, can separate us from the heavenly Comforter. Wherever we are, wherever we may go, He is always at our right hand to support, sustain, uphold, and cheer."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 669, 670.

What experience can you share of the Lord's sustaining you in times of trial? How did He change the circumstances confronting you? In what way has that experience influenced your expectations for the future?

GOD SAVES (Ps. 139:19-24; 142; 143).

David's sudden transition of topic from God's spotless character to His wicked enemies is evoked by the realization that God and evil are at completely opposite extremes.

What was David's attitude to the wicked? Ps. 139:19-22. As he turned his thoughts inward, what plea did he make to God? Ps. 139:23, 24.

God hates sin but loves the sinner and has done everything possible to wean him from sin. But God is angry with the one who loves his sin (Ps. 7:11). He loves the world, no one excepted, and gave His Son to rescue all who truly believe in His sacrificial death from the clutches of Satan. (See John 3:16.)

The psalmist realized that he too was a sinner and, in the sight of God, no better than those he hated, and whom he reckoned as enemies. He now asks God to do what He had already done according to the opening verse of the psalm, namely, to search his heart and reveal to him his real self, his innermost thoughts.

"He wants the divine Examiner to use the most powerful X-ray apparatus to detect the slightest beginnings in the direction of sin. He wants no corner left concealed. He wants to know the worst and know it quickly. He has faith in the Great Physician and does not hesitate to call for the full diagnosis."—Kyle M. Yates, *Preaching From the Psalms* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948), p. 52.

What is the perfect solution for loneliness and trouble? Ps. 142:1, 2, 5. How keen was David's plight? Ps. 142:3, 4, 6, 7.

David's response to call upon the Lord is wise counsel for everyone in distress of any kind. When David was fleeing from Saul, he almost despaired of help. (See 1 Samuel 23, 24.) When in deep trouble, the human being tends to magnify it and so increase his discouragement, looking at life through spectacles of gloom. Elijah could count only himself as faithful to God, whereas the Lord counted as many as 7,000 (1 Kings 19:14, 18).

What characteristics of the Lord give you hope that, when overwhelmed by trouble, you will receive His help? (See Ps. 143:1, 8, 10, 11, 12.)

FURTHER STUDY: Read again Psalms 139, 142, 143. Read *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 524-536; *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 167-176.

You can depend on God. "To all who are reaching out to feel the guiding hand of God, the moment of greatest discouragement is the time when divine help is nearest. They will look back with thankfulness upon the darkest part of their way."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 528.

"Heaven will not fail them in their day of adversity. Nothing is apparently more hopeless, yet really more invincible, than the soul that feels its nothingness and relies wholly on God."—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 174, 175.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why does the effort to assist others in their trouble bring relief from one's own difficult circumstances?
2. We all know that the Lord has blessed us far in excess of what we deserve. How would you convince skeptical persons that, if they will surrender to Christ, He will bless them despite their past failures and sins?
3. The message of this week's lesson is that God is with us always, even when we feel alone and deserted. How do you practice the presence of Christ? How do you develop the faith that knows He is with you even when your world seems to have fallen apart?

SUMMARY: Man was made in the image of God, but man, confident in his own wisdom, has made his god in the image of man. Because God descended to earth to share humanity, we use human terms in an attempt to describe His character. His eye sees us, His hand leads us, His mind reads us, His presence embraces us; but our words and ideas are insufficient to portray His wisdom, His power, and His love.

Hallelujah!



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Psalms 112, 113, 115, 145, 147, 149, 150.

MEMORY TEXT: "Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord" (Psalm 150:6).

KEY THOUGHT. The book of the 150 psalms begins with *blessed* or happy, and ends with *hallelujah*. While the Lord does not need praise, He delights in the happy and buoyant outpourings of the human heart.

THE LORD IS KING. George Frideric Handel, the great German composer, migrated to England and wrote his famous oratorio *Messiah* in Dublin, Ireland, between August 22 and September 14, 1741. King George II was present at its first production in London, in 1743. The monarch was so impressed by the Hallelujah Chorus that he rose to his feet in recognition of the Messiah as King of kings and Lord of lords, and before whom he was himself a subject. The psychological effect of the whole audience standing with the king has preserved this custom to the present day. Wherever the *Messiah* is performed, audiences give this act of homage to the unseen King of the universe. With their hearts they join the choir as they sing: "He shall reign for ever and ever. Hallelujah."

We can rejoice now for the personal presence of Christ in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. How much more demonstrative will be our rejoicing when we meet our Lord in person and join the praises of the saved of all ages!

THE JOYFUL HEART (Psalm 112).

After the initial Hallelujah, here is another acrostic psalm. The first eight verses each have two couplets; the last two verses each have three couplets, making 22 in all, one for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

What blessings attend a God-fearing person? Ps. 112:1-9.

The righteous, or upright, person will set a powerful example to his family (verse 2), and the memory of him or her after death will remain a constant challenge (verse 6). "As the glow of the descending sun lights up the mountain peaks long after the sun itself has sunk behind the hills, so the works of the pure, the holy, and the good shed light upon the world long after the actors themselves have passed away."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 481.

In commending the liberality shown by the Corinthian church, the apostle Paul cited Psalm 112:9. (See 2 Cor. 9:9.)

The graciousness of the upright (Ps. 112:4) is shown in their attitude toward others (verses 5, 9). Moreover in dark days the upright will have a guiding Star (verses 4, 7, 8).

Note the contrast between the desire of the godly and that of the ungodly. Ps. 112:8, 10.

Wicked people see what they do not desire, namely the fearlessness and uprightness of the godly. The godly do not tremble at evil tidings or at the attacks of their enemies. Their steadfast hearts trust in God, who brings deliverance to them.

"First, in verse 2, the righteous person's 'descendants' ('seed') will be 'mighty on earth.' The word 'mighty' is used of a 'mighty man,' a man of valor and substance. These descendants will overcome their enemies (see v. 8). As we might render this in our context today, they will be able to do spiritual battle over the forces of evil and prevail (cf. Eph. 6:10ff.). In Christ we know that our enemies have been defeated and that 'we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us' (Rom. 8:37)."—Donald M. Williams, *The Communicator's Commentary: Psalms 73-150* (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1989), p. 314.

What is your primary motive for serving God—the blessings He promises or your heartfelt love for Him?

COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS (Psalm 145).

How inclusive is the invitation to praise God? Ps. 145:6, 9, 12, 14-16, 18-21.

How fitting that His Majesty King David should ignore his own position as ruler of Israel and speak to other nations of the glorious majesty of Jehovah's kingdom!

What characteristics of the Lord are to be the subject of our praise?

Ps. 145:7 _____

Verse 8 _____

Verse 9 _____

Verse 14 _____

Verse 19 _____

These attributes flow from the grace of the Lord, a virtue absent from despotic rulers and dictators. People cannot trust a ruler who manifests pride, cruelty, and unconcern for his subjects. The Lord has demonstrated throughout history His infinite love for His subjects. The greatest of all manifestations was the death of His Son on Calvary's cross. "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him" (Heb. 7:25).

Note the permanence of God's praise and rulership. Ps. 145:1, 2, 4, 13, 21; 146:2, 6, 10. Compare the transient nature of weak and wicked humanity. Ps. 145:20; 146:3, 4, 9.

The same contrast between the fate of the righteous and of the wicked is a major motif in the New Testament. (See Matt. 25:46; 2 Thess. 1:6-10; Rev. 6:15-17; 7:9-17.)

Why is the Lord's punishment of the wicked also an evidence of His love? Why should we praise the Lord for the trials and difficulties that come to us? Why is physical suffering not a reason to lose faith in God?

PASSOVER PRAISE (Psalms 113, 115).

In contrast to the Great Hallel (Psalm 136), the group of psalms from 113 to 118 inclusive was known simply as the Hallel (praise) and sung at the family celebration of the Passover. Psalms 113 and 114 preceded the meal, and the last four psalms were sung after the meal.

For how long and how far should the Lord's name be praised? Ps. 113:1-3 (compare Acts 4:12). What reasons are given to justify such praise? Ps. 113:4-9.

John Newton, the converted slave captain, wrote the hymn entitled "The Name of Jesus." It begins: "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds, / In a believer's ear." Many names are given to Jesus in the Scriptures, and we sing six of them in Newton's hymn: Shepherd, Guardian, Friend, Prophet, Priest, King.

Note the tremendous contrasts depicted: the High and Lofty One descends as the Meek and Lowly One. (See Isa. 57:15; Matt. 11:29.) His purpose is to raise the homeless pauper to the heavenly palace, the degraded sinner to the home of the holy.

The Lord's Supper. The hymn sung after Jesus had instituted the Lord's Supper with His disciples (Matt. 26:30) was the second portion of the Hallel, namely Psalms 115-118, or portions thereof.

What attitude does the psalmist adopt that guards him from idolatry? Ps. 115:1-11. Contrast some of the characteristics of the true God with those of idols. Ps. 115:3, 11, 12, 15, 16.

Idolatry defiles. "The psalmist describes the effect produced upon the worshiper by the adoration of idols. . . . Man will rise no higher than his conceptions of truth, purity, and holiness. If the mind is never exalted above the level of humanity, if it is not uplifted by faith to contemplate infinite wisdom and love, the man will be constantly sinking lower and lower. The worshipers of false gods clothed their deities with human attributes and passions, and thus their standard of character was degraded to the likeness of sinful humanity. They were defiled in consequence."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 91.

What modern idols keep us from full appreciation of God and the spiritual benefits He wishes to bestow upon us?

UNIVERSAL SYMPHONY (Psalms 147, 148).

"How precious are the lessons of this psalm [Psalm 147]. We might well devote study to the last four psalms of David."—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 371.

What illustration shows God's personal care? Ps. 147:2-6.

God's understanding is infinite, or literally translated, without number. He numbers the stars that are more numerous than the population of Israel. He gives loving care for each person individually.

The military references in Psalm 147 indicate divine protection (verses 2, 10, 11-14), but the best defense of all protects the person who fears God.

What power is at the basis of nature and natural growth? Ps. 147:8, 9, 15-18; 148:8, 9 (compare Gen. 1:11, 12; 8:22).

"A mysterious life pervades all nature—a life that sustains the unnumbered worlds throughout immensity; that lives in the insect atom which floats in the summer breeze; that wings the flight of the swallow, and feeds the young ravens which cry; that brings the bud to blossom, and the flower to fruit.

"The same power that upholds nature, is working also in man. The same great laws that guide alike the star and the atom, control human life. . . . From Him all life proceeds."—*Education*, p. 99.

How can inanimate creation, and flora and fauna, praise the Lord? Ps. 148:3-10; 19:1-3.

"Nature speaks to their [humanity's] senses, declaring that there is a living God, the Creator, the Supreme Ruler of all. . . . The beauty that clothes the earth is a token of God's love. We may behold it in the everlasting hills, in the lofty trees, in the opening buds and the delicate flowers. All speak to us of God."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 48.

Of what are we depriving ourselves when we neglect to take time to enjoy the beauties of nature? Give three reasons why recreation in nature is important to us.

HALLELUJAH (Psalms 149, 150).

What should be the reaction of the human family to this symphony of nature? Ps. 148:11-14; 149:1-6; 150 (compare Rev. 5:13).

All classes of people, of whatever rank, age, or sex, are called to praise the Lord. And the praise is not to be limited to daylight hours. To the human voice, loud and clear, are added strings, woodwind, and brass instruments, all uniting in a veritable symphony of sound, directing praise to the great Creator.

What a fitting climax to the book of Psalms; 13 times in only six verses of the last chapter we have the word *praise*. Who can possibly resist joining in the invitation: "Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord." Hallelujah (Ps. 150:6).

Crown Him Lord of your life. Thomas Kelly (1769-1854), the Irish preacher who seceded from the established church in order to preach, among other doctrines, the message of the Second Advent, imagined the glorious scene of Christ's enthronement in his hymn entitled "Look Ye Saints."

Crown the Saviour, angels, crown Him;
 Rich the trophies Jesus brings:
 In the seat of power enthrone Him,
 While the vault of heaven rings;
 Crown Him, crown Him; . . .
 "Crown the Saviour 'King of kings!'"

 Hark! those bursts of acclamation!
 Hark! those loud triumphant chords!
 Jesus takes the highest station:
 Oh, what joy the sight affords!
 Crown Him, crown Him; . . .
 "King of kings, and Lord of lords!"

—*New Advent Hymnal* (Watford: Stanborough Press Ltd., 1952),
 no. 187.

There are plenty of thorns in this world, but there are also plenty of roses. Which can you see the most of?

A friend of yours has developed a negative attitude toward life. She has been through a painful divorce and has struggled for years to support herself and her son. How would you go about leading her into the spirit of praise?

FURTHER STUDY: Read Psalms 116-118. Read "The Lord's Vineyard" in *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 298-300, and "Poetry and Song" in *Education*, pp. 159-168.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Tell a personal experience of how you were especially blessed after praising God when things were going wrong.
2. For what did Jesus have to praise His Father when He was on the cross?
3. What effect do you think it would have on the lives of others if they could hear you praising God for the blessing they are to you?

SUMMARY: This series of lessons began with gloomy questionings, but ends with glorious praise. What a magnificent example our Lord set when He sang a song of praise, knowing that in less than 24 hours He would be suffering the second death for us! His faith pierced the dreadful gloom, and one effect for us is that "in thy presence is fulness of joy" (Ps. 16:11). Hallelujah!



TREASURY

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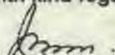
May 28, 1990

Elder Don Gilbert, Treasurer
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Dear Don:

We have just received the 1989 4th Quarter 13th Sabbath Offering which amounts to \$424,350.00. This is the largest amount that the Southern Asia Division has ever received from the Members of the World Church. Please pass on our thanks to our Brethren around the World on our behalf for the liberal offering they have given.

With kind regards,


Johnson Koilpillai, Treasurer

If you did it once, you can do it again!

Lessons for Third Quarter 1992

Sabbath School members who have not received a copy of the adult Sabbath School lessons for the third quarter of 1992 will be helped by the following outline in studying the first two lessons. The title of the series is A Living Hope. This quarter's lessons cover the book of 1 Peter.

First Lesson: Peter: First Among Equals

MEMORY TEXT: Acts 4:19

THEME: Jesus worked with Peter as He works with us, encouraging what was good and valuable, softening what was harsh, smoothing what was rugged, and purging what was offensive.

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Matthew 16:13-20; Acts 1:15-23; Mark 14:66-72; John 21:15-19; Acts 9:32-43.

Second Lesson: Elect Strangers and Pilgrims

MEMORY TEXT: 1 Peter 1:2

THEME: Peter addresses his letter to those who have heard or read the gospel invitation and have responded—the elect throughout the Christian era.

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 1 Peter 1:1, 2; 4:3; 5:12-14.

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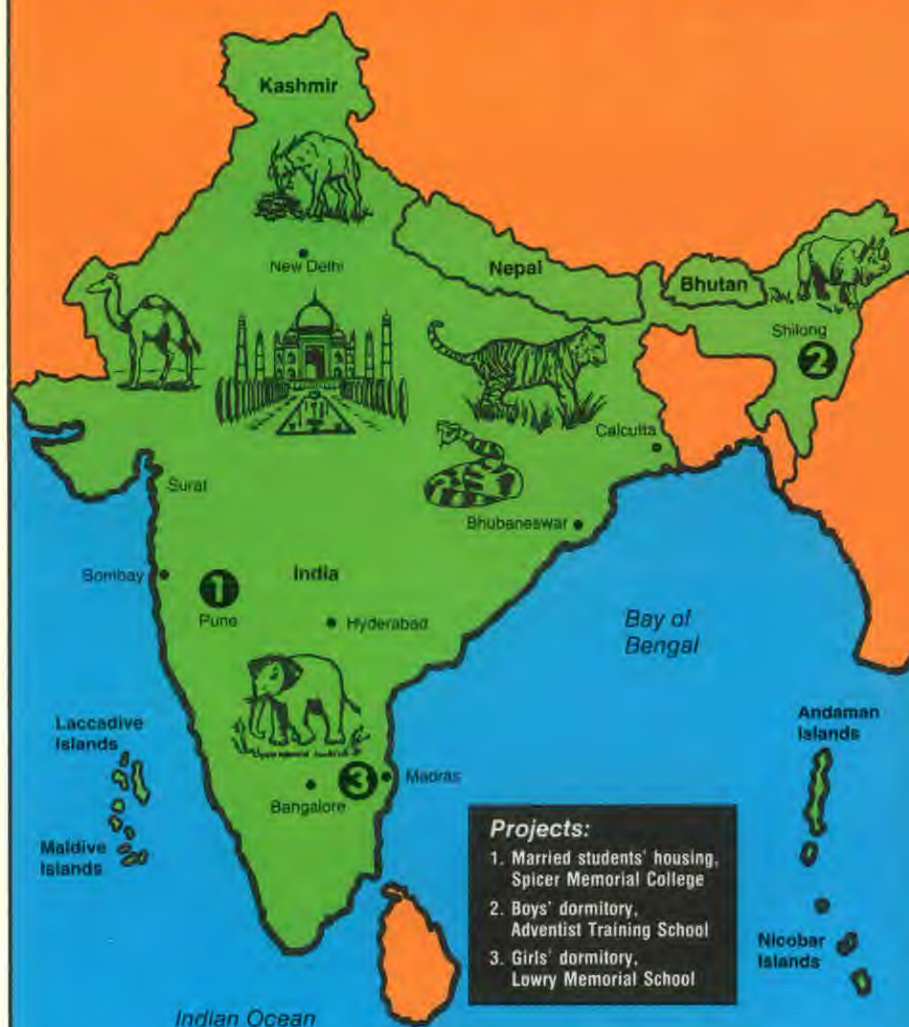
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Projects:

1. Married students' housing, Spicer Memorial College
2. Boys' dormitory, Adventist Training School
3. Girls' dormitory, Lowry Memorial School

Unions	Churches	Membership	Population
Central India	204	59,414	176,893,590
Northeast India	103	14,696	26,607,199
Northern	124	21,411	386,449,982
South India	401	67,445	112,896,921
Totals June 30, 1989	832	162,966	702,847,692