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God Shows and Tells



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Studies on Revelation and Inspiration

God Shows and Tells

When we face the fundamental questions of life and death, we realize how inadequate we are to find satisfying answers without God. There is only one true solution—to turn to our Creator and Redeemer so that we may discover what He is able to reveal to us about Himself and His purposes for us. When we turn to Him for answers, we learn that God loves us greatly and is eager to guide our lives.

Because it is impossible for us to discover what we need to know about God, He reveals all that He knows we can grasp about His eternal nature and infinite goodness. The fullest revelation of God is found in Jesus Christ, who is the focus of the Scriptures. Indeed, the heart of God's revelation in the Written Word centers in the Living Word.

But Satan does everything he can, especially in these last days, to lead people to doubt, ignore, and reject God's revelations. He uses what some call science to lead people to think that only that which is reasonable to sin-perverted human minds is true. Thus the limited human intelligence becomes the judge of whether the greatly superior revelations of the infinite God are correct. Consequently, many have rejected basically every aspect of God's self-revelation.

This quarter's guide is designed to deepen our appreciation of God's revelation of and about Himself through His inspiration of the Bible writers. Inspiration from God enabled them to grasp and communicate His revealed will in a trustworthy manner. This guide is designed to help us gain a proper perspective on how inspiration has produced and preserved the Scriptures and how God enables us to understand best what He has revealed. A good deal of time and space could be given to dealing with the questions and objections raised by skeptics. Instead, the approach purposely focuses on reviewing the clear and definite information God has given about understanding His revealed will.

"The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to man the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history.—Fundamental Beliefs, 1."—Quoted in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .*, ed. The Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1988), p. 4.

God Is Good



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Ps. 107:1-8; 77:1-13; Jer. 31:3; 1 Chron. 16:8-12.

MEMORY TEXT: "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Exodus 34:6).

KEY THOUGHT: God's revelation tells and shows us that He is good. God uses various means of revelation to help us understand His goodness. He wants us to trust Him in order that we might enjoy the best and the most of life and, in turn, reveal His goodness to others.

GOD'S GOODNESS REVEALED. Jesus came to reveal the Father (see John 1:1, 14; 14:9). If Christ were to talk to us personally, what would He say? His favorite theme while on earth was the noble character and abundant love of God. Wouldn't He speak to us about how much our Father in heaven loves us and how good He is? He would invite us as God's earthly children to trust our heavenly Father with a deeper, stronger trust than that which children have for their loving, earthly parents. The heart of our *good* God is moved by the loss of even one sparrow, let alone the tragic loss of one of His earthly children. He is continuously watching over His children. Isn't it a wonderful fact to contemplate that in our busy world, where the population is fast approaching the five billion mark, our *good* God knows each one of us intimately by name! Our God, in His *goodness*, generously provides our daily bread and all else we need to live. Because He wants us to trust Him, He has gone to great lengths to reveal His love for us.

THE GOODNESS OF GOD (Ps. 25:8; 31:19; 33:5; 107:1-8; 145:9; 1 John 4:8).

Goodness is derived from the Old English *góðnes*. Thus, it is associated with qualities that are like God. The Oxford English Dictionary defines goodness as “the quality or condition of being good . . . moral excellence, virtue.”—(Oxford, Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1978), vol. III.

How did the psalmist outline the goodness of God?

1. Ps. 25:8 _____
2. Ps. 31:19 _____
3. Ps. 33:5 _____
4. Ps. 145:9 _____

Have you offered a treat to a child only to have the youngster draw away from you in fear or suspicion? You know that your gift is good, yet the child doesn't seem to understand that. What you have to offer is something that he or she would really enjoy if it were accepted. Think, then, how frustrated our loving God must feel when He offers so much to us, His earthly children, only to be met with our response of backing away fearfully, thinking that He wants to harm us or dilute our joy.

Our acceptance of what He reveals leads to a trust in Him that encourages us to reach out with the hand of faith, take Him at His Word, and accept all the precious blessings He longs to share with us.

Contemplate the familiar text 1 John 4:8, 16 in order to discover some implications deeper than those readily perceived when first reading it.

The text makes it clear that it is God's nature to love. Love is characteristic of His very being. He is not a far-off, disinterested God. Neither is He an angry dictator needing to be appeased. The text also implies that there never has been and never will be a time when God is *not* love. God does everything possible to lead us to understand that He is love, that He is good, and that He cares for each one of us.

For reflection: Think of a time in your life when some terrible tragedy took away a friend or loved one. Did you find it difficult to understand why God allowed it to happen? If so, were you able to reconcile your doubts with the innate goodness and love of God?

“GOD IS GREAT, GOD IS GOOD” (Ps. 77:1-13; 119:142; Titus 2:11, 12; Isa. 54:8).

Study the following lists of God’s attributes and compare those that help us understand the greatness of God with those that help us understand His goodness. As you think about such attributes, consider in what ways you can become more confident and secure in God in your daily life.

GREATNESS

Eternal existence (Ps. 90:2)
All knowledge (Job 37:16)
Presence everywhere (Ps. 139:7-10)
All power (Eph. 1:19)
Righteousness (Ps. 119:142)
Justice (Ps. 89:14)
Truthfulness (John 14:6)

GOODNESS

Love (1 John 4:8, 10)
Grace (Titus 2:11, 12)
Mercy (Jer. 31:20)
Patience (Rom. 15:5)
Holiness (Purity) (Exod. 15:11)
Kindness (Isa. 54:8)
Unselfishness (Eph. 2:8)

What else can you add to either of these lists? How have you experienced these qualities in your relationship with God?

“The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee” (Jer. 31:3). Think of ways God’s lovingkindness has drawn you to Himself.

Analyze Jesus’ statement to the rich young ruler in Mark 10:18 in which He emphasizes goodness as an attribute of God. In your own words tell what you think He is saying and why He says it.

The relevance of Old Testament thought to the New Testament development of Christ’s ministry and sacrifice is found primarily in the emphasis on God’s love and goodness. In the Old Testament one senses God’s eagerness to reveal that which is almost impossible to understand fully about Him—His amazing trustworthiness, goodness, and love. However, in the New Testament we find not only the full revelation of God’s love at the Cross, but even before Calvary, the life and teachings of Jesus make it clear that we serve a good God.

Think on this: Reflect on the things God has done in your life that reveal His goodness and His mercy.

IT IS GOD'S NATURE TO LOVE (1 John 4:8-12; 1 Cor. 13:4-7).

Love is set forth in the Scriptures as the very nature of God. Yet, His kind of love is not natural in a sinful world. The Bible reveals such a unique and distinctive understanding of God that it is not possible for human minds to comprehend this concept unaided. It can come to us through God's self-revelation alone.

Review God's kind of love as defined in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7:

WHAT GOD'S LOVE IS	WHAT GOD'S LOVE IS NOT

When His kind of love is seen in us, God is revealed.

The most natural thing in the world. "If we would but think of God as often as we have evidence of His care for us, we should keep Him ever in our thoughts, and should delight to talk of Him and to praise Him. We talk of temporal things because we have an interest in them. We talk of our friends because we love them; our joys and our sorrows are bound up with them. Yet we have infinitely greater reason to love God than to love our earthly friends; it should be the most natural thing in the world to make Him first in all our thoughts, to talk of His goodness and tell of His power."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 102.

Merely to tell of His power and goodness is not enough. For those who can sing, the beautiful song "How Great Thou Art" is easy to present; but when the words are real within us, we do more than sing or tell it, we look for ways to *demonstrate* it.

List some of the persons with whom you will interact this week and think of specific ways you might help them understand the goodness and greatness of God.

“BEHOLD, WHAT MANNER OF LOVE” (Isa. 63:7-9; 1 John 3:1, 2).

God’s love is so great that it makes us sons and daughters in His royal family. John, who was so closely associated with Jesus, describes the vastness of His love. For God will not be satisfied until He gathers us around His throne.

How is God’s great love revealed to us in 1 John 3:1, 2? How does this affect your understanding of Him?

In Christ, God adopts us as His sons and daughters. He is at work restoring the image of God in us. The ultimate expression of His love will be evident in the new earth when, freed from every trace of sin, “The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God” (Rev. 21:3).

“People think it a privilege to see a royal personage, and thousands go great distances to see one. How much greater privilege it is to be sons and daughters of the Most High. What greater privilege could be conferred on us than to be given entrance into the royal family? . . . Let no one be so deluded by the enemy as to think that it is a condescension for any man, however talented or learned or honored, to accept Christ. Every human being should look to heaven with reverence and gratitude, and exclaim with amazement, ‘Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.’”—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 8.

How did John, a son of thunder (Mark 3:17), become a son of God?

“John’s was no faultless character. . . . He and his brother were called the ‘sons of thunder.’ . . . John was proud, ambitious, combative; but beneath all this the divine Teacher discerned the ardent, sincere, loving heart.

“John’s was a nature that longed for love, for sympathy and companionship. He pressed close to Jesus, sat by His side, leaned upon His breast. As a flower [drinks] the sun and dew, so did he drink in the divine light and life. In adoration and love he beheld the Saviour, until likeness to Christ and fellowship with Him became his one desire, and in his character was reflected the character of his Master.”—*Education*, p. 87.

For reflection: Is there a character quality in my life that is more like a son of thunder than a child of God? How does that compromise how I reflect God’s character to others? How can I let God help me in this area today?

HOW CAN WE KNOW GOD? (Deut. 4:29-32; 1 Chron. 16:8-12).

In Job 11:7, Zophar asks the suffering patriarch, “Canst thou by searching find out God?” Certainly, we cannot. The greatest human mind cannot produce that which would be recognized as absolute scientific evidence of God’s existence. How then can we know God? Only one way—through His self-revelation. God wants us to know all that we can about Him and His goodness.

How does God reveal Himself in ways we can understand? The Bible suggests some ways:

1. Earthly parents and/or others who have made a positive impact on our spirituality and faith (2 Tim. 1:5).
2. Jesus (John 1:1, 2).
3. Nature (Job 12:7-10).
4. The Bible (John 5:39).
5. The image of God reflected in born-again people (Phil. 4:9; 2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:29).
6. His continual leading in our lives (Ps. 107:1-8).
7. The Holy Spirit (John 14:16-18, 26).

To this list add other ways from your experience and personal study of the Bible that show how God reveals Himself to us.

All of these help to reveal that God is *good*. That He loves and cares for us is beyond our ability to comprehend.

Evidences of God’s goodness. Katie was dying from cancer. She loved birds, but her viewing was restricted to those she could see from her bedroom window. When her daughter Mary saw a flock of beautiful birds in the backyard, she prayed, “Lord, please cause those birds to fly around to the tree in front where Mom can see them.” Just then, the birds flew to her mother’s window. God does not always answer prayer in this fashion, but this time He did. Mary was overwhelmed with God’s goodness in answering such a small request, one that gave to Katie and to her specially needed encouragement during that difficult time.

Recall some of the personal goodness that God has intimately shown you in the past week.

In what ways have you been able to demonstrate the goodness of God to those about you during the last week?

FURTHER STUDY: Check the word *goodness* in your Bible or concordance. Note those verses that apply to goodness as an attribute of God. How many can you find? List several that indicate how God's goodness is reflected in the actions of those who serve Him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1. How does keeping the goodness and love of God uppermost in our thinking help us in times of tragedy and trouble?**
- 2. Are there any projects or activities our class could do that would help to portray an attractive picture of God's goodness to those in our community? How can we help people who have been hurt by others to trust and accept God's love?**

"When men go forth to their daily toil, as when they engage in prayer; when they lie down at night, and when they rise in the morning; when the rich man feasts in his palace, or when the poor man gathers his children about the scanty board, each is tenderly watched by the heavenly Father. No tears are shed that God does not notice. There is no smile that He does not mark.

"If we would but fully believe this, all undue anxieties would be dismissed. Our lives would not be so filled with disappointment as now; for everything, whether great or small, would be left in the hands of God, who is not perplexed by the multiplicity of cares, or overwhelmed by their weight. We should then enjoy a rest of soul to which many have long been strangers."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 86.

"Christ hungers to receive from His vineyard the fruit of holiness and unselfishness. He looks for the principles of love and goodness. Not all the beauty of art can bear comparison with the beauty of temper and character to be revealed in those who are Christ's representatives."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 298.

SUMMARY: One powerful way our families, church members, friends, and neighbors understand the goodness of God is by seeing His goodness in us. When our *good* God has full control of our lives, His unselfish goodness will be evidenced in our actions. This means more than professing goodness; it involves *doing* kind, loving, merciful, unselfish, generous, unexpected deeds that, by God's grace, enable others to *see* His goodness in us.



Desperately Seeking God, Part 1

Charlotte Ishkanian

The world should have looked wonderful to 22-year-old Biruthe [bih-ROO-teh] Konciute [kon-CHOO-teh]. Her homeland, Lithuania, was free after a lifetime of Communism. But a dark cloud of hopelessness hung overhead. Jobs were scarce, and crime was increasing. Biruthe felt that something was missing in her life, something absolute, something stable. She called that something "truth," but she did not know where to find it or that it even existed.

A friend gave her a book to read. Biruthe flipped through it, hoping to find something that would lift her heavy heart. One chapter caught her attention. It began with the words of Jesus: "I am the way, the truth, and the life." The word *truth* jumped out at her. She realized that the ultimate truth is in God. But how could she find God?

When she was a small girl she had sometimes gone to church with her mother. She remembered that occasionally the priest had read from the Bible. She asked her mother where she could get a Bible, but her mother told her that only the priests read the Bible, not the laity.

Biruthe was determined to find a Bible and read it. She searched for a Bible in bookshops, but she found none. She prayed, "God, if You are truly God, please help me to find Your Word." That day she found a New Testament. Eagerly she began reading it. When she found Christ's words, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), she knew she had the right book!

As she read she noticed that some people called Pharisees did not like it when Jesus healed someone on Sabbath. She wondered what was Sabbath, and why did it make the Pharisees angry when Jesus healed on this day? She found other verses that referred to the Sabbath, and she realized that the Sabbath day was holy to God.

But what day was Sabbath? In the former Soviet Union the calendar week started with Monday. But she had learned that other countries started the week on Sunday, which meant the seventh day was Saturday. How could she know which was correct?

(continued next week)



Biruthe Konciute of Lithuania (left).
Charlotte Ishkanian is editor of *Mission*.

That We May Know Him



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 2 Kings 22; Ps. 107:31-43; John 14:8-11; 16:8-14; 17:1-5; Rom. 1:17-23; Col. 1:12-20.

MEMORY TEXT: “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3).

KEY THOUGHT: Because eternal life comes through knowing God, He makes it possible for us to know as much about Him as He thinks is necessary. We will study the means God uses to reveal Himself to us.

WHAT WE CAN KNOW. The Bible makes no direct attempt to prove God's existence—it assumes it. The Bible claims to be God's message to us about Himself and His plan for us and our world. The first words of the Bible tell us that God is the Creator. Before the world was, He was. As our Creator, He naturally is Sovereign over all He has created. God can be seen in creation, but this form of revelation is limited. Because our sin-ruined planet barely reflects the original world, He must reveal Himself in other ways, as well. Among these is the greatest of all revelations—His revelation through Christ, the living Word. “Christ revealed all of God that sinful human beings could bear without being destroyed. He is the divine Teacher, the Enlightener.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 266.

TERM FOR THE WEEK: *Theistic evolution.* The speculation that God worked through the process of evolution to bring the universe and life on earth into being.

GOD SPEAKS THROUGH NATURE (Rom. 1:17-23; Ps. 19:1-6; Acts 14:15-17).

“Many are the ways in which God is seeking to make Himself known to us and bring us into communion with Him. Nature speaks to our senses without ceasing. The open heart will be impressed with the love and glory of God as revealed through the works of His hands. The listening ear can hear and understand the communications of God through the things of nature. The green fields, the lofty trees, the buds and flowers, the passing cloud, the falling rain, the babbling brook, the glories of the heavens, speak to our hearts, and invite us to become acquainted with Him who made them all.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 85.

Even though sin has so changed the natural world that much of it barely reflects the original creation, what basic lesson does nature still teach us? Ps. 19:1.

One of the frailties of being human is that we often hear only what we want to hear. “If we will but listen, God’s created works will teach us precious lessons of obedience and trust. From the stars that in their trackless courses through space follow from age to age their appointed path, down to the minutest atom, the things of nature obey the Creator’s will. And God cares for everything and sustains everything that He has created.”—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 85, 86.

We learn to trust God more as we recognize His loving care all about us and are able to see through faulty human reasoning to recognize more clearly how nature testifies of its Creator. Our study of the Scriptures leads us to a proper understanding of God through nature.

Read the following Bible passages and consider their context in order to gain greater biblical insight into the way nature reveals its Creator:

Acts 14:15-17. Under what circumstances was this given? How were the listeners affected?

Rom. 1:19, 20. For what reason did Paul address this passage to the Roman believers?

Think it through: What helpful answer can you offer to what some consider to be discrepancies between nature and the Bible? How does this answer help you to trust God more?

SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE (Isa. 40:21-28; Heb. 11:3; 2 Pet. 3:3-6).

Humanity has gained much knowledge and has made many advancements through science as it seeks to observe and research the phenomena occurring in the natural world surrounding us. However, when science enters into the realm of the origin of matter and life, it has its limitations. Some scientists give the impression that the discussion that has raged for little more than one hundred years between those who accept the theory of evolution and those who accept the Bible record of special creation was settled long ago in favor of evolution. That is not so. There is not adequate evidence on either side to prove one position or the other scientifically and conclusively. Ultimately, the choice between which theory of origins we accept comes down to faith in God's Word or faith in man's word. Here creationists have the advantage.

The Bible record of the creation of life comes from the Creator Himself. See how He made it happen in the following texts as you complete this chart.

	Title of Creator	What He did
Isa. 51:13		
Jer. 10:12		
Heb. 11:3		

When we accept the Bible as our guide to understanding the natural world, we find nature pointing to its Creator. For instance, the woodpecker is one of the Creator's marvelous productions in the natural world. Some of its special features are: a beak that can drive through wood hard enough to bend a nail; neck muscles strong enough to enable the head and beak to deliver jackhammer blows; a skull so thick that it sustains repeated shocks that would kill some other birds; and stiff tail feathers with sharp spines to brace the bird for hammering.

It is amazing how our Creator God equips such small creatures as the woodpecker with just the right intricate anatomy needed to carry out its necessary functions.

In what ways has nature helped you to know, trust, and glorify God?

GOD SPEAKS THROUGH HIS WRITTEN WORD (2 Pet. 1:19-21; John 17:17; 2 Kings 22).

Study 2 Peter 1:19-21. List some characteristics of God's prophetic word and consider how they affirm your confidence in it.

Characteristic	Affirmation
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

The Bible writers lived and wrote in such widely scattered localities as Sinai, Babylon, Jerusalem, and Rome. God used princes and paupers, heroes and herdsmen to produce the Bible. It was written approximately between 1500 B.C. and A.D. 100. In spite of this great diversity in authorship, time, and place in which it was written, the Bible's wonderful harmony is one of the unmistakable evidences that it is what it claims to be—the Word of God.

"God speaks to us in His word. Here we have in clearer lines the revelation of His character, of His dealings with men, and the great work of redemption. Here is open before us the history of patriarchs and prophets and other holy men of old. They were men 'subject to like passions as we are.' We see how they struggled through discouragements like our own, how they fell under temptation as we have done, and yet took heart again and conquered through the grace of God: and beholding, we are encouraged in our striving after righteousness. As we read of the precious experiences granted them, of the light and love and blessing it was theirs to enjoy, and of the work they wrought through the grace given them, the spirit that inspired them kindles a flame of holy emulation in our hearts and a desire to be like them in character—like them to walk with God."—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 87, 88.

Study 2 Kings 22 carefully to learn how God used the Written Word and the testimony of a prophetess to lead King Josiah to an understanding of His will.

Just as God spoke directly through the words of the book of the Law and through a prophetess to King Josiah, He speaks to us today. What a privilege it is to be able to hold in our hands the Word of God and to study it carefully as it helps us to know God and apply His principles to our daily lives!

GOD SPEAKS THROUGH THE LIVING WORD (John 1:14; 5:39; 14:8-11; Col. 1:12-20).

The revelation of God through Jesus Christ is the greatest and most complete of all revelations. The Written Word explains God's will, but the Living Word demonstrates how to live it.

According to the following texts, how fully did Jesus reveal the Father?

Matt. 11:27 _____

John 1:14, 18 _____

John 14:8-11 _____

2 Cor. 4:6 _____

Heb. 1:1-3 _____

"The revelation of God in the OT . . . pointed beyond itself to a future consummation to which the men who received it looked forward—and already saw. . . . It is the revelation of God in Christ that discloses the meaning of the OT revelation . . . Christ stands at the convergence of all the perspectives of the OT. In him all the diverse strands and fragments of revelation are gathered up into a single significant pattern."—"The Manner of Revelation," *Theological Word Book of the Bible*, Alan Richardson, ed. (New York: Macmillan Pub. Co., Inc., 1950), p. 197.

The heart and sum of all God's revelation to us in the Scriptures center in Christ. How is this fact made plain in John 5:39?

"Jesus said of the Old Testament Scriptures—and how much more it is true of the New—'They are they which testify of me,' the Redeemer, Him in whom our hopes of eternal life are centered. Yes, the whole Bible tells of Christ. From the first record of Creation—for 'without him was not anything made that was made'—to the closing promise, 'Behold I come quickly,' we are reading of His works and listening to His voice. If you would become acquainted with the Saviour, study the Holy Scriptures."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 88.

For reflection: How do some of our ways of studying the Scriptures obstruct our view of Jesus? In what ways can we make our Bible study more Christ-centered to better reflect His character before our families, neighbors, and co-workers?

OTHER MEANS OF REVELATION (Isa. 49:14, 15; Ps. 107:31-43; John 16:8-14).

1. God speaks through Providence (Ps. 107:31-43).

Think of some incidents in your life where you have noted God's providence at work.

"In our circumstances and surroundings, in the changes daily taking place around us, we may find precious lessons if our hearts are but open to discern them."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 87.

2. God speaks through human relationships. The closest relationships of life, such as family relationships, can represent God's love and care for us. Identify the relationships in the following texts and how they may reveal the nature of God's love:

Isa. 49:14, 15 _____

Isa. 54:5, 6 _____

Prov. 18:24 (see 2T 271) _____

3. God speaks through the Holy Spirit (John 16:8-14). God speaks through the Holy Spirit in various ways, but the focus here is on the Holy Spirit exposing Satan's subtle deceptions. He guides us into all truth by helping us separate truth from all the misinformation and counterfeits with which Satan floods our world. Because the devil does not want us to learn how kind God really is, he does everything possible to keep us from getting to know God and loving Him:

A. In the natural world, Satan fogs up the testimony of nature by introducing disease, pests, and the theory of evolution.

B. When it comes to Providence, Satan brings so many troubles into the world that people sometimes find it difficult to sense God's love.

C. To destroy the sure testimony of the Scriptures, Satan encourages a critical approach that views the Bible as any other book by making the human mind the final arbiter of truth.

D. Satan not only misrepresents the character of Jesus but also tries to convince people that it is impossible for them to be like Him.

E. By his subtle deceptions, Satan has made evil seem good and good seem evil.

For reflection: What has been your reaction this week as you reflected on becoming acquainted with God through His Word? What are three specific actions you could take this coming week to help others become better acquainted with God and desire to be like Him?

FURTHER STUDY: Knowing God, of course, means much more than intellectual understanding. It represents a continual, close relationship that leads us to so trust Him that we accept His revealed way as the best for us. Look up and study some texts in the Bible that go beyond mere intellectual understanding about God to experiencing an intimate relationship with Him. Consider such texts as “Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good . . .” (Ps. 34:8, NKJV).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What other means can you think of through which God has revealed Himself? How about through history? What conclusions can you reach about God’s character as you study Jeremiah 18:7-10 and Acts 17:24-27?
2. What characteristics of God are revealed by His knowledge of the future? Review Daniel 2 and Revelation 10.
3. Read chapter 10 in *Steps to Christ*, “A Knowledge of God,” and select thoughts that will add to your understanding of this lesson.

Note: We cannot expect either the Bible or our Christian experience to be meaningful unless we feed regularly on God’s Word. Once we learn to feed consistently on the Bread of Life, we develop a *taste* for it and become *hungry* when we go without it. Why don’t more people take Bible study seriously? Possibly no one taught them how to study or they feel no interest or they simply do not accept the Bible. Perhaps the major reason people do not like to study the Bible is because they find things there that cut across their way of living. The good news is that as we become better acquainted with God through His Word, our characters are transformed and our desires change.

SUMMARY: In the space below, briefly write down what you learned about how God is revealed through:

Nature _____

Science _____

The Bible _____

Jesus _____

Providence _____

Human relationships _____

The Holy Spirit _____



Desperately Seeking God, Part 2

Charlotte Ishkanian

As she searched for something to fill the aching emptiness in her heart, Biruthe Konciute turned to God. She began reading the Bible and found many references to the Sabbath. But which day was Sabbath? The Christians she knew celebrate Jesus' crucifixion on Friday, so the Sabbath should be on Saturday. But why then did they worship on Sunday instead of Sabbath? she wondered.

She knew that somewhere there must be people who live according to the principles of God's law. But how could she find them? She kept praying that God would show her His truth.

Her family greeted her questions with indifference and even animosity. "You should not be reading this book! Why can't you be satisfied with the church you grew up in?" they asked her. But their comments failed to deter her in her search for God.

Biruthe's search for truth continued several months. She learned that God expected His followers to return a tithe of their income to God. She thought, *I want to pay tithe, but to whom shall I pay it?*

When she heard of evangelistic meetings being held in her city, she decided to attend. Perhaps these people knew where to find the true church. She arrived at the lecture hall early the first night. She was impressed with the friendliness and humility of the women who greeted her. The preacher's words were warm, and his message was backed by texts from the Bible. She could almost hear God saying, "Here are the people whom I told you to look for!"

When the preacher presented the Sabbath, she nearly jumped from her seat, for she knew she had found God's true church. And when the pastor invited those who wanted to follow Jesus to stand, Birute was the first to her feet. She eagerly joined the baptismal class.

Following her baptism her eyes began to bother her. The doctors told her the redness and itching she was experiencing could not be treated but would continue the rest of her life. She found it difficult to read her Bible and begged God to heal her so she could again read her Bible. That night she dreamed that a doctor put a certain oil on her eyes. The next day she bought the oil and applied it. Within a week her eyes were clear. She has not had any trouble since then.

Biruthe shares her faith with her family every chance she has. They no longer try to discourage her, for they see the differences in her life and admit that perhaps she is right.

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What Inspiration Is



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Cor. 2:10-14; 2 Pet. 1:19-21; Rev. 1:1-3; Eph. 3:3-6; John 14:26; 16:12, 13.

MEMORY TEXT: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16).

KEY THOUGHT: God has revealed His character and His will for us in the Bible. Yet, the Bible actually was written by people. How can we have the assurance that the Bible accurately expresses God's thoughts? The production of the Old and New Testament Scriptures was supervised by God in such a way that we can accept what was written as the authoritative and infallible expression of Divine revelation.

THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE. The authority of Scripture is determined by the fact that it is the inspired Word of God. His Word is authoritative because He is authoritative. Through His Word God Himself reveals His wise plan and loving will for us. He who is our Creator and Redeemer continues to speak to us through His Word. Bible writers were chosen, inspired, and guided by God Himself. "When we come to the Bible, reason must acknowledge an authority superior to itself, and heart and intellect must bow to the great I AM."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 110.

WORD FOR THE WEEK: *Inspiration.* The Greek word translated *inspiration* in 2 Timothy 3:16 literally means "God-breathed." God moved and enabled His chosen writers to grasp and communicate that which He revealed to them in a trustworthy and authoritative fashion.

THE BIBLE UNDERSTANDING OF INSPIRATION (2 Tim. 3:16, 17; 1 Cor. 2:10-14; 2 Pet. 1:19-21).

How much of the Scripture is inspired, and what Divine agency moved upon those chosen to express God's ideas? 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21.

Inspiration refers to the means by which God safeguarded the production and preservation of the Bible in order for it to become an infallible and sufficient guide to salvation.

Inspiration acts on the writer. "The writers of the Bible were God's penmen, not His pen. . . .

"It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man's words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts. But the words receive the impress of the individual mind. The divine mind is diffused. The divine mind and will is combined with the human mind and will; thus the utterances of the man are the word of God."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 21.

"But the Bible, with its God-given truths expressed in the language of men, presents a union of the divine and the human. Such a union existed in the nature of Christ, who was the Son of God and the Son of man. Thus it is true of the Bible, as it was of Christ, that 'the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.' John 1:14. . . .

"He [God] guided the mind in the selection of what to speak and what to write. The treasure was entrusted to earthen vessels, yet it is, nonetheless, from Heaven. The testimony is conveyed through the imperfect expression of human language, yet it is the testimony of God. . . ."—*The Great Controversy*, pp. vi, vii.

In what ways does the Holy Spirit work with us to help us understand the Inspired Word? 1 Cor. 2:10-14.

The Adventist position on inspiration strengthens the church. "Our unequivocal, historic emphasis upon the divine inspiration and trustworthiness of Scripture has strengthened our church. It has helped us resist the error of treating some parts of Scripture as God's Word, while ignoring or rejecting other parts. If we accept it as God's Word, we must accept it all, whether or not we like what it says. To us the Scriptures should be the ultimate revelation of God's will for our lives."—Robert Folkenberg, "Standing on Solid Ground—The Bible," *Adventist Review* (August 3, 1995), vol. 172, no. 36, p. 22.

THE OLD TESTAMENT CLAIMS INSPIRATION (2 Kings 17:13; Jer. 1:1, 2, 9; Ezek. 1:3; Hos. 1:1; Joel 1:1; Jon. 1:1).

Whom did God use to “testify against Israel”? 2 Kings 17:13.

What are the implications of the following statement in regard to the inspiration of the Old Testament?

“The Bible writers testify that their messages come directly from God. It is ‘the word of the Lord’ that came to Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, and others (Jer. 1:1, 2, 9; Eze. 1:3; Hos. 1:1; Joel 1:1; Jonah 1:1). As messengers of the Lord (Haggai 1:13; 2 Chron. 36:16), God’s prophets were commanded to speak in His name, saying ‘Thus says the Lord’ (Eze. 2:4; cf. Isa. 7:7). His words constitute their divine credentials and authority.”—*Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .*, ed. The Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1988), pp. 11, 12.

Expressions such as *the word of the Lord, thus saith the Lord*, or their equivalent appear more than 3,800 times in the Old Testament. David claimed: “The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue” (2 Sam. 23:2).

Job and Genesis were inspired accounts written by Moses. The first words in our Bible tell us that “In the beginning God created . . .” (Gen. 1:1). During Moses’ forty years in the desert of Midian, “under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he wrote the book of Genesis and also the book of Job.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1140.

The first part of Genesis has been likened to a primer that not only tells us about how God created but step-by-step introduces us to the God of Creation. In the book of Job, which may have been the first book he wrote, Moses demonstrates how one human being came to know God better through intense and seemingly unreasonable suffering. Although the book takes us behind the scenes of the great controversy to show us why God allows those who serve Him to suffer trial and affliction, it is fascinating that, as far as we know, Job never was given this insight, but Moses was.

Thought question: Since Moses was not present at Creation and probably did not know Job personally, how was he able to write authoritative accounts of what occurred during Creation and what took place in the life of Job?

THE NEW TESTAMENT CLAIMS INSPIRATION (Matt. 4:4-10; Mark 7:7-9; Luke 20:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; Rev. 1:1-3).

What was Jesus' attitude toward the authority of the Scriptures? Matt. 4:4-10; Luke 20:17; Mark 7:7-9.

Jesus recognized that, as the authoritative Word of God, the Bible was above all human traditions. He pointed to the prophecies of the Old Testament as confirming His role as the Messiah (see Mark 1:15; Luke 4:21).

What did Jesus mean when He told the Jews that "the scripture cannot be broken"? John 10:35, 36.

The *New English Bible* translates this text "Scripture cannot be set aside." The Jews who received the law acknowledged that it was impossible to break, annul, or cancel what the Scriptures taught.

"Throughout His ministry, Jesus stressed the authority of the Scriptures. When tempted by Satan or battling His opponents, 'It is written' was His defense and offense (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10; Luke 20:17). . . .

"So, without reservation Christ accepted the Holy Scriptures as the authoritative revelation of God's will for the human race. He saw the Scriptures as a body of truth, an objective revelation, given to lead humanity out of the darkness of faulty traditions and myths into the true light of a saving knowledge."—*Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .*, p.12.

This is what Paul claims about his teachings: "For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God . . ." (1 Thess. 2:13, NKJV; see also 4:2). Compare 2 Peter 3:15, 16.

What did John the revelator state about the source of his messages? Rev. 1:1-3.

Thought question: In what way was the human personality of the writers preserved through the process of inspiration as described in the Scriptures? Give some illustrations from both the Old and New Testaments. For example, in what way did Moses' personality show through his writing? Identify what made his style of writing different from Daniel's or David's.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND INSPIRATION (Eph. 3:3-6; Isa. 42:1; 61:1).

“These two pursuits of the Holy spirit, namely, revelation and inspiration, are so closely intertwined that it is difficult to separate them. Not only is it difficult, but fruitless as well, it seems, to try to know where one ends and the other starts. One may want to distinguish between them for the sake of clarity, but they should never be separated . . .”
—Raoul Dederen, “The Revelation-Inspiration Phenomenon According to the Bible Writer,” *Issues in Revelation and Inspiration*, Frank Holbrook and Leo Van Dolson, eds. (Berrien Springs, Mich.: A.T.S. Publications, 1992), p. 18.

“Do not let any living man come to you and begin to dissect God’s Word, telling what is revelation, what is inspiration and what is not, without a rebuke. Tell all such they simply do not know. . . . What we want is to inspire faith. We want no one to say, ‘This I will reject, and this will I receive,’ but we want to have implicit faith in the Bible as a whole and as it is.”—Ellen G. White *Comments, SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 919.

What does Paul teach about the Holy Spirit’s part in the revelations he received? Eph. 3:3-6.

Read Isaiah 42:1; 61:1; and Micah 3:8. How do these texts demonstrate that the Old Testament writers were dependent on the same Source?

“With enormous courage and amid great danger for their personal lives, God’s prophets delivered their messages, guided by the Holy Spirit. Not often with great success, however.

“Zechariah, among others, deplored that his contemporaries turned a stubborn ear to his proclamation, refusing as well ‘the words which the Lord of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets’ (Zech. 7:12). ‘Many years thou didst bear with them, and didst warn them by thy Spirit through thy prophets,’ explains Nehemiah (9:30). These messages were conveyed through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, so that their statements, oral or written . . . were an authentic expression of the divine revelation. God enabled His servants to express in a fully dependable manner what He had disclosed to them.”—Dederen, *Issues in Revelation*, p. 16.

Imagine that you were living in Israel when the prophets were led by the Holy Spirit to present God’s messages. Would you have responded differently to them from the way the children of Israel responded?

TRUSTWORTHY TRANSMISSION (Matt. 7:29; Mark 1:22; 2 Pet. 1:20, 21).

Revelation is not a distinct process that can be separated from inspiration. The two go hand in hand. In both, God is personally and directly active. He revealed Himself and enabled His chosen writers to receive and communicate His will in a trustworthy and authoritative manner.

What characteristic of Christ's transmission of God's Word contrasted markedly with that of the scribes and Pharisees? Matt. 7:29. (Compare Mark 1:22.)

"The scribes' teaching was dogmatic, and based on the traditions of the elders. There was life-giving power in the method of Christ's presentation, as well as in the truths he set forth in contrast with the dead formalism of the teaching of the scribes."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 360.

To what extent did the Bible writers understand their messages to be the faithful and inspired transmission of revelations given by God? 2 Pet. 1:20, 21.

"What Peter emphasizes here . . . is that the prophets spoke *because* they were 'moved by the Holy Spirit.' None of their prophetic messages came 'by the impulse of man.' In other words, their statements were in no case the result of their own meditation, nor of their later reflection on an allegedly silent encounter with God. This, explains Peter, is of first importance and must be clearly understood. Being moved by the Spirit, the prophets of old spoke for God. This work of the Spirit is what we refer to as 'inspiration.' A supernatural quality all its own marks the prophetic ministry. Inspiration enables the Bible writers to grasp and to convey in a trustworthy and authoritative manner what God had revealed to them. Inspiration is an enabling work which counterbalances, so to speak, the shortcomings of the prophets and the sinful tendencies of their human nature. Though the term 'inspiration' itself hardly appears in Scripture, the content . . . is firmly embedded in the Scripture's teaching."—Dederen, *Issues in Revelation*, pp. 16, 17.

For reflection: What sort of Bible teaching have I experienced? How can my church become closer to the *life-giving power* of Christ's instruction? How can I avoid the *dead formalism* of the scribes in teaching? How can I help my church improve in this area?

FURTHER STUDY: Written by a large number of God's inspired writers over a lengthy period of time, the Bible is rich in variety. Yet it harmoniously brings us the revealed will of God. One of the reasons that God gave us this rich difference in background and in ways of expression used by the writers is because of our diversity in understanding and background. This way God is able to speak to people throughout the ages in the various circumstances in which they find themselves and to meet the needs of all who study what He has revealed. Choose three writers from different backgrounds (such as Moses, Jonah, and John) who lived at widely separated points in history, listing some of their differences and showing how they speak to your particular needs today.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. **John 14:26; 16:12, 13 contain promises that the Holy Spirit will continue to enable Jesus' followers to comprehend and teach truths not yet fully understood. How is this promise fulfilled in the passages that follow?**

Acts 4:8-31; 9:17-20 _____

Gal. 1:11, 12 _____

Rev. 1:1, 2 _____

2. **Review the Bible passages you have studied this week, then select six texts that you understand well and arrange them in a sequence that would be useful in presenting your understanding of the inspiration of the Bible to a friend who may not understand this subject.**
3. **What are some implications to you and your church of the belief that the Scriptures are the trustworthy transmission of the revelation God gave us?**

SUMMARY: "The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to man the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history.—Fundamental Belief, 1."—Quoted in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .*, p. 4.



Miracles in the Land of Noah

Mike Feldbush

Nakhichevan is a scrap of land tucked between Iran, Turkey, and Armenia. Its name means "Noah was here." Mount Ararat looms on the horizon. But the saving knowledge of Jesus is virtually unknown among the predominantly Muslim population.

ADRA is working in this isolated region of Azerbaijan, where war and boycotts have cut off the people from the outside world and hunger and poverty stalk the countryside. ADRA workers cannot openly evangelize, but their silent witness has made an impact on the people in the land of Noah.

Nineteen-year-old Aygun noticed the difference in these Christian workers and began asking questions. Soon she began visiting the tiny Adventist worship services. When her father learned of her interest in Christianity, he forbade her to come, but she continued to attend. Her mother decided to see for herself what her daughter was learning and began attending as well. Aygun was thrilled when she received a Russian Bible. She even slept holding her Bible tight against her chest. She accepted Jesus as her Saviour.

Aygun began translating in the children's Sabbath School and eventually learned to lead out. She and a Muslim friend now tell stories from the Bible and pray with the children.

She continued studying her Bible and praying earnestly that she could be baptized. But her father would not allow her. He forbade her to read her Bible and other Christian literature. Aygun refused to give up her Bible and challenged him to read the Christian books before she did. "If you find any wrong teachings for health and happiness, then you may forbid me to read these books."

Her father accepted her appeal and began reading her books and literature. The Holy Spirit worked on his heart, and he found himself enjoying the books! Finally he gave his permission for her to be baptized. Today Aygun witnesses to her Muslim relatives and classmates at school. Pray that God will empower and encourage her each day in her Christian witness in the land of Noah.



Aygun (left). Mike Feldbush served with ADRA on a short-term project in Nakhichevan, Azerbaijan.

How Inspiration Works



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Deut. 4:1-9, 27-29; Jon. 1; Luke 24:25-27; Heb. 11:8-10; 2 Pet. 1:19-21.

MEMORY TEXT: "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you" (Deuteronomy 4:2).

KEY THOUGHT: The words of the Bible have been transmitted to us in such a way that they bring us a knowledge of God's plan of salvation and His instruction on how to live the abundant life and bring glory to Him.

INSPIRATION IS NOT LIMITED TO THE TRANSMISSION OF THE WRITTEN WORD. Peter states clearly that "the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. 1:21). Although the Scriptures were not written until about 2500 years after Creation, the patriarchs and prophets presented God's messages to those for whom it was intended in oral form before that time. "Enoch . . . , the seventh from Adam, prophesied . . ." (Jude 14). God spoke to Noah, and Noah spoke to the world for God. Jacob blessed Joseph's sons when he laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim. Joseph objected, explaining that because Manasseh was the firstborn, Jacob's right hand should be placed on him. Jacob refused, stating under Inspiration that Manasseh's "younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations" (Gen. 48:19).

THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE (Deut. 4:1-9; 18:15-19; Luke 24:27).

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Moses became the first to write documents that now are part of the Bible. Over the next 1600 years, many more prophets were used by God to prepare the Scriptures for us.

What did Moses claim as the Source of his instruction? What did he predict concerning additional instruction that would come to God's people after his death? Deut. 4:5, 6; 18:18, 19.

“Moses, no doubt, had many of the incidents and much of the instruction vividly in mind when he reviewed them orally to Israel shortly before his death, and recorded them in Deuteronomy. The Spirit directed in the selection of material to be recorded, refreshed Moses' memory to recall it clearly, and ‘moved’ him in his writing. This is not a record of entirely new information. Interspersed among the historical incidents and reviewed instruction, however, are predictions and further instruction especially revealed to Moses by the Holy Spirit to be recorded under His guidance.”—T. H. Jemison, *Christian Beliefs* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1959), pp. 18, 19.

What does Jesus' statement in Luke 24:27 reveal concerning the accepted divisions of the Old Testament Scriptures in His time?

The order of the Old Testament books. The Hebrew Scriptures were organized as follows:

The Law—The five books of Moses known as the Pentateuch.

The Prophets—Four “former” prophets: Joshua, Judges, Samuel (1 and 2), and Kings (1 and 2). Four “latter” prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the 12 minor prophets (in one book).

The Writings—The rest of the books.

The order of the New Testament books. The 27 books of the New Testament are arranged in these five divisions:

- (1) the four Gospels
- (2) the book of Acts
- (3) the fourteen Epistles of Paul
- (4) the seven general Epistles
- (5) the book of Revelation

INSPIRATION AND THE PROPHETS (Jon. 1; Dan. 8:27; Heb. 11:8-10; 1 Pet. 1:10, 11).

There do not seem to be specific qualifications that served the Holy Spirit as a guideline in choosing the Bible writers. God made the choice for reasons best known to Him.

What do the Bible chapters that follow indicate about the prophets noted? Why did God use them in spite of their glaring shortcomings?

Jonah—(Jon. 1)_____

Balaam—(Num. 22-24)_____

David—(Ps. 51)_____

God had to use sinners because they were all that was available (Rom. 3:23). By God's grace many of the Bible prophets became persons of outstanding character and virtue, despite their human failings. Consider Abraham's experience as outlined in Hebrews 11:8-10.

Abraham, a channel of light and blessing. "When he received the divine call, Abraham was not a man of renown, neither a lawgiver, nor a conqueror. He was a simple herdsman, dwelling in tents, but employing a large number of workmen to carry on his humble employment. And the honor which he received was because of his faithfulness to God, his strict integrity and just dealing. . . . Abraham's unselfish life made him indeed a 'spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men' (1 Cor. 4:9). . . . Through Abraham's experience in his religious life a correct knowledge of Jehovah has been communicated to thousands; and his light will shed its beams all along the path of those who practice the piety, the faith, the devotion, and the obedience of Abraham."—E. G. White, *The Youth's Instructor*, Mar. 4, 1897.

Note the fact that the Bible writers did not always understand the messages they were asked to communicate. Dan. 8:27. What did they have to do to gain a better understanding? 1 Pet. 1:10, 11.

For reflection: The Holy Spirit used the Bible writers despite their failings and frailties. How does this encourage me today in my spiritual walk and in my service to God?

**THE UNITY OF THE BIBLE DEMONSTRATES INSPIRATION
(Luke 24:25-27; Matt. 12:25).**

Whether written by David in a palace, Paul in a prison, Moses in the fifteenth century B.C., or John in the first century A.D., the books of the Bible reveal a remarkable unity. This is one of the great evidences that the same Spirit inspired all the writers.

“Unity is one of the clearly recognized characteristics of the Scriptures. There is unity of purpose—the story of the plan of salvation. There is unity in its theme—Jesus Christ, His cross and His crown. There is complete harmony of teaching—the doctrines of the Old Testament and those of the New are the same. There is unity of development—a steady progression from the creation to the Fall and on to the redemption and final restoration. There is unity in the co-ordination of the prophecies. How can it be? The same Spirit who spoke through Moses spoke sixteen centuries later through John the revelator. And in all the centuries between, that same Spirit testified of the same Father-God and the same Messiah, and the same plan for mankind.”—Jemison, *Christian Beliefs*, p. 17.

How did Jesus use the unity of Old Testament prophecies to demonstrate that their fulfillment gave proof of His Messiahship? Luke 24:25-27.

“The truths of the Bible are as pearls hidden. They must be searched, dug out by painstaking effort. Those who take only a surface view of the Scriptures will, with their superficial knowledge, which they think is very deep, talk of the contradictions of the Bible, and question the authority of the Scriptures. But those whose hearts are in harmony with truth and duty will search the Scriptures with a heart prepared to receive divine impressions. The illuminated soul sees a spiritual unity, one grand golden thread running through the whole.”—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 20.

Demonstrate the unity of the Bible by selecting a Bible topic and choosing four texts referring to it from different Bible books. Note how your compilation gives a more complete picture than most individual texts do.

Text Idea _____

Text Idea _____

Text Idea _____

Text Idea _____

INSPIRATION AND HISTORY (John 20:30, 31; 21:25; Luke 1:3, 4; 1 Cor. 10:11).

God's direct control of revelation works through the Spirit to decide what is to be included.

What does John say about the material covered in his Gospel and why he included what he did? John 21:25; 20:30, 31.

John does not include much of what is covered in the other three Gospels but adds a record of much that has not been included. Even then, we are given records of only a few weeks from the total life and ministry of Jesus.

Whether the information in the Bible "came from personal observation, oral or written sources, or direct revelation, it all came to the writer through the Holy Spirit's guidance. This guarantees the Bible's trustworthiness."—*Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .*, p. 10.

What explanations are given for the inclusion of historical accounts in the Bible? 1 Cor. 10:11; Luke 1:4.

"The Bible reveals God's plan in His dynamic interaction with the human race, not in a collection of abstract doctrines. His self-revelation stands rooted in real events that occurred in a definite time and place. The reliability of the historical accounts is extremely important because they form the framework of our understanding of God's character and His purpose for us. . . . The Holy Spirit gave the writers special insights so that they could record events in the controversy between good and evil that demonstrate the character of God and guide people in their quest for salvation."—*Seventh-day Adventist's Believe . . .*, p. 10.

Bible biographies also ground us in our certainty of Inspiration. Contrary to much of what is included in ancient biographies, the Bible faithfully records the errors and weaknesses of the individuals whose lives are portrayed. It makes no excuses for them but portrays what they were and what they became as God worked in them and through them.

"No cover-up shrouds Noah's lack of self-control or Abraham's deception. The fits of tempers that Moses, Paul, James, and John exhibited are recorded. . . . Scripture makes no excuses for them, nor does it attempt to minimize their guilt. It portrays them all for what they were and what they became or failed to become by the grace of God. . . ."—*Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .*, pp. 10, 11.

In what ways does such frank portrayal of Bible characters' failures give us assurance that we can overcome by God's grace?

AN INFALLIBLE REVELATION (Matt. 5:17, 18; 24:37-39; John 6:32; Titus 1:1-3).

“The Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His [God’s] will.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. vii.

To what extent did Jesus uphold the authority and inspiration of the Scriptures? Matt. 5:17, 18.

“Jesus accepted them [the Scriptures] as historically accurate and spiritually relevant (Matt. 12:39-41).”—*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 11.

Find five Bible references showing examples of Jesus’ confirmation of the accounts recorded in the Old Testament. (Examples: Noah’s flood—Matthew 24:37-39; miracle of the manna—John 6:32).

What about mistakes in copying and other transcriptional errors? The large number of copies of various manuscripts of Sacred Records now available to scholars demonstrates that there have been scribal errors through the ages. This has led to an attempt to restore the original text by what is known as *textual criticism*. Taking into consideration the thousands of copies of the Bible text in existence, what is amazing is that there are so few errors. But what do we do about the very few mistakes that have been documented?

“No man can improve the Bible by suggesting what the Lord meant to say or ought to have said. Some look to us gravely and say, ‘Don’t you think there might have been some mistake in the copyist or in the translators?’ This is all probable, and the mind that is so narrow that it will hesitate and stumble over this possibility or probability would be just as ready to stumble over the mysteries of the Inspired Word, because their feeble minds cannot see through the purposes of God. . . .

“And He [God] has not, while presenting the perils clustering about the last days, qualified any finite man to unravel hidden mysteries or inspired one man or any class of men to pronounce judgment as to that which is inspired or is not. . . .

“I take the Bible just as it is, as the Inspired Word. I believe its utterances in an entire Bible.”—*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 16, 17.

Think on this: Would you like to see a miracle? Pick up your Bible and look at it. It is a real miracle. As you hold it in your hands, contemplate the way it was produced, transmitted, safeguarded, and the way the Spirit uses it today to reveal Christ and move upon your heart.

FURTHER STUDY: “When men, in their finite judgment, find it necessary to go into an examination of scriptures to define that which is inspired and that which is not, they have stepped before Jesus to show Him a better way than He has led us. . . . Men arise who think they find something to criticize in God’s Word. They lay it bare before others as evidence of superior wisdom. These men are, many of them, smart men, learned men, they have eloquence and talent, the whole lifework [of whom] is to unsettle minds in regard to the inspiration of the Scriptures. They influence many to see as they do. And the same work is passed on from one to another just as Satan designed it should be, until we may see the full meaning of the words of Christ. “‘When the Son of man cometh shall he find faith on the earth?’” (Luke 18:8).

“Brethren, let not a mind or hand be engaged in criticizing the Bible. It is a work that Satan delights to have any of you do, but it is not a work the Lord has pointed out for you to do.”—*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 16, 17.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Discuss the difference between “criticizing the Bible,” as mentioned above, and asking searching questions about it so that we may know and appreciate it more fully.
2. Sometimes Bible writers did not understand the revelation given to them by God. What implications does this have? What does it tell us about how God works? What does it also tell us about the Bible writers?

WORD FOR REVIEW: *Moved* (2 Pet. 1:21). Here the record “implies that the prophets were borne along by the Spirit as a ship is borne along by a wind. They were entirely under the Spirit’s motivation.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 602.

SUMMARY: The Holy Spirit “moved” upon the prophets to enable them to present accurately to others the messages God gave them to deliver. The Bible we have today is the inspired Word of God. “The Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience.”—*The Great Controversy*, p.vii.

From Buddhist to Believer, Part 1

Nola Tudu

Drathai Chureson grew up in Thailand. Her parents taught her to follow the principles of Buddhism: Walk in the middle path and do good to others. They urged her to worship the spirits of her ancestors, who could protect them and ensure a good harvest. "If we refuse to worship the ancestors, some harm might come to us," her mother often warned.

When Drathai was 10 years old, a friend told her about the God who created the world. When Drathai asked to see this Creator God, the girl explained that God is invisible, but He is everywhere. Drathai could see and touch the family's images of Buddha. To her these images were evidence that her family's god existed.

Drathai often wondered whether she was good enough to earn favor with her god. She would examine her actions and resolve to try harder, live better, and hope to gain favor with the deity.

She was 16 years old when an Adventist pastor visited her home and left some Christian magazines. Drathai was impressed by the pastor's concern for people. She began to read one of the magazines that he had left and noticed that they were published by Seventh-day Adventist Christians. She had heard of Christians, but who were Seventh-day Adventists? And why were they so eager to share with others? She found a Bible study enrollment card and sent for Bible lessons. An Adventist in her village brought her a small New Testament to use as she filled out the lessons. Tears came to her eyes as she read the story of how Jesus healed the paralyzed man whose friends lowered him through the roof into a crowded room. (See Luke 5:17-26.)

But the story of the crucifixion stunned her. How could a Man who had healed people, and even raised people from the dead, allow a band of soldiers and an angry mob to put Him to death? She tried to picture the scene of Jesus hanging on the cross, to imagine His brokenhearted plea, "Father, forgive them!" She wondered how He could love people who had rejected Him, even after He had healed them and taught them about God. What kind of God was this anyway?

(continued next week)



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The Preparation and Preservation of the Scriptures



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Deut. 31:24-26; 2 Kings 22; Jer. 36; 2 Pet. 3:15, 16; Acts 20:29, 30; 1 Cor. 10:11.

MEMORY TEXT: "The Word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Peter 1:25).

KEY THOUGHT: Not only did the Holy Spirit inspire the production of the Bible, but He also, in a supernatural way, preserved those Scriptures He wanted people of later ages to have and to study. The Bible is a miracle book not only in its inception but also in its transmission to us. We need to be open to it as it leads us to Jesus our Lord.

WRITTEN REVELATION NOT GIVEN UNTIL THE TIME OF MOSES. "During the first twenty-five hundred years of human history, there was no written revelation. Those who had been taught of God, communicated their knowledge to others, and it was handed down from father to son, through successive generations. The preparation of the written word began in the time of Moses. Inspired revelations were then embodied in an inspired book. This work continued during the long period of sixteen hundred years—from Moses, the historian of creation and the law, to John, the recorder of the most sublime truths of the gospel. . . .

The Infinite One by His Holy Spirit has shed light into the minds and hearts of His servants . . . and those to whom the truth was thus revealed, have themselves embodied the thought in human language." —*The Great Controversy*, pp. v, vi.

THE PRODUCTION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT (Deut. 31:24-26; 1 Sam. 10:25; 2 Chron. 36:22).

How did God give special significance to the preservation of the Inspired Writings in the days of Moses? Deut. 31:24-26.

In this passage God marked the beginning of setting the inspired writings apart as having special honor.

What did Samuel do centuries later that added to the collection of the Old Testament Scriptures? 1 Sam. 10:25.

“As the centuries passed, one prophet after another wrote as he was moved by the Holy Spirit, and the books came to be recognized as messages of God. Priests or other religious leaders held the writings of the prophets in private collections or deposited them for safekeeping in the temple. Here they remained—in some instances for centuries—until all available sacred writings were collected and sorted. . . . It appears that the writings were *not* assembled into a body until after the captivity and restoration of Israel; or in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah.”—Jemison, *Christian Beliefs*, p. 20. (For further discussion of the Old Testament canon, see Friday’s section.)

What indication is there that the book of Chronicles was written after the Jewish exile in Babylon? 2 Chron. 36:22, 23; Jer. 29:10.

“Many books of pre-exilic origin survived the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity. This can be seen from the fact that Daniel used the book of Jeremiah during the exile in Babylonia (Dan. 9:2), and that about 20 different books are mentioned in the books of Chronicles as either having provided the source material for the contents of that work, or as books where additional information could be secured concerning many points that were only lightly touched in Chronicles.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 38.

For reflection: What have you found in your study of the Bible that sets it apart from other works of literature? Recall texts that have been a comfort to you during the hardships and trials of your life. How have these Inspired Words been an inspiration to you in the past, and how do they continue to draw you closer to God and inspire you with a deeper understanding of His divine love?

THE PRESERVATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT (Jer. 36; 2 Kings 22).

“More than any other of the prophets, he [Jeremiah] emphasized the teachings of the Mosaic law, and showed how these might bring the highest spiritual blessing to the nation and to every individual heart.”
—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 411.

The rulers and the people became antagonistic toward Jeremiah because of the straight messages he preached. He warned that, unless the kingdom of Judah turned back to God, they were to be taken into Babylonian captivity. He also cautioned them against stirring up the wrath of the Babylonians by alliances with Egypt. God gave Jeremiah a message for King Jehoiakim, telling the king not only that the Babylonians would capture Jerusalem but that the king himself also would be put to death (Jer. 22:18, 19). Angered, Jehoiakim threw Jeremiah into prison, but this did not prevent the prophet from forwarding God’s message to the stubborn king.

Read the fascinating story found in Jeremiah 36, noting:

- 1. God’s command to write His message on a scroll**
- 2. How this was done and how it finally reached the king**
- 3. How the pen of the prophet proved mightier than the king’s knife**
- 4. The result of King Jehoiakim’s attempt to destroy the Word of God (verse 32)**

Jehoiakim’s experience demonstrated that human efforts to destroy the Word of God result in it becoming an even more powerful witness. A more subtle and successful way to destroy the effectiveness and power of the Bible is to neglect or ignore it.

Read 2 Kings 22:3-20 to find an illustration of how God brought a reformation in the time of Josiah through the discovery of the long-neglected book of the Law.

“[Josiah] resolved to walk in the light of its [the book of the Law’s] counsels, and also to do all in his power to acquaint his people with its teachings, and to lead them, if possible, to cultivate reverence and love for the law of heaven.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 398.

For reflection: Have there been times on the job, in the family circle, or among peers when you have been called like Jeremiah to make a firm stand for God’s truth in the face of opposition?

THE PRODUCTION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT (Isa. 8:20; 1 Tim. 5:18; 2 Pet. 3:15, 16; 1 Cor. 5:9; Acts 20:35).

The gathering of the New Testament books took far less time than did the more complicated collecting of the Old Testament books. One obvious reason is that the New Testament covers a much shorter period of history, and most of it was written by or reflects the reports of eyewitnesses. We see a continuation of God's revelation at work as the New Testament reflects the new light that came into the world through Jesus.

But it is essential to keep in mind here that *new light* that contradicts *old light* is **no light**.

When Paul quotes Luke 10:7 in 1 Timothy 5:18, how does he refer to it? How does Peter classify Paul's writings? 2 Pet. 3:15, 16.

"As accounts of the Saviour's life were circulated and letters addressed to churches or groups of churches appeared, exchanges were made with other churches who had received documents from the same authors. Col. 4:16. In some cases, copies were sent to relatives and friends who were church members in other cities and countries. In this way the writings of the apostles and those who had been closely associated with Jesus were widely circulated and accepted among Christians in a relatively short time. Paul's epistles, which are generally regarded as the earliest in the New Testament books, received almost immediate acceptance everywhere."—Jemison, *Christian Beliefs*, p. 21.

In 1 Corinthians 5:9, Paul refers to an epistle he wrote to the Corinthians that no longer exists. Because it also must have been written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, why do you think it was not preserved?

"That it was the apostle's habit to write letters to the churches is evident from 2 Cor. 10:9, 10. The letters preserved in the NT for our benefit form only part of the total instruction given through Paul to the many groups of believers whom he had organized into churches."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 692. Note that in Acts 20:35 Paul quotes words of Jesus that are not recorded elsewhere in the New Testament. John acknowledges that the Gospels do not contain everything Jesus did or taught when he writes: "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written" (John 21:25).

THE PRESERVATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT (Matt. 24:11; Acts 17:16-34; 2 Pet. 3:3-6; Rev. 11:3-11).

We can rest assured that the twenty-seven books we now have in the New Testament reveal divine guidance in their preservation for our attention and use. Many uninspired and fanciful writings—often referred to as the pseudepigrapha—circulated among the early Christians. Most of them were falsely given the name of noted apostles or church elders. Undoubtedly this caused confusion, but the Holy Spirit was at work to prevent these from becoming part of the accepted Sacred Canon.

What did Jesus warn about in Matthew 24:11?

What did Paul call false teachers who would distort God's revelations? Acts 20:29, 30.

Scoffers and critics in Paul's day mocked his teachings. (See Acts 17:16-34.) Second Peter 3:3-6 mentions the scoffers' willful forgetfulness and criticism of the Bible record of the promise of Christ's coming, of Creation, and of the Flood. But in every generation since the fall of man, God has had faithful followers like Noah and Elijah to stand as a witness against the scoffers and mockers of His truth.

Note: Here is a continuation of yesterday's discussion of the New Testament canon for our consideration.

"The gathering of the New Testament books was somewhat different from that of the Old. Both writers and readers were acquainted with and believed in the doctrine of divine inspiration. They already had a group of sacred writings in the form of the Old Testament. . . .

"Development of the canon progressed through the first four centuries as men, prompted by the Spirit, recognized the writings as inspired.

"These men held two basic standards, or measures, for the books that came to their attention: (1) Had the author been an apostle, or a companion of an apostle? (2) Did the contents of the book agree with the other Scriptures, was it internally consistent, and did it conform to Christian experience? But these standards, without the guidance of the Holy Spirit, would not have been sufficient to guarantee a correct selection. The books were inspired when they were written, and accepting them into the canon of Scripture in no way affected their inspiration."—Jemison, *Christain Beliefs*, pp. 21, 22. (If available, see *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pp. 123-132 for a fuller discussion of the New Testament canon.)

PRESERVED FOR OUR BENEFIT (1 Cor. 10:11; Matt. 13:3-9, 18-23).

What does Paul suggest concerning the reason God has preserved the Scriptures? 1 Cor. 10:11.

For whom was the Bible written? It was written for each one of us. It is not just for the intellectual or the Bible scholar who can read God's Word in the original languages. God meant for the Bible to be read and understood by everyone. One of our problems in this scientific age is that we have been conditioned to think that only the trained expert *really understands*. Or maybe this is not the real problem—maybe it is just an excuse. Perhaps we've just become comfortable with allowing the experts and the scientists do our thinking for us. As much as we are indebted to theologians, it could be that we're just too accustomed to being spoon-fed. We shouldn't rely on what others think about the Bible. Nothing can take the place of studying and discovering Bible truth for ourselves. Because it takes time and effort, many give up without finding the blessing that God has placed there for those willing to discover the value and experience the joy of in-depth Bible study.

What four types of response to the gospel seed did Jesus mention in His parable of the sower? Matt. 13:3-9, 18-23.

Match the following: (Answers given in Friday's lesson)

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. ___ The careless and prejudiced | A. Thorny-ground hearers |
| 2. ___ The shallow and superficial | B. Stony-ground hearers |
| 3. ___ The easily distracted | C. Good-ground hearers |
| 4. ___ Those most receptive | D. Wayside hearers |

The careless and indifferent approach to Bible study can be worse than not studying at all. Those who have such an attitude seem to approach their occasional contact with the Scriptures with this motto: *Blessed are those who expect nothing, for they shall not be disappointed*. Good-ground hearers train themselves to get the most out of the time they regularly set aside for Bible study.

In which hearer category do you fit? What things can you think of in other areas of your life that help you or hinder you from becoming receptive to the gospel?

FURTHER STUDY: (A continuation of the discussion of the Old Testament canon begun in Sunday's lesson.) "Before this [the days of Ezra and Nehemiah] all biblical references to 'books' seem to be to the books of Moses, the Pentateuch. But in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah 'the book of the law' appears to take on a wider meaning and to include other writings. Jewish tradition indicates that these two divinely guided leaders were largely responsible for gathering the sacred writings and forming them into a unit.

"In the time of Christ the Jews were certain that the body of sacred writings—called the 'canon'—had been arranged in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. Following the council of Jamnia, A.D. 90, the Jews were united on the contents of the Old Testament canon. The books were the same as in our Bible, but the order and grouping differed. . . .

"It [the canon] signifies something measured, recognized, or accepted according to a definite standard. . . . Applied to the Old Testament, it means the body of sacred writings that met the standard for inclusion in the Scriptures. . . .

"Each book found its way into the canon by reason of its inspiration. The choice of books to be included in the canon was not left to the wisdom of men. The Holy Spirit, who inspired the writers, led minds to recognize and accept the books that were to be preserved for future generations. The authority for the choice was God's authority, and the divinely prompted recognition of inspiration ensured the inclusion of a book within the accepted group."—Jemison, *Christian Beliefs*, pp. 20, 21.

"Jesus Christ and the apostles definitely believed in the authority and inspiration of the Hebrew Bible, as seen from numerous testimonies witnessing to this fact . . . Furthermore, hundreds of quotations taken from at least 30 Old Testament books show the high esteem in which these writings were held by the founder of the Christian faith and His immediate followers."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, pp. 44, 45. (For a fuller discussion, see, if available, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, pp. 36-45.)

WORD FOR REVIEW: *Canon*. "The collection or list of sacred books composing the Old and New Testaments, which are accepted as inspired by God and therefore as possessing divine authority."—*SDA Bible Dictionary*, p. 172.

SUMMARY: Not all the writings of the prophets were preserved for future generations. But the Bible as we know it, after the fixing of the canon, was supernaturally preserved for the admonition and guidance of God's people.

Answers to matching quiz in Thursday's lesson: 1. D; 2. B; 3. A; 4. C.



From Buddhist to Believer, Part 2

Nola Tudu

As Drathai studied her Bible, she was amazed that the Creator God allowed His own Son to die at the hands of an angry mob. She wanted to talk with Him, to receive His guidance, but her growing awareness of her own sinfulness troubled her. How could she ever be good enough to approach this mighty God?

When the pastor visited her, she asked him to teach her how to pray. Soon she made her first feeble attempts to communicate with her Creator. Other Christians shared their faith with her, prayed for her, and encouraged her in her steps of faith.

Drathai's parents had seen the letters that came to their daughter from the Bible correspondence school. They appreciated the positive influence of her Christian friends. But they did not realize the depth of interest Drathai had in Christianity.

Drathai decided to follow Jesus and be baptized. She knew that her parents would try to stop her, so she was baptized secretly in the nearby river. When her parents learned of her baptism, her mother cried bitterly. "The spirits will punish us because you no longer worship them!" her mother cried. "Please bow with me to the ancestors!" Drathai quietly refused, explaining that a Christian can have no other gods save the God of heaven.

Friends also scolded her. "You have been brainwashed! These Christians will bring the anger of our ancestors down upon us!" Drathai struggled to retain her faith. In her distress she poured out her heart to Jesus.

God answered her prayers, and Drathai saw a remarkable change in her parents' attitude. They told her that she was almost an adult and had a right to make important decisions about her life.

When she finished secondary school, her pastor encouraged her to attend Spicer Memorial College in Pune, India. With her parents' permission, Drathai enrolled in the Christian college.

She writes her parents often, thanking them for allowing her to follow her faith and complete her education. "I pray that the Holy Spirit will work in their hearts and lead them to know Jesus. Each day I learn more and more about God and His love," she says. "I want to share that knowledge with others. That is my way of saying Thank You to God."

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The Languages and Translations of the Bible



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Isa. 19:18; Mark 5:41; 15:34; Acts 21:37, 38; 2 Tim. 2:15; Rev. 14:6; 22:18, 19.

MEMORY TEXT: “And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” (Revelation 14:6).

KEY THOUGHT: Since the Tower of Babel there has been an astounding increase of various languages and dialects. Languages also are in a constant process of change. This presents an enormous challenge if we are to fulfill the commission to provide the Word of God in every *tongue*.

LANGUAGES OF THE BIBLE. Most of the Old Testament was written in what now is known as ancient Hebrew. A small portion was written in Aramaic. The New Testament was written in *koine* Greek (the language of the common people) as opposed to the classical Greek used by writers of that time.

Although the Bible was still read in Hebrew in the synagogues in the time of Christ, Aramaic had become the common language of the Jewish people. Aramaic was the language Jesus spoke. Bible translations began in the third century B.C. when the Hebrew Old Testament was translated into Greek. Near the end of the second century A.D., the New Testament was translated into Syriac (a form of Aramaic), into Latin, and for the believers of Upper Egypt, into Coptic.

BIBLICAL HEBREW (Isa. 19:18; 2 Kings 18:26, 28; Neh. 13:24).

What biblical terms are used for the language spoken by the Old Testament Israelites?

Isa. 19:18 _____ 2 Kings 18:26, 28 _____

Neh. 13:24 _____ 2 Cor. 3:14 _____

Biblical Hebrew is a branch of the ancient Semitic language spoken by the Hebrews and the natives of Canaan. Most of its basic words contain three consonants, making the Hebrew sentences brief and forceful. The seventh commandment in English contains five words but only two in Hebrew. The twenty-third psalm contains 57 words in Hebrew as compared to 122 in the English translation. The Hebrew makes the poetry of the Old Testament particularly vivid, expressive, and beautiful.

What was one common form of keeping manuscripts in Old Testament times? Jer. 32:14.

This has been confirmed by the finding of many ancient records stored in jars. The most famous of these are the Dead Sea Scrolls found in the caves at Qumran and dating from the third century B.C. to the first century A.D.

Significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls. "These finds have provided us with Bible manuscripts that are a thousand years earlier than the earliest Hebrew Bible texts known before these scrolls came to light. This is of great importance, because we have thus obtained samples of every Old Testament book, save one [Esther], as it existed during the time of Christ's ministry. In other words, we now know what the Bible of Christ's time looked like; in fact, we have discovered that its text differed scarcely at all from the one on which our modern translations were based."—*SDA Bible Commentary* (1978), vol. 1, p. 34.

When Paul refers to reading the books of Moses in 2 Cor. 3:14, what term does he use? What does Luke call the Old Testament, and what does he include in it? Luke 24:27.

For reflection: How is your confidence affirmed in the Old Testament you study, knowing that it was the Bible used by Christ and His apostles?

ARAMAIC IN THE BIBLE (Gen. 31:47; 2 Kings 18:26; Mark 5:41; 15:34; 1 Cor. 16:22).

Aramaic, closely related to Hebrew, was the language of the Aramaeans who lived mainly in Upper Mesopotamia and Syria. Because it was a simple and easy language to learn, the Assyrians and Babylonians adopted it. The Persians made Aramaic the official language of their empire. As the result of the Babylonian captivity, the Jews adopted it in place of the Hebrew language.

By the time of Christ, Aramaic was the mother tongue of the people who lived in Palestine. Ezra 4:8–6:18; 7:12–16; Daniel 2:4–7:28; and one verse in Jeremiah (10:11) were written in Aramaic. As a high official in Babylon, Daniel was so fluent in Aramaic that, when he introduced the speech of the wise men in chapter 2:4, he began quoting them in Aramaic and continued using that language through chapter 7:28.

When was an Aramaic word first used in the Old Testament? Gen. 31:47.

Laban used the Aramaic *Jegar-sahadutha*, and Jacob used the Hebrew *Gal'eed*. Both mean “stone heap of witness.”

Why did the officials of King Hezekiah ask Rabshakeh, the emissary of King Sennacherib of Assyria, to speak in Aramaic to them? 2 Kings 18:26.

How do such texts as Mark 5:41; 15:34; and 1 Corinthians 16:22 demonstrate that Jesus and Paul spoke Aramaic?

“A number of Aramaic expressions in the New Testament show clearly that it was the language of Jesus. ‘Talitha cumi’ (Mark 5:41), and . . . ‘Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?’ (Mark 15:34) are some of Christ’s expressions.

“The Bible was still read in Hebrew in the synagogue services in the time of Christ, but many people, especially the women, could not understand it. It had therefore become customary for the readers in the synagogues to translate Scripture passages into Aramaic. Later on, written translations of the Old Testament into Aramaic were made—the so-called Targums. Contrary to Hebrew, which had become a dead language in pre-Christian times, and has experienced only artificial revivals, Aramaic has been kept alive continuously as a spoken language to the present day, and is still used in certain parts of the Near East, where it is known as Syriac.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 30.

NEW TESTAMENT GREEK (Acts 21:37-39; 22:2).

With the expansion of Alexander's empire in the fourth century B.C., Greek culture and language spread throughout most of the Mediterranean area and the Middle East. Later, Greek was adopted by the Roman Empire as its universal language. As far as can be determined, all twenty-seven books of the New Testament were written in Greek. However, many of the Greek terms had to be adapted to fit the religious meaning expressed in the New Testament.

At the time of his arrest Paul surprised the Roman commander by speaking Greek and impressed the mob by speaking Aramaic. Acts 21:37; 22:2. Why? What point was Paul making with each of these usages? Acts 21:38, 39; 22:3.

The advantage of studying the Bible in the original languages. It is not essential to be able to study the Bible in the original languages, especially when we have so many modern translations. But it is helpful to be able to do so as an aid to understanding the original intention expressed in the languages used to write any particular portion of the Bible.

The following illustrations demonstrate how an acquaintance with the Greek language helps us understand the meaning of the Bible text in which it is found:

1 John 3:4—*sin* (Gr. *hamartia*) means to miss or fail to hit the mark; in this context, to wander from or violate the moral law.

2 Cor. 7:9—*repentance* (Gr. *metanoia*) means a change of mind, implying that the change is for the better and produces good results.

Rom. 3:20—*to be justified* (Gr. *dikaioo*) means to set right; to declare right; to treat as being righteous; the act by which a person is brought into a right state in relation to God.

Eph. 4:22—*conversation* (Gr. *anastrophe*) means manner of life, conduct, behavior. In this context it gives the idea that the new nature is to be put on to replace the old nature.

Matt. 16:18—*Peter* (Gr. *Petros*) means a small stone as compared to the Gr. *petra*, which is a large, immovable rock. A small stone would make an impossible foundation for the building of the Church. Jesus, making a play on words, referred to Himself as the Rock (see 1 Cor. 3:11; 10:4).

WHAT ABOUT THE VERSIONS? (Rev. 22:18, 19).

How does God regard those who make deliberate changes to the revelation He has given? Rev. 22:18, 19.

Although specifically referring to adding to and taking away from the book of Revelation, the principle applies to making deliberate changes in any book of the Bible. As the need arose for versions in different languages and within languages because of their constantly changing nature, the restriction found in the book of Revelation serves, among other things, as a guide to keep translators from taking liberties with God's Word.

In spite of God's warnings, some liberties have been taken. Ellen White states: "I saw that God had especially guarded the Bible; yet when copies of it were few, learned men had in some instances changed the words, thinking that they were making it more plain, when in reality they were mystifying that which was plain by causing it to lean to their established views, which were governed by tradition. But I saw that the Word of God, as a whole, is a perfect chain, one portion linking into and explaining another."—*Early Writings*, pp. 220, 221. Even though there may be some errors owing to human-made changes in any one version, our interpretation is to rest on the weight of evidence as we take into consideration all that the Bible has to say on a topic.

Variations in versions go back to the earliest. Because the Septuagint (the earliest Greek version of the Old Testament) served as the Bible of the New Testament writers, it is common to find some minor variations in phraseology between texts quoted in the New Testament and the texts being quoted as we find them in our Old Testament, translated from the Hebrew text. Yet such minor variations do not result in any differences in theology. To become familiar with these differences, complete the exercise that follows:

Compare:	<u>Old Testament</u>	<u>New Testament</u>
	Exod. 16:33	Heb. 9:4
	Ps. 102:25-27	Heb. 1:10-12
	Ps. 40:6	Heb. 10:5
	Deut. 32:35, 36	Heb. 10:30

Even though the Bible is an ancient book, it has been preserved, and its use is widespread today, reaching many diverse peoples in their own *tongues*. It is indeed for all the world and for all times, meeting the deepest longings of the human heart.

WHAT ABOUT MODERN VERSIONS? (Acts 2:5-11; 2 Tim. 2:15).

According to 1995 statistics published by the American Bible Society, the Bible or portions of it are now printed in 2,123 languages or dialects. Although they estimate 6,528 languages and dialects exist, many of them are used by very few people. Therefore, they estimate that 90 percent of the world population has access to the Bible in their spoken language. The current number of translations and versions is constantly increasing.

The following comment and exercise have to do with an antiquated English version of the Bible. This may not be useful to our non-English readers, but they may wish to use a similar exercise relating to an old Bible version in their own language.

Many who use the English version believe the King James Version is the most authentic and has the greatest authority. Yet, the King James Version contains many words no longer currently used. As evidence, determine what the following words mean in the King James Version—passages indicated: (Answers in Friday's section.)

1. Gal. 4:17—*Affect* (verb)
2. Job 20:3—*Check* (noun)
3. Joel 2:24; 3:13—*Fat* (noun)
4. Deut. 28:26—*Fray* (verb)
5. Isa. 43:13—*Let* (verb)
6. Exod. 28:11—*Ouches* (noun plural)
7. 1 Thess. 4:15—*Prevent* (verb)
8. Ezek. 35:6—*Sith* (conjunction)

In the light of what Paul says in 2 Timothy 2:15, how is his admonition helpful to us when we use the various versions?

Ellen White's use of versions. In the 1905 publication of *The Ministry of Healing*, Ellen White used eight texts from the English Revised Version and fifty-five from the American Revised Version. W. C. White wrote: "When *Testimonies for the Church*, Volume Eight, was printed and it seemed desirable to make some lengthy quotations from the Psalms, it was pointed out to Sister White that the Revised Version of these Psalms was preferable, . . . [She] gave the matter deliberate consideration and instructed us to use the Revised Version."—E. G. White Document File, No. 579; *Ministry*, April 1947, pp. 17, 18.

FURTHER STUDY: As an aid to understanding the development of Bible versions, look under "Versions" in a Bible dictionary, if available. Choose a Bible chapter and compare it carefully in whatever versions or languages you have available. Notice: (1) variations in wording, (2) other differences, (3) which readings are the most understandable. If you have access to the *SDA Bible Commentary*, look up those passages on which you may have questions. What do you conclude about the use of Bible versions as a result of this exercise?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. It is not difficult to understand why there should be translations in different languages, but why should there be so many versions in any one language?
2. Do you know of or can you find other words in the King James Version that have changed meaning since its publication?

A comment on Bible versions: From the standpoint of clarity and understanding alone, modern versions can be helpful. For example, Acts 2:47 in the King James Version reads "such as should be saved," whereas the Revised Standard Version translates it in harmony with the Greek text, "those who were being saved."

For serious Bible study of doctrinal topics, the literal translations closest to the original languages are recommended. In English such versions are: the New King James Version (does not use the outdated words in the King James Version), the Revised Standard Version (1946), and the New American Standard Bible. For personal devotional study, you may wish to read the version that brings the greatest spiritual blessing to you. Keep in mind that paraphrases are not translations of the Bible but reflect the intent and interpretation of the paraphrasers.

SUMMARY: The careful Bible student has the advantage today of being able to study the Bible in its original languages and in many modern translations and versions. Because these sources vary in accuracy, it is wise to become knowledgeable about using them.

Answers to the quiz on the meaning of KJV words:

1. *Affect* (verb) = to desire earnestly, to seek after
2. *Check* (noun) = reproof, rebuke
3. *Fat* (noun) = a vat, vessel
4. *Fray* (verb) = to frighten
5. *Let* (verb) = to hinder, to prevent
6. *Ouches* (noun plural) = sockets in which precious stones are set
7. *Prevent* (verb) = to do or come before, to anticipate
8. *Sith* (conjunction) = since



China Report

I am a student at a university in China. But I find ways to spread the news of God's love to people who have never heard it before. Many people in China are eager to know about God.

One of my teachers, Mr. Lu, began asking me questions about the Bible. I answered with caution, because I did not know if he was a secret spy. But he was sincere, and soon we began studying the Bible behind tightly closed doors. Mr. Lu and his wife accepted Jesus as their Lord. Now he is eager to tell others about the freedom found in Christ. Often he comes to ask for Bibles to give to someone he has told about Christ.

But he must be careful. A few years ago Mr. Lu was accused of criticizing the government. He was questioned by the university, and his salary was reduced. He knows he is being watched.

Mr. Lu's brother and his family, who live in another province, became Christians three years ago, but they cannot fellowship with other Christians in the area. It is too dangerous. They have never seen a Bible! The government is very strict there, and the family's home has been searched twice for religious materials. Parcels arriving from outside the area are searched, and even passengers arriving from other areas are spot-searched for religious materials. In spite of this danger, Mr. Lu plans to carry Bibles and literature to his brother's family when he visits. Because he was born there, he hopes that authorities will not search him. Pray for him!

I tutor 13 students on a private basis and study the Bible with several others. Two students from inner Mongolia recently gave their hearts to the Lord. It is precious to see these intelligent, earnest young people choose to follow God so wholeheartedly!

Recently I spent my school holiday visiting former students. I stayed in the home of Chin Le. Her family are new Christians, and already they have won a number of others to God. These new believers came to Chin Le's home to study the Bible and find answers to their questions. If it were discovered that a foreigner was teaching them, the believers would face great hardships. So I hid in the house and did not even peek out the door for a whole week!

These people have so much love for the Lord! Many were members of a Sunday church whom Chin Le told about the Sabbath. Since the group was formed four years ago, they have established at least sixteen other congregations with more than two thousand worshippers—all without a pastor. Pray for our believers in China!

The author, whose name must remain a secret, lives and ministers in a large city in China.

Produced by the General Conference Office of Mission Awareness
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New Division!

For the very first time the Northern Asia-Pacific Division will receive the special offering taken on the Thirteenth Sabbath of this quarter. This division, which covers the areas of North and South Korea, Hong Kong, Japan, Macao, Mongolia, China, and Taiwan, was formed in 1997 when the area originally known as the Far Eastern Division was divided into two separate divisions.

Evangelistic opportunities are challenging in this region of the world.* The division leadership has requested assistance from the world church family to establish a Lay Training Center in South Korea and to help establish a greater Adventist presence in East Asia by the placing of new churches.

***Read *Mission* for more details.**

CHRIST
SAW YOU
THERE . . .

NOW YOU
CAN SEE HIM
THERE TOO.



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at the
Cross**

*E. Lonnie Melashenko and
John Thomas McLarty*

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The Bible Its Own Interpreter



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 2 Tim. 2:15; 3:15; John 7:17; 8:43, 44; 16:13-15; Isa. 28:9, 10; 1 Cor. 2:9-14.

MEMORY TEXT: "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15).

KEY THOUGHT: The Holy Spirit inspired the writers of the Bible to record accurately God's revelations. Why, then, are there so many different ideas about what the Bible teaches? The difficulty is not with the Bible but with the way we interpret what we study. We must let the Bible be its own interpreter.

HIDDEN TREASURE. A man by the name of Doc Noss claimed to have found several million dollars' worth of gold bricks. He told anyone who would listen that he found the gold at the bottom of a deep cavern in the Umbrillo Basin area of New Mexico. Rumors of the gold kept cropping up, but the United States Army, who owned the area, refused explorers entry to the cavern. Finally, a group known as Expedition Unlimited was able to obtain approval and searched thoroughly for the gold treasure. Using metal detectors, ground radar, and other modern and sophisticated instruments, they discovered many unknown tunnels and caverns—but no gold.

Those who search for earthly hidden treasure are often disappointed, much as the group known as the Expedition Unlimited was. But those who diligently search for the hidden treasure in the Word of God will find eternal riches.

PRAY FOR THE GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (John 16:13; 1 Cor. 2:14; Rom. 12:2).

The finite mind, without the guidance of the Holy Spirit, cannot possibly grasp the deep and meaningful truths revealed in the Bible. It is, therefore, essential that the first step in any approach to Bible study be prayer for guidance.

What promise should we claim as we open the Bible to study it? John 16:13.

“Never should the Bible be studied without prayer. Before opening its pages we should ask for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, and it will be given.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 91.

What do the texts that follow indicate about why it is impossible for the human mind, unaided by the Holy Spirit, to grasp divine truth?

1 Cor. 2:9-14 _____

2 Cor. 3:14 _____

2 Cor. 4:4 _____

What change must take place in our minds before we can appreciate truth as we should? Rom. 12:2.

“Some things cannot be fully understood unless they are experienced—explanation is not enough. . . . One may be able to explain what prayer is, but until he has learned to pray his concept of prayer will be hazy.

“The Holy Spirit’s work is twofold: to lead us to understanding, and to lead us to experience. Shortly before His crucifixion, Jesus said to His disciples, ‘When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth.’ John 16:13. Early in His ministry the Master had spoken to Nicodemus: ‘Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.’ John 3:5, 6.”—Jemison, *Christian Beliefs*, pp. 43, 44.

For reflection: According to 1 Corinthians 2:14, the “natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit . . . nor can he . . . because they are spiritually discerned.” In what ways can we be more receptive to the Spirit’s illumination?

LET THE WRITER SAY WHAT HE WANTS TO SAY (John 8:43, 44).

Why are some in Jesus' audience not able to grasp His teaching? John 8:43.

They are standing in Jesus' presence but will not *hear* what He is attempting to communicate to them. Thus they completely misunderstand His message.

How does John 8:44 explain why they are not able to *hear* His Word?

We must learn to let the authors say what they want to say, and we must learn to listen to what they are saying. This is easy to agree with but difficult to practice. This highlights the human problem inherent in understanding what others are attempting to communicate, resulting from our cherished ideas formed beforehand.

It is easy to fall into condemnation of others as being "blind" to what the Bible really says. But isn't there a possibility that we, too, have our blind spots? Even in early Christian times, with the apostles still living, the church was beset by differences of opinion on some matters of teaching and practice. Can we expect all Christians around the world, with vast differences in culture and background, to follow exactly the same practices and understand every teaching in exactly the same way?

Obviously there is room for some minor differences, even though there is general agreement on basic principles and fundamental doctrines. Sometimes we may find ourselves unable to understand clearly what a Bible writer is saying in a particular passage. That should not discourage us but rather encourage us to pray and study more earnestly so that the Holy Spirit may shed more light on His Word.

Moreover, if we want to be able to understand more fully what biblical writers intend, we must allow them the right to say what they want to say in their own way of saying it. We must try to understand exactly what they said rather than reading into their words what we think they should have said.

For reflection: "God intends that even in this life the truths of His Word shall be ever unfolding to His people. There is only one way in which this knowledge can be obtained. We can attain to an understanding of God's Word only through the illumination of that Spirit by which the Word was given. . . . And the Saviour's promise to His followers was, 'When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth.'"—*Steps to Christ*, p. 109.

STUDYING A SINGLE PASSAGE (2 Tim. 2:15).

How does Paul challenge us to careful, in-depth Bible study? 2 Tim. 2:15. What does he mean?

“One may read the whole Bible through and yet fail to see its beauty or comprehend its deep and hidden meaning. One passage studied until its significance is clear to the mind, and its relation to the plan of salvation is evident, is of more value than the perusal of many chapters with no definite purpose in view and no positive instruction gained.”
—*Steps to Christ*, p. 90.

When we learn to take a single passage and find all that the Lord has put there for us to understand, there will be a deepening of our spiritual experience and a hunger for continued study. It’s a blessing to listen to someone who is well versed in Bible study explain the Scriptures, but what greater blessing it is to personally experience the help of the Holy Spirit in discovering the deep significance of a Bible passage for ourselves. Yet, many Christians do not know how to do this and, therefore, do not appreciate the thrill and challenge of this kind of study.

How do we go about studying a verse or a short Bible passage in a way that will bring rich rewards? One such way is this: “We should carefully study the Bible, asking God for the aid of the Holy Spirit, that we may understand His word. We should take one verse, and concentrate the mind on the task of ascertaining the thought which God has put in that verse for us. We should dwell upon the thought until it becomes our own, and we know ‘what saith the Lord.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 390.

Glean from the above statement possible steps to follow in studying a Bible promise. Use the space below to write down such steps:

For study and reflection: Try to follow the above steps in your consideration of this promise: “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand” (Isa. 41:10, NKJV).

COMPARING SCRIPTURE WITH SCRIPTURE (Isa. 28:9, 10; 1 Cor. 2:13, 14).

The next step in careful attention to the text is to determine how the context illuminates the passage. After that, find out what other Bible texts contribute to our understanding of it.

What do Isaiah 28:9, 10 and 1 Corinthians 2:13, 14 say about comparing scripture with scripture?

“The evidence of truth is in the Scripture itself. One scripture is the key to unlock other scriptures. The rich and hidden meaning is unfolded by the Holy Spirit of God, making plain the word to our understanding.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 390.

It is essential to find and compare all the scriptures on a topic in order to grasp the entire scope of Bible teaching about it. (The use of a Bible concordance is recommended.) The best commentary on Scripture is Scripture. First, discover all you can for yourself from the Bible, then turn to other resources to aid you in your study.

Illustrate this next step by a study of Matthew 5:3. Commentaries suggest that the “poor in spirit” are those who have learned that they cannot possibly save themselves or perform any righteous act that will save them. Contrary to the mistaken ideas of the Pharisees in Christ’s day, those desiring salvation are completely dependent on what Christ can and will do for them.

The statement in *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, page 13, that “throughout the Beatitudes is an advancing line of Christian experience” gives us the key to understanding the Beatitudes. They are sequential steps we take in becoming children of God. The first beatitude presents the first step in becoming a son or daughter of God—recognition of our need. How rich Matthew 5:3 becomes when we realize that the word used for “poor” is not just meant in the ordinary sense in which we use the word but one that designates the desperate and destitute. Thus Jesus tells us how *beggars* can become *kings*. The position of the pronoun *theirs* in the Greek text gives it particular emphasis. Only those who have the kind of experience outlined in this passage—who realize their desperate need and turn to Christ to supply it—will receive the blessing.

Study the second beatitude by using the same method discussed above, comparing scripture with scripture. How does the Bible define mourning as it is meant in the Beatitudes? How does the act of mourning serve as another step in becoming God’s children?

A RIGHT ATTITUDE TOWARD TRUTH (John 7:17; Dan. 12:9, 10; Ps. 25:14; Luke 11:28).

What basic principle for understanding the Bible is presented in John 7:17 and Luke 11:28? What do you think is the reason for this condition?

Why would God make His will known to us if it were not intended to guide us in our relationship to Him and those about us? The more light we receive and put into practice, the more light we will receive.

What promise does Daniel give concerning those in the last days who will diligently study and apply God's messages? Dan. 12:9, 10.

What does Psalm 25:14 add to our understanding of God's willingness to share His special light with those who trust and obey Him?

The Hebrew in this text indicates that the word translated *secret* means "confidential talk" or intimate, special friendship. When God's people enjoy intimate, special friendship with Him, He reveals His secrets to them. Commenting on the use of the same word *secret* in Proverbs 3:32, the *SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 3, page 959, adds: "God's secret is the revelation of Himself in His Word, in nature, and in His providences. While the most prosperous unbeliever looks to a vague and uncertain future and trembles at the thought of death, the man who follows in the ways of God has an understanding of the workings of providence that enables him to face wealth or woe, life or death, with the same calm certainty."

Application: The old adage "We are what we eat" applies to both the physical and spiritual aspects of life. If we feed only on the husks of the commonplace and uninspired, our lives will become dwarfed and cheapened. In contrast, when we make the Word of God our daily bread, we grow. Paul states in Philippians 4:8, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, . . . think on these things."

For reflection: Do you know someone who, in the last few years, has demonstrated striking Christian growth? If you check the reason for it, you'll doubtless discover that daily and prayerful Bible study underlies all such Christian development. How do you plan to experience more spiritual growth in your life? (See 1 Pet. 2:2.)

FURTHER STUDY: Reflect on 2 Peter 3:15, 16. What reasons can you develop for people's "wresting" the Scriptures? How does Psalm 119 broaden your understanding of the relationship between being willing to do God's will and better understanding the truths of God's Word? Go through the familiar twenty-third psalm, noticing every word and analyzing what it means in that passage. As you do so, keep a record of your thoughts. What reasons can you think of for wanting better to appreciate the truths of the Bible?

In studying a Bible verse or passage, it is helpful to keep in mind the following points:

1. See the primacy and unity of the scripture.
2. Discern the centrality of Christ in the scripture.
3. Let the scripture explain itself.
4. Study what the text says, paying close attention to the correct meaning of words.
5. Consider the context and historical background.
6. Ascertain the meaning of the text to those to whom it was addressed originally—and to us today.
7. Apply in your daily life the specific things the Holy Spirit has taught you in the Bible study.

"If the people of God would appreciate His word, we should have a heaven in the church here below. Christians would be eager, hungry, to search the word. They would be anxious for time to compare scripture with scripture and to meditate upon the word. . . . And as a result their lives would be conformed to the principles and promises of the word. Its instruction would be to them as the leaves of the tree of life."
—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 193.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What can you and your fellow members do in your local church to foster "a heaven in the church here below" and enjoy the "leaves of the tree of life" now?
2. After your study of this lesson, summarize your answer to the question, Why are there so many different ideas about what the Bible teaches?

WORD FOR REVIEW: *Hermeneutics*. Derived from the Greek word *hermeneuein*, this word means to express, interpret, or explain. It also means to seek to determine the principles for deriving the true meaning of written texts, including biblical words or passages.

SUMMARY: Outline from reviewing this lesson some helpful points that you can suggest to your class as a means of ensuring that your study reflects more accurately the truths of God's revelation.



The Missing Money, Part 1

Told to Traci Lemon by Delores Thomas Morris

Delores glanced at her watch as the bus she was riding stopped to pick up more passengers. She did not want to be late for work. She had stopped at the bank to cash her paycheck so she could give her birthday-thank offering on Sabbath. *Just one more stop*, she thought. *I should be on time. Thank You, Jesus*, she prayed.

A young mother with a baby in one arm and several packages in the other struggled to deposit her coins in the farebox. Delores set her bags down and helped the woman, then returned to her seat.

As the bus slowed for Delores's stop, she grabbed her bags and hurried toward the door. She stepped off the bus and started toward her workplace, when suddenly she stopped. Something was missing. She had left one bag behind—the bag containing her passport and cash—two weeks' pay! She turned and watched the bus round the corner.

"Jesus," she breathed, "help me get my bag back!" Delores did not earn a lot at her part-time job, and she stretched every penny to provide for herself and her two children. In addition, injuries caused by a hit-and-run driver had left her with a large hospital bill to pay.

Another bus pulled up to the bus stop, and Delores stepped on board. She explained her plight to the driver, who let her ride free to the bus station. She asked at the lost-and-found office, but the driver of the bus in which she had ridden had not reported finding anything on the bus. The station supervisor kindly warned Delores, "You won't get your things back."

My God is able, Delores thought. *I won't let the devil get the best of me! I will give my thank offering, even if I have to borrow the money!*

Delores returned to work and explained her tardiness to her boss. Word of her loss spread among her co-workers. Even some of her Christian friends told her to forget ever seeing her money again. *God*, she prayed, *even if I cannot get the money back, please help me get my passport. I need my passport.*

She felt confident that God would take care of her needs, although she did not know how.

..(continued next week)

Delores Thomas Morris lives and works in Silver Spring, Maryland. Traci Lemon is editorial assistant of *Mission*.

The Uniqueness of the Gift of Prophecy



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Joel 2:28, 29; Acts 2:14-21; Heb. 1:1-3; Rev. 12:17; 19:10.

MEMORY TEXT: "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper" (2 Chronicles 20:20).

KEY THOUGHT: The gift of prophecy is an identifying mark of the remnant church. Seventh-day Adventists believe that this gift was manifested through Ellen G. White. Her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth, which provide comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction for the church. She testifies that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested. (Based on *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .*, p. 216, and *Fundamental Belief*, no. 17.)

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GIFT OF PROPHECY TO THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH. A 1982 study in one of the church divisions shows that Seventh-day Adventists who study the writings of Ellen White regularly are more likely to exhibit positive Christian attributes and behavior than members who do not (*Administration*, July 1982, pp. 226, 227). Many other benefits that have come to the church through the gift of prophecy could be listed. One that is not usually considered is the advantage Seventh-day Adventists have in receiving a contemporary example of how the gift of prophecy works. We have the advantage of being able to know and experience what a modern prophet may say and do.

THE UNIQUENESS OF THE GIFT (Jer. 20:7-9; Acts 21:9; 2 Pet. 1:21).

A study of the Bible records that about eighty people are known to have received the genuine gift of prophecy. Eight of these were women. Approximately forty wrote the sixty-six books of the Bible. This gift is one of the rarest and, consequently, is unique among the spiritual gifts.

Selection of the prophet is the only church appointment God has kept strictly in His own hands. Prophecy comes not "by the will of man" (2 Pet. 1:21). Prophets sometimes prophesied: (1) without foreseeing that they would (see 1 Kings 13:20-22) and (2) when they didn't want to. They could not always do what they wanted (see Num. 23:12, 20; 24:13).

The gift of prophecy often was a calling not desired by those God called. Why? Exod. 4:1, 10-12; Jer. 20:7-9; Jon. 1:1-3.

Ellen White overwhelmed. Being a prophet is not easy. Commenting on the fact that Ellen White had to write out everything by hand, her husband, James, reported her reaction to the new vision of June 12, 1868: "Mrs. White has said more than twenty times since the Rochester vision, December, 1865, upon which she has written several thousands of pages, that in view of the responsibilities of her work, if she could have her choice, to go into the grave or have another vision, she should choose the grave. And since Sabbath evening it has been with difficulty that she has been able to control her feelings of disappointment and sadness in view of her new responsibilities." —*Review and Herald*, June 16, 1868.

Women, as well as men, were called by God to the prophetic office in Bible times. Review the following texts and identify some of those called to be prophetesses:

Exod. 15:20, 21 _____ Judg. 4:4, 5 _____

Luke 2:36 _____ Acts 21:9 _____

Were these women given the same recognition as male prophets? Note that in spite of the fact that Jeremiah (compare Jer. 1:2 with 2 Kings 22:3) and probably Habakkuk and Zephaniah were recognized prophets in Josiah's time, Josiah's counselors sought out Huldah the prophetess in order to discover the Lord's will.

THE BIBLICAL BASIS OF THE LAST-DAY PROPHECIC GIFT
(Joel 2:28-32; Matt. 24:11, 24; Eph. 4:11-14; Rev. 12:17; 19:10).

How do the texts listed below support the expectation of a last-day prophetic gift?

Joel 2:28-32—Partially fulfilled at Pentecost (see Acts 2:16-21), but the major fulfillment takes place in the last days when the signs mentioned in verses 30, 31 will be seen. The manifestation of the Spirit at Pentecost involved tongues, whereas the last-day promise involves prophecy.

Matthew 24:11, 24—Perhaps Jesus would not need to warn against false prophets just before His coming unless the true gift of prophecy was to be manifested.

Ephesians 4:11-14—This text seems to support the idea that there are three different reasons for giving the gift, but actually there is one. Verse 12 literally states: “With a view to the mending of the saints for the purpose of the work of Christ unto the house building of the body of Christ.” The last-day gift of prophecy is essential to this purpose and will be needed until we come into “the unity of the faith . . . unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (verse 13).

Revelation 12:17; 19:10—Note the similarities of Revelation 19:10 and 22:9: In both, John says he fell at the angel’s feet to worship. In both cases the angel said, “Don’t.” In both, the angel began his message with the same words. By comparing the above three texts, we see that the testimony of Jesus is equated with the person and the work of the prophets.

Gift of prophecy given to Ellen G. White. Seventh-day Adventists believe that the Bible prediction of a last-day gift of prophecy has been fulfilled in a remarkable way through the Holy Spirit’s work in the life and ministry of Ellen G. White. Concerning her gift, Ellen White testifies: “Little heed is given to the Bible, and the Lord has given a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light. Oh, how much good would be accomplished if the books containing this light were read with a determination to carry out the principles they contain!”—*Colporteur Ministry*, p. 125.

The ministry of Ellen White. Her ministry extended over a period of 70 years until her death in 1915. During that time she received approximately 2,000 visions and wrote approximately 25 million words. One of the most remarkable aspects of her ministry is the immense variety of topics on which she wrote: education, health, prophecy—just to mention a few.

TESTING THE PROPHETIC GIFT (Deut. 18:21, 22; Isa. 8:20; Matt. 7:20; 1 John 4:1-3).

Imagine a man receiving a letter that makes him so upset that he bangs on the door of the post office demanding that the postal carrier explain why he delivered such a frightening and allegedly unreasonable letter. He loses his temper and gives the postal carrier a hard kick. That wouldn't be either Christian or rational.

Yet, in recent years some have been kicking the postal carrier—Ellen White—just because they don't like what she wrote. Of course, there's the fact that she also is blamed for things that she never actually wrote.

Perhaps too many of us as youngsters were whipped into line by authority figures who rested their case on the line "You can't do that because Ellen White says you shouldn't." What a pleasant surprise it is to learn how human, even fun-loving, Ellen White was. She was a pleasant, happy person to be around. There were even times when she almost rebelled against giving some of the straight messages God gave her for people she knew and with whom she worshiped. She was urged to pass them along no matter what personal pain it caused her. Overall, her ministry was one of encouragement, pointing to the loving and lovable Jesus, whom she always sought to represent faithfully.

The Lord powerfully used this godly woman for so many years to guide and lead this church and its members heavenward. Regrettably, some engage in subtle denials of the full inspiration of Ellen White's writings. In order to meet these attacks, we must be aware of the Bible tests of the true gift of prophecy.

Study the following Bible tests of a true prophet, applying them as best you can to what you know about Ellen White's gift:

Test 1—Isa. 8:20 _____

Test 2—Matt. 7:20 _____

Test 3—Jer. 28:9 (modified by the biblical principle of conditional prophecy) _____

Test 4—1 John 4:2 _____

The standard. "The word of God is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested."—*The Great Controversy*, p. vii.

For reflection: Think of specific passages from Ellen White's writings that have been a spiritual blessing to you. In what ways have they been helpful, and why?

INSPIRATION AND REVELATION IN ELLEN WHITE'S EXPERIENCE (1 Thess. 5:19-21; 2 Chron. 20:20).

Study 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21; then list three things that we can do to help us accept a true claim to the gift of prophecy.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

If God gave special messages through the prophets in past ages for the encouragement and spiritual enlightenment of His people, why can He not use someone that way in the twentieth century? Is God's power to communicate with His people any less today than it was in the time of Elijah or Jeremiah? Why should we accept the reality of miraculous prophetic inspiration in earlier ages but deny it for our age? If we should discover that the tests of a true prophet are fulfilled in the ministry of a contemporary, how unwise we would be not to accept the messages as coming from God! To reject the counsel of a true prophet is to insult the Holy Spirit.

Ellen White's description of her writing process. A study of the many passages in which Ellen White described her writing process is informative. Here we'll select just two: "When I went to Colorado I was so burdened for you that, in my weakness, I wrote many pages to be read at your camp meeting. Weak and trembling, I arose at three o'clock in the morning to write to you. God was speaking through clay. You might say that this communication was only a letter. Yes, it was a letter, but prompted by the Spirit of God, to bring before your minds things that had been shown me. In these letters which I write, in the testimonies I bear, I am presenting to you that which the Lord has presented to me. I do not write one article in the paper, expressing merely my own ideas. They are what God has opened before me in vision—the precious rays of light shining from the throne."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 27.

"I am just as dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord in relating or writing a vision, as in having the vision. It is impossible for me to call up things which have been shown me unless the Lord brings them before me at the time that He is pleased to have me relate or write them."—*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 2, p. 293.

For reflection: What are the advantages to the church and to you personally in accepting Ellen White's messages? Give some examples. (See 2 Chronicles 20:20, last part.)

THE FRUITAGE OF THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS (Matt. 7:20; 24:11, 24).

One of the major signs of the time of the end will be false prophets whose main work is deception (see Matt. 24:4, 11, 24). Christ has given His true followers spiritual discernment into what is true and what is false: "By their fruit you will recognize them" (Matt. 7:20, NIV).

What did Ellen White claim for herself? "I have had no claims to make, only that I am instructed that I am the Lord's messenger; that He called me in my youth to be His messenger, to receive His word, and to give a clear and decided message in the name of the Lord Jesus. 'Your work,' He instructed me, 'is to bear My word. . . . The messages that I give shall be heard from one who has never learned in the schools. My Spirit and My power shall be with you.

"Be not afraid of man, for My shield shall protect you. It is not you that speaketh: it is the Lord that giveth the messages of warning and reproof. Never deviate from the truth *under any circumstances*. . . ."

"Why have I not claimed to be a prophet?—Because in these days many who boldly claim that they are prophets are a reproach to the cause of Christ; and because my work includes much more than the word 'prophet' signifies."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 32.

How do Ellen White's claims measure up to the tests of a true prophet outlined in Isaiah 8:20 and Matthew 7:20?

The consistency of her writings with Scripture. Ellen White's writings teach no doctrine that cannot be substantiated solely from Scripture. Her writings lead us back to the Bible. Ellen White did not teach that her writings should be used as another Bible, nor that they should be added to the sacred canon: "I recommend to you, dear reader, the Word of God as the rule of your faith and practice. By that Word we are to be judged. God has, in that Word, promised to give visions in the 'last days'; not for a new rule of faith, but for the comfort of His people, and to correct those who err from Bible truth."—*Early Writings*, p. 78.

The fruitage of Ellen White's work. The noble Christian character of Ellen White was affirmed by many of those who knew her. (If available, see Arthur L. White's biography entitled *Ellen G. White*, 6 volumes. These volumes are a rich source of information regarding the beginning and development of the Advent movement, as well as of the work of Ellen White.)

The fruitage of Ellen White's work is demonstrated in two ways: (1) the unique growth of the Seventh-day Adventist work and institutions around the world and (2) the spiritual impact of her writings on millions of people.

FURTHER STUDY: Study the ways in which later inspired prophets served as authoritative interpreters of earlier prophets: Rom. 10:5-10 (compare Lev. 18:5; Ezek. 20:11, 13, 21; Neh. 9:29; Deut. 30:11-14); Rom. 1:16, 17 (compare Heb. 2:4); 1 Cor. 9:9 (compare Deut. 25:4); Gal. 4:22-24 (compare the Old Testament account of Gen. 15-17; 21); Matt. 24:15 (compare Dan. 8:13; 9:27); Acts 2:17-21 (compare Joel 2:28-32); Acts 2:25-28 (compare Ps. 16:8-11).

Excerpts of Ellen White's testimony below tell us how the Holy Spirit enabled her and the early pioneers to arrive at true doctrines:

"We are to be established in the faith, in the light of the truth given us in our early experience. . . . We would search the Scriptures with much prayer, and the Holy Spirit would bring the truth to our minds. Sometimes whole nights would be devoted to searching the Scriptures, and earnestly asking God for guidance. . . . The power of God would come upon me, and I was enabled clearly to define what is truth and what is error.

"As the points of our faith were thus established, our feet were placed upon a solid foundation. We accepted the truth point by point, under the demonstration of the Holy Spirit. I would be taken off in vision, and explanations would be given me."—*Gospel Workers*, p. 302.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In the lesson it was mentioned that one of the most remarkable aspects of Ellen White's writing ministry was the fact that she wrote on an immense variety of topics. List some of those and tell why or how they have been a blessing to the church.
2. In what ways can we share Ellen White's books with others who would benefit by their special inspiration and guidance? Here is a suggestion: Many find that the best way to share this truth with others is the *taste and see method*. Share with someone a book written by Ellen G. White, such as *The Desire of Ages*, *The Ministry of Healing*, *Christ's Object Lessons*, *Steps to Christ*, or whatever may be available where you live. When presenting the book, give a warm, personal testimony as to the blessing you have received by reading it and following its principles.

TERM FOR REVIEW: *Spirit of Prophecy*. This refers to the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the gift that enables the prophets to speak and write for God (see 1 Cor. 12:7-11).

SUMMARY: Seventh-day Adventists believe that the genuineness of a professed prophet can be determined by the application of the tests given in Scripture. When these tests are applied to Ellen White, she is found to be an inspired modern prophet.



The Missing Money, Part 2

Told to Traci Lemon by Delores Thomas Morris

In her haste to arrive at work on time, Delores accidentally left a bag on the bus—a bag containing her passport and two weeks' wages! She tried to catch the bus but was too late. She took another bus to the bus company's headquarters, where she checked in the lost-and-found office, but no bag had been turned in. Even her Christian co-workers warned her that she probably would never see her money or passport again. But Delores felt confident that God would provide according to His will, if only she had faith.

Delores returned home that evening, still praying that God would watch over her passport and money. At 7:30 the phone rang. The caller introduced himself as Larry. "I have your bag with your money and your passport," he said. "Don't be afraid; the money is all there."

Relief swept over Delores. *Thank You, Jesus*, she prayed silently. *I knew You could do it if it was in Your plan for me.*

"But . . ." Larry interrupted her thoughts. "I need to tell you"—the voice paused for a long moment before continuing. "I was strongly tempted to spend your money. Four times I tried to spend it, but every time the devil told me to spend it, Jesus told me No. You must have a lot of faith," he said.

"I do," Delores answered. "And so can you. You mentioned Jesus; are you a Christian?"

"Yes," Larry answered. "Two years ago God saved me from a life of drug addiction. You name it, I used it. Jesus has been so good to me. That's why I can't keep your money.

"Do you remember those stickers you have in your bag—the ones that say 'I love Jesus'? When I saw them I knew you were a Christian. I couldn't keep your money—not any of it. I can't mess with Jesus. He kept reminding me how much He loves me. I couldn't do this to Him—or to you."

"Yes," Delores answered. "God knew my money and my passport would be in good hands with you."

Larry delivered the bag to Delores as he had promised. They talked about the difference Jesus has made in their lives. Delores invited Larry to worship in a Seventh-day Adventist church. Larry now is attending church and has recommitted his life to God.

Delores Thomas Morris lives and works in Silver Spring, Maryland. Traci Lemon is editorial assistant of *Mission*.

Guide for the Last Days



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Ps. 119; Isa. 50:4; 60:1-3; Dan. 7-12; Eph. 6:17; Rev. 10:1, 2, 7.

MEMORY TEXT: "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17).

KEY THOUGHT: Bible writers did not always comprehend the full importance of the message given through them. Some things in the Bible are reserved especially for readers living in the last days.

BIBLE STUDY INVOLVES COMMUNICATION WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT. An attitude of humility, earnestness, diligence, and expectancy greatly enhances our communion with God through the study of His Word. His sure promise is that "you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:13, NKJV). Studying God's Word involves intimate communication with the Holy Spirit, who promised to be with us and to guide our minds. Some may shy away from any suggestion that we can be taught individually by the Holy Spirit. But we can be. The same Holy Spirit who inspired the Bible is always ready to help us grow strong in Christ and to guide us "into all truth" (John 16:13).

WORD FOR THE WEEK: *Illumination.* Do not confuse this word with *inspiration*. Although both of these words are the result of the work of the Holy Spirit, *illumination* focuses on the light the Holy Spirit sheds on the Inspired Writings to help us understand God's revealed will for us all.

SOMETIMES THE PROPHETS DID NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT THEY WERE WRITING (Dan. 7–10).

The seventh chapter of Daniel presents a prophetic vision that covers the major events of history in relationship to God's people from the time of Daniel until the establishment of Christ's everlasting dominion on earth.

What did Daniel do when he could not understand the vision? Dan. 7:15, 16.

Even though a more detailed explanation was given, verse 28 indicates that Daniel still remained troubled. Two years later he was given another vision. It was designed to increase his understanding of the revelations that had been disturbing him. (See Daniel 8:17.) As a result of this more detailed explanation, undoubtedly, Daniel understood more fully what was to take place in the future. But the last verse of chapter 8 relates that he was so astonished at the vision that he fainted and was sick for several days.

What does chapter 9, which was written about thirteen years later, demonstrate concerning Daniel's continuing difficulty with fully understanding the visions?

Daniel's difficulty revolved around understanding the time factor involved and its relationship to the seventy-year period of captivity predicted by Jeremiah. He began to seek the answer by fasting and prayer. While he was praying, the angel Gabriel stood by his side, announcing that he was there to give Daniel "skill and understanding." The angel particularly discussed Daniel's problem concerning the period of time "determined" upon the Jewish people.

Three years later, Daniel remained so troubled about the length of time involved that chapter 10 informs us he fasted three weeks because of his lack of understanding. Once again he was given a vision in which he was assured of Heaven's interest in helping him comprehend what he needed to understand.

Why do you think an intelligent man like Daniel, gifted with divine wisdom, was having so much difficulty with what Christ and Gabriel were telling him regarding the visions? How do you react when, in your Bible study, you find some things difficult to understand? Why do you suppose you respond this way?

DANIEL'S DIFFICULTY EXPLAINED (Dan. 11, 12).

Chapters 11 and 12 contain a brief outline of events from Daniel's time to the second coming of Christ, particularly those events that the text suggests are to be sealed till the "time of the end."

What do we find Daniel admitting in 12:8?

The understanding of these events was sealed until the time of the end (verse 9), since it was impossible to grasp them fully until the last days. Daniel was told, "Go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days" (verse 13, NKJV).

Instead of satisfying Daniel's request for complete understanding of the visions, what words of encouragement does God offer to Daniel? Dan. 12: 9-13.

There was no way Daniel could understand fully the events revealed and recorded in the last six chapters of his book. But he was encouraged to believe that the time would come "at the end of the days" when the things he had been so troubled about would be unsealed and made meaningful to those who would be guided by the Holy Spirit in understanding what he had written.

When was the prophecy "unsealed?" Rev. 10:1, 2, 7.

"Daniel shall stand in his lot at the end of the days. John sees the little book unsealed. Then Daniel's prophecies have their proper place in the first, second, and third angels' messages to be given to the world. The unsealing of the little book was the message in relation to time. The books of Daniel and the Revelation are one. One is a prophecy, the other a revelation; one a book sealed, the other a book opened."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol 7, p. 971.

After doing everything possible to determine objectively what a Bible author is trying to say, we need to realize that the Scriptures "are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Cor. 10:11).

The Holy Spirit sometimes intends a prophetic passage to have more than one application. Jesus Himself had two applications in mind in Matthew 24. Whenever a later inspired Bible writer is led by the Holy Spirit to convey what God intended in the writings of an earlier inspired Bible writer, we have clear authority for understanding it in this sense.

HOW THE HOLY SPIRIT'S GUIDANCE PREVENTS US FROM MISINTERPRETING THE SCRIPTURES (2 Tim. 2:15; Isa. 8:20).

The Holy Spirit is *not* given as a shortcut to eliminate the necessity of careful and methodical Bible study. But when we apply ourselves as a “workman that needeth not to be ashamed,” the Holy Spirit helps us to rightly divide, or properly understand, the Word of Truth. (See 2 Tim. 2:15.)

To approach the study of the Bible with the human mind unaided by the Holy Spirit is to open the way for a spirit not of God to lead us astray. Without the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we are inclined to misinterpret the Scriptures. If the Word of God is opened without reverence and prayer, the study of the Bible can lead to faulty understanding and to unbelief.

“A true knowledge of the Bible can be gained only through the aid of that Spirit by whom the word was given. And in order to gain this knowledge we must live by it. All that God’s word commands, we are to obey. All that it promises, we may claim. The life which it enjoins is the life that, through its power, we are to live. Only as the Bible is thus held can it be studied effectively.”—*Education*, p. 189.

These two important factors must be kept in mind as we follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit in applying biblical passages:

First, we must be able to distinguish between universal principles and local applications of these principles. Certain portions of the Scriptures were written to meet particular circumstances and specific instances. The principles behind the specific applications expressed in these portions are universal in their scope; that is, they apply in all circumstances, for all time.

Second, we must be able to relate a particular Bible passage to times and circumstances today. We need to be able to see the relationship of truths or teachings in the passage to the Scriptures as a whole. Any one passage may emphasize a certain portion of a Bible teaching without giving all the other parts that must be understood to grasp the truth being discussed in its wholeness. Before drawing definite conclusions concerning the nature of a revealed truth, it is essential to study it in the light of the entire Bible teaching on the subject. In doing so we must recognize that the Holy Spirit does not contradict Himself.

What does the Bible tell us about *new light* that contradicts old light? Isa. 8:20.

For reflection: How does the Holy Spirit safeguard your careful, comparative Bible study against misinterpreting or misunderstanding a Bible teaching? What valuable lessons has this taught you?

A LIGHT ON OUR PATH (Ps. 119:105, 130; John 14:24; 16:13; Isa. 50:4).

What does the Word of God do to enlighten our way in a world darkened by sin? Ps. 119:105, 130.

“As we search its pages, light enters the heart, illuminating the mind. By this light we see what we ought to be.”—*My Life Today*, p. 27.

What part does the Holy Spirit play in this illumination? John 16:13.

“The Comforter is called ‘the Spirit of truth.’ His work is to define and maintain the truth. He first dwells in the heart as the Spirit of truth, and thus He becomes the Comforter. There is comfort and peace in the truth, but no real peace or comfort can be found in falsehood. . . . Through the Scriptures the Holy Spirit speaks to the mind, and impresses truth upon the heart. Thus He exposes error, and expels it from the soul.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 671.

“No man can have insight into the Word of God without the illumination of the Holy Spirit. If we will but come into the right position before God, His light will shine upon us in rich, clear rays.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1152.

What do the following texts reveal about Christ’s communication of Heaven’s truth?

John 14:24 _____

Isa. 50:4 _____

How can we receive illumination from the Holy Spirit as Jesus did?

“From hours spent with God He came forth morning by morning, to bring the light of heaven to men. Daily He received a fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit. In the early hours of the new day the Lord awakened Him from His slumbers, and His soul and His lips were anointed with grace, that He might impart to others.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 139.

How is it possible in this hectic life to emulate our Lord’s example of daily receiving a “fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit”? Share some helpful suggestions with your class.

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD (Rev. 18:1; Matt. 5:14; Isa. 60:1-3).

Isaiah 60:1-3 indicates that, in these times, when “darkness shall cover the earth and gross darkness the people,” God’s people will bring the glorious light of the gospel of Christ to the entire world. (See Matthew 5:14; Revelation 18:1.)

What two challenges does God give to His people? Isa. 60:1.

1. ARISE: What does that indicate? Many are caught up in a deadly Laodicean sleeping sickness (see Rev. 3:17) and are not measuring up to all that Christ makes possible.

2. SHINE: What does it mean for us to shine and for His glory to be seen upon us? (Isa. 60:1, 2). We do not shine; Christ shines in and through us. This means that we reflect the glorious light of His character to those about us. The following illustration from a newly published book, *Martyrs: Contemporary Writers on Modern Lives of Faith*, ed. by Susan Bergman (San Francisco, Calif.: Harper) helps us understand how God can work when people see the character of Christ shining in our lives.

In 1995, Steve Saint moved to Ecuador with his wife and children to establish an airport and hospital for the Huaroni people. Steve’s father, Nate, was one of five missionaries who was martyred in January of 1956 in his attempt to take the gospel to those who have commonly been called the Auca Indians. Steve recently learned some of the details of the fate of the five martyrs when he became a good friend of the now-converted Indians who killed the missionaries.

The five attackers are Christians today. Knowing that they had nothing to fear from Steve, they openly told him the story of the slaying of the five missionaries. As they attacked with hardwood spears, the Aucas were fearful that they would be killed, because the missionaries had guns to protect themselves from wild animals. One of the missionaries did fire a pistol in the air when he realized what was happening, but the five had agreed among themselves that they would rather be killed than kill any of the Aucas. As the Indians discussed their raid with Steve, they repeatedly asked, “Why didn’t the men use their guns to defend themselves?” This all-important question became the major factor in later allowing missionary Elizabeth Elliot and Steve’s aunt, Rachel Saint, to come live with them, begin medical missionary work, and finally convert them.

For reflection: Have you ever experienced a time when your witness for Christ brought you loss by the world’s standards or put you in danger? How did your “loss” influence others to accept Jesus?

FURTHER STUDY: Carefully and prayerfully study chapter 37 in *The Great Controversy* entitled “The Scriptures a Safeguard.” If you do not have a copy of the book, the following texts progress through the chapter: Isa. 8:20; Rev. 14:9-11; 2 Tim. 4:3; Prov. 3:13; 16:25; Mark 12:24; John 7:17; Ps. 119:11, 18, 99, 104; Isa. 59:19; John 14:26; Eph. 5:14-16; Jer. 17:8.

Note: “**A device of the enemy.**” “We are to pray for divine enlightenment, but at the same time we should be careful how we receive everything termed new light. We must beware lest, under cover of searching for new truth, Satan shall divert our minds from Christ and the special truths for this time. I have been shown that it is the device of the enemy to lead minds to dwell upon some obscure or unimportant point, something that is not fully revealed or is not essential to our salvation. This is made the absorbing theme, the ‘present truth,’ when all their investigations and suppositions only serve to make matters more obscure than before, and to confuse the minds of some who ought to be seeking for oneness through sanctification of the truth.” —*Counsels to Writers and Editors*, p. 49.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What have you found in the lesson that outlines in a practical way how to make sure that it is the Holy Spirit that illuminates our study of the Bible?
2. What is the relationship between illumination and inspiration? What is the difference?
3. What differences are there between the work of the Holy Spirit in Old Testament times and His work in New Testament times?
4. What are some biblical passages that you consider particularly helpful in facing Satan’s last-day deceptions?

SUMMARY: Although some of the Bible writers were not able to anticipate how their writings would apply to the last days, the Holy Spirit guides us in making proper applications so we might be prepared for Satan’s great masterpiece of deception.



Songs in the Dungeon

Thony Escotto

The days of Paul and Silas are not as far removed as we might think.

Julio and Carlos are two teenage boys living in Cuba. Like Paul and Silas, they are not afraid to share their faith with others. The boys often distribute Christian literature in their city, including Bible lessons, church invitations, and program guides for the Spanish-language *Your Story Hour (Tu Historia Preferida)*, a half-hour radio broadcast featuring dramatized Bible stories.

One day when they were about twelve years old, the boys were passing out invitations to evangelistic meetings in their church when two military police approached them and demanded to know what they were doing. "We're giving away these brochures," the boys said, showing the men their papers.

"Do you have government permission to pass out this subversive material?" the soldiers demanded to know.

"No sir, we do not," the boys replied politely.

The men arrested the two boys, handcuffed them, and took them to the police station, where they were locked in a cell to await transport to a prison for young delinquents.

Meanwhile, the boys' parents began to worry about them. It was time to go to church, and they were not home yet. Their mother grew alarmed and began searching for the boys. She asked people on the street if they had seen her sons. Finally someone who had witnessed the boys' arrest told her where they were. But when she arrived at the police station, her sons were not there. She was sent from one precinct to another until finally she arrived at the correctional prison for delinquents.

A guard led her down a long hallway. From the far end of the hall she heard young voices singing a familiar song:

"This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine . . ."

She rushed to the cell and found her sons still singing. She hugged them and listened as they told her about their exciting day that began with witnessing and ended in prison!

The boys' experience with prison did not dampen their enthusiasm for evangelism. As they walked out of the prison, they pulled their pamphlets and invitations from their pockets and began passing them out again!

Thony Escotto is a writer and translator for *Tu Historia Preferida*, the Spanish *Your Story Hour*, an independent, interfaith radio broadcast originating in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

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Principles of Prophetic Interpretation



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 2 Pet. 1:19-21; Rev. 1:1-3; Matt. 24; Joel 2:28-32; Isa. 61:1-3; Zech. 3, 4; Dan. 2:44; 4:17; 5:21.

MEMORY TEXT: “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts” (2 Peter 1:19).

KEY THOUGHT: Prophecy is God's answer to our human questions about the uncertain future. It demonstrates that the God who knows the end from the beginning is in control in our world and in our lives. But there are false prophecies and false interpretations of prophecy. This lesson gives some guidelines for understanding prophecy and applying it correctly.

UNDERSTANDING PROPHECY. “Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7, NKJV). But in giving the prophets insights that would be appropriate to later times and to the present, and that would reflect the different aspects of life today, it was necessary to use symbols and figures that are sometimes difficult to understand. Frequently, the Bible itself explains the meanings of the symbols used. There are keys of interpretation that apply to prophecies, such as a day representing a year (see Ezek. 4:6). The safest approach to prophetic interpretation is to find the key to understanding in the writings of some other inspired writer. “The Bible is its own expositor.”—*Education*, 190.

INTERPRETING PROPHECY (2 Pet. 1:19-21; Matt. 24:11, 24; Joel 2:28-32; Isa. 61:1-3).

A general principle of Bible interpretation is that a passage must be understood according to the plain, obvious, and literal meaning, unless a figure or symbol clearly is used. Some prophetic sections of the Bible employ symbolic and figurative descriptions that are an indication of future applications. In such cases, there is a danger of distorting the meaning of these passages.

What Bible rule makes it clear that prophecy should not be given private interpretations? 2 Pet. 1:19-21.

“How can we know when a particular historical incident may rightly be viewed as having a counterpart in a later event, or a prophetic statement as having a dual application? The answer is: When an *inspired writer* makes such an application of it. To go beyond that which is clearly set forth by Inspiration is to enter the realm of personal opinion. . . . The safe rule in Biblical interpretation is to compare scripture with scripture. In no other way can we be secure against the fanciful, even grotesque, explanations that some have given to OT prophecies.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol.1, pp. 1018, 1019.

How did Jesus warn about false prophets and distorted prophecies in the last days? Matt. 24:11, 24.

Prophecies that have dual applications, such as Matthew 24, are likely to be misunderstood and misapplied. One reason is that some readers of the Word of God fail to recognize the principle of dual application, thus focusing on one application and ignoring the other.

Illustrations of prophecies that have dual application:

Joel 2:28-32—Partially fulfilled in Acts 2:16-21, but points to events that are still to take place in the final “day of the Lord” (Joel 2:1, 30, 31). (See also *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 54, 55.)

Isaiah 61:1-3—Applied by Jesus to His ministry in Luke 4:16-21. Significantly, He left out the words “the day of vengeance of our God” (Isa. 61:2, KJV), for those words pointed forward to a fulfillment just before His second advent.

For reflection: What rule of interpretation and method of studying the Bible will safeguard us from believing erroneous explanations about Bible prophecy?

INTERPRETING DANIEL (Dan. 1–12).

The book of Daniel is apocalyptic prophecy. The word *apocalyptic* is derived from the Greek word *apokalupsis*, which means a “revelation.” Apocalyptic prophecy provides special revelations from God based on inspired visions and dreams given to the prophet that employ much symbolism. Symbols that represent reality depict events to occur or messages to be given. The focus of apocalyptic prophecy is on the end of time. An outline of history from the prophet’s day until the end often is provided, along with spiritual encouragement for God’s people in every era. But the main purpose is to concentrate our attention on events at the end of human history, when earthly nations will be destroyed and the kingdom of Christ established for eternity.

What major truth is presented in Daniel? Dan. 2:44; 4:17; 5:21.

The true philosophy of history is that God is in control. “To understand these things—to understand that ‘righteousness exalteth a nation;’ that ‘the throne is established by righteousness’ and ‘upholden by mercy’ (Proverbs 14:34; 16:12; 20:28); to recognize the outworking of these principles in the manifestation of His power who ‘removeth kings, and setteth up kings’ (Daniel 2: 21)—this is to understand the philosophy of history. In the word of God only is this clearly set forth. Here it is shown that the strength of nations, as of individuals, is not found in the opportunities or facilities that appear to make them invincible; it is not found in their boasted greatness. It is measured by the fidelity with which they fulfill God’s purpose.”—*Education*, p. 175.

What two major divisions are evident in the book of Daniel? What are some differences and similarities that characterize each division?

a. Daniel 1–6 _____

b. Daniel 7–12 _____

The last section of Daniel focuses on outlining prophecies that center in the final victory of Christ and His people over Satan in the great controversy that has been raging since the inception of sin.

For reflection: How can you let God have more control in your life?

INTERPRETING REVELATION: PART ONE (Rev. 1–22, An Overview).

Revelation, like Daniel, is apocalyptic prophecy. Much of the book of Revelation directs our attention beyond history to the end of time. All Scripture comes to a focus in Revelation. The major prophetic, doctrinal, and spiritual teachings of the Bible are brought together in this book.

The theme of the book of Revelation centers in Christ. Kenneth Strand expresses it as follows: “The theme of the book appears to be twofold: the promise of Christ’s coming in victory at the eschatological climax, and an assurance of God’s presence even now.”—*Interpreting the Book of Revelation* (Naples, Fla.: Ann Arbor Publishers, 1979), p. 43.

Ellen White, whose writings dwell on Revelation, urged Christians to give their best attention to this book. “The solemn messages that have been given in their order in the Revelation are to occupy the first place in the minds of God’s people. Nothing else is to be allowed to engross our attention.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 302. “When we as a people understand what this book means to us, there will be seen among us a great revival. We do not understand fully the lessons that it teaches.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 113.

The structure of Revelation. The first half of the book parallels the second half, in inverse order, as diagramed below:

- A. Prologue—1:1-11
- B. Church militant—1:12-3:22
- C. 24 elders/4 living creatures praise God;
Preparation for judgment—4:1-8:1

HISTORY OF CHURCH D. Judgments; beasts attack—8:2-13:18

- E. 144,000 sing a new song—14:1-5
- F. 3 angels’ messages of
warning—14:6-13

CENTRAL THEME OF REVELATION: CHRIST COMES TO EARTH
—14:14

- F’. 3 angels’ harvest message—
14:14-20

E’. 144,000 sing song of Moses and
Lamb—15:1-4

LAST DAY

D’. 7 plagues, beasts judged—15:5-18:24

C’. 24 elders/living creatures praise God;
Final judgment—19:1-20:15

B’. Church triumphant—21:1-22:5

A’. Epilogue—22:6-21.

INTERPRETING REVELATION: PART TWO (Rev. 1:3; 22:7, 12, 20).

Several passages in the book itself give us special clues to understanding the book. That it is named “Revelation” indicates that God wants us to study and understand it. In fact, Revelation 1:3 informs us that God has placed special blessings on those who study this prophetic book.

There are seven “beatitudes” in Revelation. Putting them together gives us an overview of the book. Become familiar with these by completing the following exercise. God especially blesses those who:

Rev. 1:3 _____

Rev. 14:13 _____

Rev. 16:15 _____

Rev. 19:9 _____

Rev. 20:6 _____

Rev. 22:7 _____

Rev. 22:14 _____

The number seven appears frequently in Revelation. There are seven spirits, stars, candlesticks, churches, horns, eyes, angels, seals, trumpets, thunders, heads, crowns, plagues, golden vials, mountains, and kings. Seven represents completeness. The seven blessings comprise the fullness of the grace God provides His people.

The series of seven churches in chapters two and three started with seven literal churches in Asia Minor. These seven messages, then, extended beyond these local churches to represent the period of church history from the time of the apostles to the time when Jesus comes. The seven seals are symbolic of God’s sealing work through the history of the church and the final sealing of God’s people that takes place before Jesus comes. The seven trumpets represent the judgments of God on the powers of earth and end with three woes—the last of which culminates in the final judgment (see Rev. 11:14-19).

Revelation 12 presents an overview of the great controversy that began with the angels in heaven and describes Satan’s final attack upon God’s remnant people. Chapters 13–19 largely focus on prophecies yet to be fulfilled in the last moments of time. Revelation 20 leads us into the millennium, and chapters 21 and 22 climax with God’s people in the new earth.

For reflection: The last words of Jesus recorded in the Bible are found in Revelation 22. What emphasis is repeated in verses 7, 12, and 20? Why is this message meaningful to you?

OTHER APOCALYPTIC PROPHECIES (Zech. 1–3; 14).

Although the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation form the major apocalyptic passages in the Bible, they are not the only ones. Many apocalyptic passages can be found in Isaiah, Ezekiel, Joel, Zechariah, Malachi, Matthew, 2 Thessalonians, and other books. Probably the apocalyptic prophecies most neglected among Adventists are those found in Zechariah. Much of what is recorded in the book pertains to the last days as implied by such statements as the following: “Zechariah’s vision of Joshua and the Angel applies with peculiar force to the experience of God’s people in the closing scenes of the great day of atonement. The remnant church will then be brought into great trial and distress. Those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, will feel the ire of the dragon and his hosts.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 587. Zechariah contains a wealth of instruction and encouragement for the church in the last days.

Study the following visions in Zechariah to find possible applications to our time:

1:8-17—compare with Revelation 6

2:1-13—compare with Revelation 11:1; 21:3

3:1-10—compare with Revelation 14:1-6

4:1-14—compare with Revelation 11:4-12

14:3, 4—compare with Revelation 20:8, 9; 21:2, 3

14:12—compare with Malachi 4:1; 2 Peter 3:10

Conditional prophecies. Many of the prophecies found in Zechariah, as well as in other Old Testament books, were conditional upon Israel’s fulfillment of the requirements necessary to Christ’s setting up His Messianic kingdom in Jerusalem at the time of His first advent. “If the [Jewish] nation had been faithful to its trust . . . the whole earth would have awaited the coming of the Messiah with eager expectancy. He would have come, He would have died, and would have risen again. Jerusalem would have become a great missionary center (see *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 232), and the earth would have been set ablaze with the light of truth.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, pp. 29, 30. Because the people never did accept Him in the way that was necessary, “the predictions of national honor and glory . . . could not be fulfilled. Yet, since God’s purposes are immutable . . . success must and will come—through Israel after the spirit.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 34.

FURTHER STUDY: “Let Daniel speak, let the Revelation speak, and tell what is truth. But whatever phase of the subject is presented, uplift Jesus as the center of all hope.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 118. Our study of last-day events is to be Christ-centered, not event-centered. How would you go about finding Christ at the center of Daniel 2 and Revelation 13?

“God’s Spirit has illuminated every page of Holy Writ, but there are those upon whom it makes little impression, because it is imperfectly understood. When the shaking comes, by the introduction of false theories, these surface readers, anchored nowhere, are like shifting sand. They slide into any position to suit the tenor of their feelings of bitterness. . . . There is need of a much closer study of the word of God; especially should Daniel and the Revelation have attention as never before in the history of our work. . . . When the books of Daniel and Revelation are better understood, believers will have an entirely different religious experience. They will be given such glimpses of the open gates of heaven that heart and mind will be impressed with the character that all must develop in order to realize the blessedness which is to be the reward of the pure in heart. . . . The perils of the last days are upon us, and in our work we are to warn the people of the danger they are in. Let not the solemn scenes which prophecy has revealed be left untouched.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 112-118.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Study Hosea 11:1 and Matthew 2:14, 15. Then discuss the dual applications concerning God calling Israel, His son, out of Egypt, and calling Jesus, His Son, out of Egypt as well.
2. What two or three misapplications of prophecy in the Christian world can you call to mind? What is the best way to reach out to those who firmly believe these misapplications?

WORD FOR REVIEW: *Eschatology*. This word pertains to the study of last things or last-day events as outlined in Bible prophecy.

SUMMARY: Prophecy is God’s reassuring answer to us about our troubled times and uncertain future. God is and will be in control of our lives and the affairs of this world. Through the guidance of His Spirit, He gives us helpful guidelines for understanding and applying prophecy correctly so that we may not be deceived.



The Sabbath-keeping Donkey, Part 1

Rae Patterson

"You are not going to church today!" Ivan ordered. "You are going to work with me in the garden!" He was determined to put a stop to this Sabbath-keeping nonsense.

Lidia winced as she heard her husband's words. She had been attending evangelistic meetings in the city of Dobritch, Bulgaria, and was convinced that God wanted her to keep the Sabbath day holy. For several weeks she had managed to slip away to church without her husband noticing. But earlier that week Ivan had told her that on Saturday they would go to his parents' house outside of town to work in the garden.

All week Lidia had tried to reason with Ivan. She told him about the blessing of keeping God's day holy, but he would not listen. She prayed that something would happen so she would not have to work on Saturday. But Saturday arrived, and Ivan urged her to get ready to go.

"All right," Lidia answered calmly, "I will go to your parents' house today, but I will not work in the garden."

"If you do not work, then you will not eat," Ivan growled. He was sure that his parents could convince Lidia that her new beliefs were foolish.

The couple rode the bus to the edge of town where they kept their donkey and cart. They hitched up the donkey and set out for Ivan's parents' home. It was almost noon when they arrived. As Lidia helped her mother-in-law prepare lunch, Ivan told his parents of Lidia's foolish new idea that God wanted people to waste a good work day by resting on Saturday. When Ivan and his parents sat down to eat, Lidia excused herself, knowing that if she ate she would be expected to work.

Suddenly they heard a loud commotion outside. "Come quickly!" a neighbor shouted. "Something has happened to your donkey!" Ivan ran to the front door and looked out. He saw several of his neighbors standing over his donkey, which was lying in the middle of the road.

(continued next week)



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Understanding Biblical Literature



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Exod. 25; Ps. 19; 80:7-11; Matt. 13:34, 44-46; Isa. 40:26; 2 Cor. 5:7, 9; 10:1-13; Heb. 9:1-9; Rev. 6:1-8.

MEMORY TEXT: "They that seek the Lord understand all things" (Proverbs 28:5).

KEY THOUGHT: Because literary style strongly affects interpretation, it is extremely helpful if the Bible student is aware of the principles that apply to the interpretation of some of the literary devices such as poetry, symbols, types, allegories (symbolic stories), and parables.

BE AWARE OF WHAT SYMBOLS MEANT TO THOSE USING THEM. Biblical writers use symbols and expressions known to their audiences, but in order to understand them, we need to become acquainted with the meaning they attach to the language they use. Here several principles of interpretation could be useful. First, the language should be interpreted literally unless there is clear contextual evidence that symbols are being used. The parable of the good Samaritan mentions a donkey (Luke 10:34, NIV). In some parts of the Bible, kings rode on donkeys. Does it mean that this man was a king? Of course not! This was his means of transportation, and it does not have any specific symbolic meaning in the story. Second, the meaning of a symbol must be determined by the Bible itself. Third, one is to determine the central truth each parable or type intends to teach and avoid giving a particular meaning to every detail of the story or narrative.

HEBREW POETRY (Ps. 19; 34:4; 37:21; 38:1; Isa. 40:26).

In the Scriptures “there is poetry which has called forth the wonder and admiration of the world. In glowing beauty, in sublime and solemn majesty, in touching pathos, it is unequaled by the most brilliant productions of human genius.”—*Counsels to Teachers*, p. 429.

For examples of beauty, nobility, and majesty in Hebrew poetry, read Isaiah 40:26 and Psalm 19. What are some expressions that catch your attention in these poems?

Hebrew poetry does not depend on regular accent and rhyme but on the repetition of thoughts expressed in the verse. This is called *parallelism*. There are three primary forms of parallelism found in the Bible:

1. Synonymous parallelism: The fundamental thought is repeated in the second line of a couplet.

Line one—“*O Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger,*”

Line two—“*or discipline me in your wrath*” (Ps. 38:1, NIV).

Notice that *rebuke* is defined in the parallel line as a disciplinary action. Both lines express the same thought in slightly different language. Comparing the two lines makes the interpretation of the verse easier.

2. Antithetical or contrasted parallelism: The thought of the first line is explained by its contrast or reversal in the second line.

Line one—“*The wicked borrow and do not repay,*”

Line two—“*but the righteous give generously*” (Ps. 37:21). The contrast is between the wicked and the righteous and their different inner dispositions toward others. Notice also that while the wicked have to borrow, the righteous have enough to share generously with others.

3. Synthetic or constructive parallelism: The thought of the first line is completed, enlarged, or intensified in the second line.

Line one—“*I sought the Lord, and he answered me;*”

Line two—“*He delivered me from all my fears*” (Ps. 34:4).

The first line describes the psalmist seeking the Lord and the Lord listening to him but does not tell us what his concern is. This is done in the second line: The psalmist is possessed by fear produced possibly by the problems confronting him.

The Psalms show that the Lord cares for and protects us regardless of the hardships that come our way. How do such hardships lead us to a closer relationship with Him? Think of a character in the Bible who experienced hardship and share with your class how the trials that he or she faced actually brought this person closer to Christ.

BIBLE TYPOLOGY (Dan. 8:13, 14; Mal. 4:5; Matt. 11:12-14; 12:39, 40; 1 Cor. 5:7, 9; 10:1-13; Rev. 14:7).

Bible types are rooted in history yet applicable to the future. They are realities that later Bible writers indicate apply to antitypes. For example, see the following list of types and study the texts next to them to discover how types meet antitypes.

<u>Type</u>	<u>Antitypes</u>
Exodus	1 Cor. 10:1-3
Elijah	Mal. 4:5; Matt. 11:12-14
Passover	1 Cor. 5:7, 9
Jonah's release	Matt. 12:39, 40
Day of Atonement	Dan. 8:13, 14; Rev. 14:7

Interpreting Types. Not every type meets its full counterpart in the New Testament. Some have later eschatological significance. Because types do not apply in every detail to antitypes, it is important to take into account the differences between the two. The only safe interpretation is to follow the lead of inspired writers. Antitypes usually are broader in meaning and have a more vital and ultimate reality than do types.

"Types frequently have spiritual meaning both for the times when they were given and the future. Especially are the OT types important to the interpretation of the NT, so that there is great loss in attempts to separate the study of the NT from a careful exegetical and theological exposition of the OT. Care must be exercised to differentiate between type and prediction. Although a type has reference to the future, it is not itself a prediction. Rather, it is recorded as historical fact without evident reference to the future. The antitype proves to be the 'body' of which the type was a foreshadowing."—W. G. C. Murdoch, "Interpretation of Symbols, Types, Allegories, and Parables," in *A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics*, ed. G. M. Hyde (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1974), p. 214.

Of what was literal Israel a type? Rom. 2:28, 29.

"Israel was God's chosen people in the OT era. They were called to do a special work, but failed their commission. In the NT God called another people, who were free from ethnic restrictions. Their faith and commitment centered in Christ. The OT promises are now fulfilled to them who are Jews inwardly."—Murdoch, *Symposium*, p. 215.

BIBLE SYMBOLS (Exod. 25; Heb. 9:1-9; Rev. 5:5; 6:1-8).

A religious symbol is a representation of an idea or an object that helps an observer grasp a difficult truth. Often it teaches a particular lesson as did the flaming sword at the Garden of Eden. There are prophetic symbols such as those used in Daniel and Revelation and New Testament symbols that supersede Old Testament ones such as those used in the Communion service. Probably some of the most fascinating prophetic symbols to Seventh-day Adventists are those used in the earthly sanctuary service that symbolized events and services that would take place in the heavenly sanctuary.

What do the following furnishings of the sanctuary symbolize?

Altar of Burnt Offering—Rom. 12:1 _____

Laver—Titus 3:5, 6 _____

Candlesticks—John 8:12 _____

Table of Shewbread—John 6:48 _____

Altar of Incense—Rev. 8:3, 4 _____

Ark of the Covenant—Heb. 4:16 _____

“The matchless splendor of the earthly tabernacle reflected to human vision the glories of that heavenly temple where Christ our forerunner ministers for us before the throne of God. The abiding place of the King of kings, . . . filled with the glory of the eternal throne, where seraphim, its shining guardians, veil their faces in adoration, could find, in the most magnificent structure ever reared by human hands, but a faint reflection of its vastness and glory. Yet important truths concerning the heavenly sanctuary and the great work there carried forward for man’s redemption were taught by the earthly sanctuary and its services.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 414.

Interpreting symbols. No symbol should ever be treated in such a way that it is made to contradict the plain teachings of the Bible. In the interpretation of symbols, some details may be incidental and of no particular significance. In defining the meaning of a symbol, study all other Bible passages that use the same symbol. There is a possibility that a symbol could have more than one meaning. For example, both Christ and Satan are referred to as “lions” (Rev. 5:5; 1 Pet. 5:8). In those cases, the context determines the specific use of the symbol. When the context or other inspired writers do not explain a symbol clearly, it is best to keep silent rather than speculate as to its meaning.

A PARABLE (Matt. 13:34, 44-46).

A parable is an illustration that indicates that something is like something else. Often a common narrative or ordinary circumstance is used to illustrate a truth. One of Jesus' favorite teaching devices was the use of parables. (See Matt. 13:34.)

What major truth did Jesus illustrate in the parable of the hidden treasure? Matt. 13:44.

This parable is based on a rather common occurrence in the Palestine of Christ's day. It was a time when bank vaults did not exist. Thefts, robberies, and invasions were frequent. Those who had valuables worth trying to preserve often followed the custom of burying them in their fields. If, however, the individual or individuals who knew where the family treasure was hidden were slain or exiled, the place where the treasure had been concealed might be forgotten.

In this parable a man was working his neighbor's field on shares. One day he was plowing the field when, suddenly, the plow struck something metallic. He stopped the oxen and found a small treasure chest. As he broke it open, he recognized that it contained a fortune far exceeding anything he ever hoped to own. But according to the laws of that country, it wasn't his unless he owned the field. Covering it up, he ran over to the owner's house and urged him to sell the field.

"I'm sorry, friend. It's not for sale. This property has been in my family for generations, and I don't want to sell it." But the anxious purchaser wouldn't take No for an answer. Finally the owner, in order to get rid of him, placed a ridiculously high price on the field. "All right, I'll buy it!" the discoverer of the treasure answered, rushing off to sell everything he owned so he could complete the transaction.

Jesus did not tell the story to teach us how to take advantage of our neighbors. The point is that when we find hidden treasure worth far more than anything we ever expected to be ours, we joyfully give all we have for it.

"This parable illustrates the value of the heavenly treasure, and the effort that should be made to secure it. The finder of the treasure in the field was ready to part with all that he had, ready to put forth untiring labor, in order to secure the hidden riches. So the finder of heavenly treasure will count no labor too great and no sacrifice too dear, in order to gain the treasures of truth.

"In the parable the field containing the treasure represents the Holy Scriptures. And the gospel is the treasure."—Christ's Object Lessons, p. 104.

What is your "hidden treasure"?

UNDERSTANDING ALLEGORIES (Ps. 80:7-11; Gal. 4:21-31).

An allegory is a story or narrative in which several elements are compared to and are practically equated with each other. It is usually formed by a list of points that are easily identifiable. For example, in the story of the Good Shepherd, the shepherd is Christ, the sheep are people for whom He dies, and the flock represents those who follow Jesus (John 10:1-16; see A. B. Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1963], pp. 230, 231). We have to allow the text itself to identify the key points of the allegory that are relevant for the message that is being communicated. Look at the following allegories:

In Psalm 80:7-11, Israel is likened to a vine transplanted from Egypt that prospered in the Promised Land. List the different points of comparison.

Galatians 4:21-31 illustrates the difference between the old and new covenants. Identify the points used in the comparison.

Hagar represents the old covenant and Jerusalem; Sarah represents the new covenant and the heavenly Jerusalem; Isaac is the son of the promise, and Ishmael is the son of the flesh. The tension between the two sons is the tension between justification by faith and legalism.

Paul is illustrating "the freedom Christians have in Christ's grace in contrast to the bondage of trying to earn salvation by works. Isaac was the child of faith, Ishmael the son of works. . . ."

"In attempting to interpret an allegory we should [1] always bear in mind the original hearers, [2] the author's reason for using the device, and [3] the basic points of comparison stressed by him. Recognition of the messages for the original and present readers is vital for the interpreter."—Murdoch, *Symposium*, p. 218.

Understanding the Song of Solomon. This book has been considered by many commentators to be an allegory in which the basic points of comparison would be the king/Christ and the bride/the Church. The allegorical method of interpreting this book has resulted in speculations of different types with little, if any, foundation based on the biblical text; and here one must be very careful. We have here a beautiful collection of love poems that illustrate in a very appropriate way God's intention and will for husbands and wives. Of course, there are many other spiritual lessons that we can learn by reading the book. Ellen White applies Song of Solomon 6:10 to the church and 4:15 to the Word of God (see *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 724, 725).

FURTHER STUDY: Apply what you have learned in this lesson to deciding the proper category for the following examples:

<u>Category</u>	<u>Example</u>
A. Symbol	___ Baptism
B. Type	___ The vineyard in Isaiah 5
C. Allegory	___ The Day of Atonement
D. Parable	___ Rending of temple veil at the time of Jesus' death
	___ Marriage feast in Matthew 22:1-14
	___ The marriage of a king in Psalm 45
	___ The sacrificial lamb

(There can be honest differences of opinion as to that which is the most appropriate category for these examples. Be prepared to give your reasons for putting them in the category you chose.)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Think of biblical symbols in which color is significant. (See Rev. 6:1-8.) What significance do they have?
2. Suppose you were teaching the parable of the lost sheep in a country that has no sheep. What animal could you substitute without violating the intent of the original?
3. After studying some of the poetic parallelisms found in the psalms, try developing some of your own.
4. Identify the types of parallelism used in the following verses: Prov. 15:17; Ps. 19:12; Josh. 10:12; Job 36:31; Prov. 28:13.

WORD FOR REVIEW: *Parallelism*. This is the most common type of Hebrew poetry. As we learned this week, it arranges ideas in pairs in order to explain or contrast them. (For biblical examples, see Sunday's lesson.)

SUMMARY: Because most of the literary devices studied can be easily misunderstood or misapplied, we must be careful to understand them in the terms of what they meant to those who used them or to applications made by later inspired writers. The Bible is to be understood as it plainly reads, unless the context clearly indicates that literary devices such as symbols and parables are involved. Although interpreting figurative language involves careful and prayerful study, we should not pass up the opportunity to gain the rich rewards that come from becoming acquainted with Bible poetry and symbolism.



The Sabbath-keeping Donkey, Part 2

Rae Patterson

When Ivan told his wife, Lidia, that they were going to his parents' home on Saturday to work in the garden, he hoped to put a stop to her foolish new notion that God expected people to rest on the Sabbath day. All week Lidia prayed that God would intervene so she would not have to work on Sabbath. But by Sabbath morning nothing had happened to prevent their trip, and the couple hitched their donkey to the cart and set out for the country.

While the family ate lunch, they heard a commotion outside. Ivan ran to the front door to see what had happened. There he saw his donkey lying in the middle of the road. Several neighbors stood looking at the animal. "Something happened to your donkey," one man told Ivan. "He just fell to the ground."

"How can that be?" Ivan said, examining the donkey. "He was fine a little while ago." Ivan ordered the animal to stand, but the donkey did not respond. Ivan jerked on the halter and shouted at the donkey to get up, but the donkey did not move.

The neighbors pushed and tugged on the animal while Ivan pulled at the harness. But still the donkey did not respond.

"I can't imagine what is wrong," Ivan said, shaking his head. "We can't work in the garden without the donkey." Angry and frustrated, Ivan finally returned to the house to finish his lunch and mull over the problem. Lidia thanked God for providing a way to keep the Sabbath but prayed for the donkey's safety as well.

Several times that afternoon Ivan tried to get the donkey to stand, but nothing worked. Late in the afternoon Ivan gave up and slumped on the front step. It would be dark soon; how would they get back to town without the donkey?

At sunset the donkey stirred, then slowly stood to his feet. Amazed, Ivan ran to see if the donkey was fine. Finding nothing wrong, he hitched the cart to the donkey and called to Lidia that it was time to go home.

Ivan had little to say as they rode home that evening. Finally Lidia broke the silence. "I think that God made our donkey sleep all day so that I could keep the Sabbath holy," she said.

Ivan would not admit it, but he wondered as he listened to the donkey's brisk clip-clop on the road if Lidia might be right. Later that week when Lidia told him that she wanted to be baptized into the Adventist Church, he did not even try to change her mind.

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The Great Controversy

Theme



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Gen. 3:15; Job 1, 2; Isa. 14:12-14; Rom. 5:6-11; Phil. 2:5-11; Rev. 12.

MEMORY TEXT: "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (Revelation 12:7-9).

KEY THOUGHT: A great cosmic controversy rages between Christ and Satan over the character of God, His law, and His sovereignty in the universe. This conflict originated in heaven with Lucifer, who became Satan, God's adversary. He introduced the spirit of rebellion there and, later, into this world when he led Adam and Eve to sin. This world became the theater of the universal conflict. This great controversy between Christ and Satan and the final vindication of God form the central theme of the Scriptures.

WHY DO BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE? Why do rosebuds exist with thorns? Why are innocent people killed in accidents and natural disasters? Why do people in some parts of the world have too much food while people in other parts are starving? Such questions have been asked in a variety of forms ever since sin began. Philosophers' answers have proved inadequate to provide meaningful explanations. The question of why our world is afflicted with evil can be adequately answered only by our acceptance of the worldview outlined in the Bible. Here the term *worldview* refers to the integrated view of reality based on the Scriptures.

THE GREAT CONTROVERSY WORLDVIEW (Job 1, 2).

The grand central theme. Ellen White clearly sets forth the grand central theme of the Bible and an analysis of how to focus on it: “[1] The student should learn to view the word as a whole, and [2] to see the relation of its parts. [3] He should gain a knowledge of its grand central theme, of God’s original purpose for the world, of the rise of the great controversy, and of the work of redemption. [4] He should understand the nature of the two principles that are contending for supremacy, and should learn to trace their working through the records of history and prophecy, to the great consummation. [5] He should see how this controversy enters into every phase of human experience; how in every act of life he himself reveals the one or the other of the two antagonistic motives; and how, whether he will or not, he is even now deciding upon which side of the controversy he will be found.”—*Education*, p. 190 (bracketed numbers supplied).

Complete the chart below by applying the above five ways of finding the great controversy theme to John 14:1-3.

Word as a whole	
Relation of its parts	1. Don’t be troubled—trust Me 2. I won’t forget you—prepare a place for you 3. I will come again—take you
Grand central theme	
Two contending principles	Troubled (result of sin) Trust (result of grace)
How it enters into every phase of human experience	

The true integrated view of reality as found in the Bible (see Job 1, 2) is centered in the great controversy theme. God would not have created this world unless He already had worked out a solution to the sin problem. Sin was allowed to run its course so the entire universe might realize how devastating the cancer of sin is. At Calvary, God gave all in order to be able to eradicate sin and its results from this universe forever. When our world is restored to what God intended it to be, no one will ever question God’s goodness again.

WHERE SIN BEGAN (Ezek. 28:15; Isa. 14:12-14; Rev. 12).

Before this world was created, evil originated mysteriously in the heart of Lucifer, the most exalted of the angels in heaven. The fault was not God's, for Lucifer was created perfect. (See Ezek. 28:15.)

Why was Lucifer dissatisfied with his status? Isa. 14:12-14.

Lucifer permitted envious thoughts to control him. He should have recognized that as a created being he had no right to the respect and worship accorded Deity. But instead, he harbored jealous thoughts, even confiding them to his angel companions. He raised questions designed to sow seeds of dissatisfaction. "Don't you think that heaven is too tightly structured? Why do holy beings need laws? I don't think God loves us as He claims. He's unjust and unfair."

These kinds of suggestions continued until one-third of the angels were committed to Lucifer's rebellion. Misled by his sophistries, they felt that he could set up a government superior to God's. With infinite patience God attempted to explain His actions—to persuade Lucifer and his sympathizers to abandon their disastrous course. He attempted to make clear that heaven's laws, grounded in love, were essential to happiness. But the rebels refused to accept God's explanations or to respond to His entreaties. God did not at once destroy Lucifer and his followers but gave them an opportunity to show whether their charges against His character and law were justified. (See *The Great Controversy*, pp. 495-499.)

What event then took place in heaven, and what happened to Satan and the angels who followed him? What happened in connection with the Cross? Rev. 12:7-9.

"John now presents briefly the history of the great controversy between Satan and Christ in heaven, from its origin to the time of Christ's victory at the cross (Rev. 12:7-9; Col. 2:14, 15), the final casting out of Satan at that time to this earth (Rev. 12:10-12), and the course of the controversy on earth down to the time of the end (Rev. 12:13-16; see Dan. 11:35). . . .

"Though the revelator is focusing primarily on the turning point of the controversy reached at the time of the cross, it is proper to understand the words, 'there was war in heaven,' as referring also to the time prior to the creation of the earth, when the hostility of the dragon began, and Lucifer aspired to be like God."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 809.

THE COSMIC CONFLICT EXTENDED TO EARTH (Gen. 2:16, 17; 3:15).

Following Satan's rebellion in heaven (see *The Story of Redemption*, p. 19), God created Adam and Eve, placing them in the Garden of Eden.

What simple test of character did God set up through which Adam and Eve could demonstrate their loyalty to Him? Gen. 2:16, 17.

God warned our first parents that disobedience would bring death. Satan saw this as an opportunity to tempt the first humans to eat the forbidden fruit and join him in rebellion. Tragically and incredibly, Adam and Eve yielded to Satan's temptation. In mercy, God spared their lives so they might have opportunity to repent, but the results of breaking God's law could not be reversed. Thus Christ determined to come to this earth and die, taking the place of repentant sinners.

What happy ending did God promise to the continuing conflict between good and evil? Gen. 3:15.

As time passed, the effects of sin became more and more evident, not only in the human race but in all of nature. The principles promoted by Satan bore a harvest of evil fruit. When Satan inspired human beings to murder Jesus, the beings in other worlds saw clearly that God was right and Satan was wrong. The inhabitants of heaven and the unfallen worlds recognized as never before that God is love and that His law is just and necessary.

"Now the guilt of Satan stood forth without excuse. He had revealed his true character as a liar and a murderer . . .

"Satan's lying charges against the divine character and government appeared in their true light. . . .

"All heaven saw His [God's] justice revealed, both in the condemnation of Satan and in the redemption of man. . . ."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 502. (See also pp. 501-504.)

As the drama nears its close, the Holy Spirit and the angels of heaven are seeking to help us put love and loyalty to God and His truth above life itself. The Bible makes it clear that the ultimate outcome will be complete victory for God and the vindication of His character and law.

For reflection: Do I realize how intently Christ and Satan are contending for my eternal destiny? What must I do today, this week, to be on Christ's side of the conflict?

WHY DID JESUS COME? (Phil. 2:5-11; Rom. 5:6-21; John 12:31, 32).

What did Jesus give up, and what did He gain by coming to the world and dying for us? Phil. 2:5-11.

The basic question answered by the biblical worldview is “Why did Jesus come to this planet?” Seventh-day Adventists believe that the cross of Jesus has universal, as well as earthly, significance. Jesus came to live and die for our salvation. But He also came to answer Satan’s charges against the love and justice of God that were raised before the creation of this world. After the Creation, Satan claimed that it is impossible for created beings to keep God’s law. One of the main reasons why Jesus became a human being and lived in this world for more than thirty years was to prove Satan wrong and to demonstrate that human beings, by God’s grace, can keep His law.

How was Satan’s charge proved to be wrong? Rom. 5:17-21.

In order to demonstrate the possibility of living a life in harmony with the will of God, Jesus had to live as a human being on earth. Satan had no quarrel with the fact that God could keep His own law. Jesus lived as a man, having emptied Himself of the use of His own divine powers while here on earth. He was fully God but depended fully on His Father. Seventh-day Adventists believe that created beings from the unfallen populated planets, along with heaven’s unfallen angels, watched with intense interest as Jesus came to earth. They, too, had a stake in His life and death. In Jesus, God would demonstrate to them that He is just and that Satan’s charge of injustice is false.

“The sacrifice to which infinite love impelled the Father and the Son, that sinners might be redeemed, demonstrates to all the universe—that nothing less than this plan of atonement could have sufficed to do—that justice and mercy are the foundation of the law and government of God.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 503.

Why did Jesus die, and what does His risen life mean to us today? Rom. 5:6-11; John 12:31, 32.

The real issue in the great controversy is whether created beings can trust God to do what is best for them. Have you resolved this issue in your life? Explain your answer. If you have resolved it, how does that help you in your daily life?

THE COSMIC ISSUE (1 John 3:4; Matt. 5:17-19; 1 John 2:3-6).

How is the basic issue in the cosmic conflict explained in the Scriptures? 1 John 3:4.

It is rooted in rejection of God, His government, and His laws that are designed to protect and bless us. Rather than taking the blame for lawlessness, Satan tries to blame God for giving His law. He challenges the laws of God as not being in the best interests of created beings and as being impossible to keep. But God's eternal law represents His character. Those who oppose His law really oppose God. (See Matt. 5:17-19; 1 John 2:3-6.)

Insight into this issue is found throughout the Bible. The Gospels, for example, tell how Christ and Satan came face to face. Satan invited Christ, after His forty days' fast, to change stones into bread in order to satisfy His hunger. Christ replied: "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4, NIV). As He did with Eve in Eden, Satan was urging Christ to act on His own and not to depend on God's Word and will. Christ upheld God's Word in every act of His life.

Read Revelation 12 in more than one Bible version, then match the following:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> The woman | a. Persecution |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The dragon | b. Types and shadows of the Old Testament |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The man child | c. A sanctuary, protection |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The wilderness | d. Satan |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The sun | e. The apostles |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The moon | f. Christ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The twelve stars | g. Haven, Protestant lands |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The flood of waters | h. The Church |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The earth | i. The gospel |

Focus on verses 7-16 until you are sure you understand their meaning. Identify the "remnant" of verse 17, KJV.

Why is understanding the verses above significant to Seventh-day Adventists? Why is it meaningful to you personally, and how does it affect your daily life?

FURTHER STUDY: Study Romans 1:19-32; 2 Peter 3:8-14; 1 Corinthians 4:9. We are soldiers in the greatest war ever fought. We are actors in the greatest drama ever played. Our earth truly is the battle zone and theater of the universe. Satan's studied strategy in this great war is to make God look bad. He hopes that by heaping upon us pain, violence, disease, and death he can incite us into blaming God for our troubles—into giving God the credit for Satan's own diabolical doings. But for every lie Satan tells about God, Christ responds with an even clearer revelation of God's love. Lies and love are the contrasting weapons of the two adversaries in the war of the ages.

Read the chapter in *Patriarchs and Prophets* entitled "Why Was Sin Permitted?" pp. 33-43.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In this lawless age—a time when absolutes are being thrown to the winds—what will enable me to gain a proper perspective of the issues involved in the cosmic conflict?
2. What can I do to help others adopt a worldview that adequately handles the problem of where sin came from, why God allows it, and what He plans to do about it?
3. If I continue to live my life as I am now, where will that place me in the drama of the great controversy? Where do I want to be? Knowing that life is fragile, what do I need to change in order to reach my goal?
4. In what ways do I desire to be like God, and why?
5. What can I do this week to make practical what I have learned?

TERM FOR REVIEW: *Cosmic controversy.* This term designates the universal scope of the battle between Christ and Satan.

SUMMARY: Seventh-day Adventists have a cosmic worldview of the great controversy that brought Christ on His costly but successful mission to planet Earth. The sin problem involves Satan's rebellion, his charge that God made a law that created beings cannot keep, and Christ's coming to earth—in human form—to demonstrate that the law can be lived. The truth as it is in Jesus is broader than many Christians realize. We need to look beyond a humanity-centered, planet-centered worldview to a biblical and universal worldview.



My Hands Are My Gods, Part 1

Andrejs Arinsh and Baldis Zilgalvis

Sofia is a new believer who lives in Latvia. She invited her prayer and Bible-study group to meet in her home. Her husband, who was not a Christian, came home and found the believers praying. He did not want Christians in his home and threatened to call the police.

“What kind of Christians are you?” he shouted angrily. “You destroy families! My wife used to come with me to the theater, but now she won’t come; she goes only to church!”

The pastor invited the man to join the group and learn more about God, but the man grew more heated. “I don’t need your God. Look at my hands!” he demanded, holding out his muscular arms. “These are my gods. They provide everything I need!”

After the man stormed out of the room, the believers knelt and prayed that the Holy Spirit would touch his heart and turn him toward God. As the pastor prepared to leave, he reached for his coat and felt something wet. He found the remnants of broken raw eggs seeping from his coat pocket. He said nothing but walked to his car. As he neared the car, he found that all four of his tires had been slashed. He was certain that the person who had put eggs in his pockets had slashed his tires.

With the help of some of the believers, the pastor repaired the tires. As he drove off, he saw the angry husband watching him. He smiled and waved a friendly farewell toward him. *Something good must have happened in that house*, the pastor thought. *Satan surely is angry!*

The believers said nothing about the confrontation at the man’s home but continued to pray for the angry husband. Several believers invited the angry husband to the church for an orchestra concert and were delighted when he came. But still his dislike for Christians did not mellow.

Then one day Sofia approached the pastor. “My husband is in the hospital,” she said. “His hands are paralyzed! At first he felt pain when he tried to move his fingers, but now he cannot move them at all. The doctors say he has nerve damage, and they want to keep him in the hospital for treatment.” The pastor could not help but wonder if God had stricken the man’s hands because of his angry words.

(continued next week)

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The Adventist Church and Revelation



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Rev. 10; 12:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Pet. 1:2-4; Acts 20:27, 28; Jer. 31:10; Mark 16:15.

MEMORY TEXT: "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 12:17).

KEY THOUGHT: Although none of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church held advanced theological degrees, they were keen students of the Bible. The doctrines formulated by the time the church was organized in 1860 still are the basic fundamental doctrines of the church. They have stood the test of time and the ever-advancing understanding of how to interpret the Bible.

LAYING UP FOR THE TIME OF TROUBLE. Seventh-day Adventists have been told: "The Lord has shown me in vision, repeatedly, that it is contrary to the Bible to make any provision for our temporal wants in the time of trouble."—*Maranatha*, p. 181. However, there *are* some things of eternal value and consequence that must be laid up for the time of trouble: "Now is the time to lay up treasure in heaven, and to set our hearts in order, ready for the time of trouble. . . . I saw that the time for Jesus to be in the most holy place was nearly finished, and that time can last but a very little longer; and . . . time . . . should be spent in searching the Bible."—*A Sketch of the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White*, p. 46.

A LOOK AT HISTORIC ADVENTIST INTERPRETATION (Rev. 10; John 12:44-50).

The impetus for the formation of what was to become the Seventh-day Adventist Church was a keen interest in Bible prophecies concerning the second advent of Christ. William Miller followed the traditional historicist school of prophetic interpretation. His studies led him to conclude that Christ would come when the heavenly sanctuary was to be “cleansed” in about 1843 (later revised to 1844). Although his understanding of the time was correct, he misinterpreted what was to happen in 1844. This error led to the bitter disappointment predicted in Revelation 10.

What was the little group that had been disappointed in 1844 to do in furthering prophetic interpretation and the teaching of the Second Coming? Rev. 10:11.

Just a little over the period of the following ten years (1844 to about 1855), the founders of what was to become the Seventh-day Adventist Church conducted Bible-study groups and Bible conferences that led them to a uniformity of belief based on the primacy of the Bible. Writing in *The Signs of the Times* (Jan. 13, 1887), E. J. Waggoner outlined the principles of interpretation followed by Adventists: “We noted first, that the Bible is absolute truth and that anything that disagrees with it in the slightest particular must be false. Second, that the Bible, though composed of many books, is one Book with one Author; that there is perfect harmony in all its parts. Third, that the Bible contains all truth, because that by it a man may be ‘thoroughly furnished unto all good works;’ and that therefore it must be its own interpreter. Fourth, that one part of the Bible cannot be fully understood if taken out of its connection, or without reference to the Bible as a whole.”

“The great motive powers of the soul are faith, hope, and love; and it is to these that Bible study, rightly pursued, appeals. The outward beauty of imagery and expression, is but the setting, as it were, for its real treasure—the beauty of holiness.”—*Education*, p. 192.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church still upholds the position that the Bible is the authoritative revelation of God’s will, the true revealer of doctrines, the trustworthy record of God’s acts in history, and the foreteller of last-day events centering in Christ’s triumph soon to come.

On what basis will those who reject the clear revelations of God through His Word be judged? What reason does Jesus give as to why this will be so? John 12:44-50.

THE SCRIPTURES OUR SAFEGUARD (Eph. 5:6; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Pet. 1:2-4).

Seventh-day Adventists need to study more carefully the Inspired Word in order to be able to distinguish between the false and the true during this time when Satan surrounds us with insidious and deceptive teachings. For decades the world has been wrapped in materialism that seeks to exclude religion from everyday life. Tremendous scientific advances have caused a large number of people to think that they do not need God or heaven. Then technology seems to have turned on us. Such things as nuclear weapons, environmental pollution, and numerous cancer-producing agents have left us with uncertainty and fear. Because the old values largely have been thrown away, people are left with no place to turn, and evil influences have filled the vacuum. This is evident in the current popularity of the occult, the New Age movement, astrology, and the rise of cults. We now are surrounded by a growing bombardment of daily satanic lies.

It is truer than it ever has been that we need to search the Scriptures daily that we may know the way of the Lord, and “that we be not deceived by religious fallacies. The world is full of false theories and seductive spiritualistic ideas, which tend to destroy clear spiritual perception, and to lead away from truth and holiness. Especially at this time we need to heed the warning, ‘Let no man deceive you with vain words’ (Eph. 5:6).

“We must be careful lest we misinterpret the Scriptures. The plain teachings of the Word of God are not to be so spiritualized that the reality is lost sight of. . . . Take the Scriptures as they read. Avoid idle speculation. . . .”—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 170.

What does 1 Thessalonians 2:13 indicate about the value of receiving the Word of God?

Many neglect to follow the example of the Thessalonians and to let the Word of God work “effectually” in them.

List the precious promises given in the Scriptures to those who take advantage of becoming better acquainted with God through Bible study. 2 Pet. 1:2-4.

For reflection: If we apply ourselves to careful study, we can expect the fulfillment of the promise that “He who opens the Scriptures, and feeds upon the heavenly manna, becomes a partaker of the divine nature.”—Ellen White, *Review and Herald*, June 28, 1892.

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS AND THE SCRIPTURES (2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Acts 20:27, 28).

Second Timothy 3:16, 17 tells us why God's Word is essential to individual members. Scripture is given for (1) doctrine, (2) reproof, (3) correction, and (4) instruction in righteousness. The ultimate objective is "that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (RSV). When we realize that God's will, as expressed in His laws, is designed to enable us to get the most out of life, our attitude toward the Bible should change drastically—we'll long to search out His will and *delight* in it.

What parting counsel did Paul share with the elders from Ephesus that applies to the needs of the Church today? Acts 20:27, 28.

In addition to its role in enabling us to distinguish between truth and error, the Bible must be the source of our faith and practice. It must provide our ethical and moral values, as well as our understanding of ourselves and the world around us. It also must serve as the determinant of the mission and goal of the Church and its institutions. It is the Bible and the Bible alone that justifies our existence as the remnant church and teaches us how to live as sons and daughters of God in the midst of a fallen and corrupt world.

Use of the Bible by church leaders. Seventh-day Adventist leaders have been known as students of the Word. This was true of the pioneers and still characterizes many leaders today who take time in the midst of their heavy schedules to steep themselves in understanding Bible principles. Adventist church leaders have a tremendous responsibility not only to be deep students of the Word but to foster a "back to the Bible" movement that will help prepare members for the great tests ahead. Addressing church leaders, Ellen White says: "Those who are ready to do service are those who feed most on Christ. Read and study His word, drink in the inspiration of His Spirit, and receive of His grace, not to hoard, but to give to others. In order to instruct others, the teachers must first be learners of Christ. There are Marthas in every church. They are intensely busy in religious activities, and they do much good; but we need also Mary's side of character. The most zealous workers need to learn at the feet of Jesus."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 346.

Do you find yourself to be a more diligent student of the Bible now than last year? In what ways can your daily life become more ordered around Bible principles?

**USE OF THE BIBLE IN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST WORK:
PART ONE (Deut. 6:7; Isa. 54:13; Eph. 6:4; Jer. 31:10; Mark 16:15).**

Analyze what Deuteronomy 6:7, Isaiah 54:13, and Ephesians 6:4 teach us about Adventist educational goals.

Seventh-day Adventist education is not perfect, but it does contribute significantly to students' developing a meaningful religious experience. However, we need to keep in mind that Christian education in the home and in the church plays an important role in complementing our schools. An encouraging study in one union conference in the early 1980s found that among Seventh-day Adventist families, students who attended Seventh-day Adventist schools had a greater probability of being baptized and a greater retention rate in remaining Seventh-day Adventists. (See *Parentline*, Publication for Parents by Southern College of Seventh-day Adventists, vol. 1, Nov. 1986, pp. 1, 2.)

The Seventh-day Adventist philosophy of education is based on such revelations by Ellen White as: "The students in our schools are to regard the knowledge of God as above everything else."—*Counsels to Parents and Teachers*, p. 447. What is the source of such knowledge? "The Bible is the great educator; for it is not possible prayerfully to study its sacred pages without having the intellect disciplined, ennobled, purified, and refined."—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 171.

Many encouraging things are happening in Seventh-day Adventist schools around the world. On more than one Seventh-day Adventist college campus there has been a spontaneous development of small Bible-study groups and evangelistic outreach. In one place, college students launched home visitation, contacting 4,000 homes in a nearby nonentered community with a health-and-Bible-interest survey. They received more than 700 responses. A church was started in that community and continues to grow. They also began a student-led church service that soon overflowed the capacity of the chapel in which they were meeting, necessitating the use of a larger facility.

Literature work. One major challenge facing Adventists in these last days is to make it possible for people everywhere to possess the Bible and the literature containing God's message for today in their own language (see Jer. 31:10; Mark 16:15). "In a large degree through our publishing houses is to be accomplished the work of that other angel who comes down from heaven with great power and who lightens the earth with his glory."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 140.

Outline a plan of how you can help to scatter literature containing God's message for today.

USE OF THE BIBLE IN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST WORK: PART TWO (Luke 4:18, 19; 2 Tim. 4:2).

What are the seven facets of Christ's ministry as recorded in Luke 19?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Use of the Bible in medical institutions and offices. "If we are to go to the expense of building sanitariums in order that we may work for the salvation of the sick and afflicted . . . [then] we are to do all in our power for the healing of the body; but we are to make the healing of the soul of far greater importance."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 96. "Every medical practitioner, whether he acknowledges it or not, is responsible for the souls as well as the bodies of his patients. . . . Every physician should be a devoted, intelligent gospel medical missionary, familiar with Heaven's remedy for the sin-sick soul as well as with the science of healing bodily disease."—*Medical Ministry*, p. 31.

The operation of medical work today is far more complex and involves many more problems in relating to government and community agencies than when this counsel was given. But Adventists need to take seriously the principles of medical work outlined in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy.

Use of the Bible in pastoral work and preaching. When pastors are strongly convinced regarding the authority and inspiration of the Bible, then they can preach it with conviction and enthusiastically lead their congregations to an understanding and acceptance of biblical authority.

What is the pastor's commission? 2 Tim. 4:2.

"Pastors are needed—faithful shepherds—who will not flatter God's people, nor treat them harshly, but who will feed them with the bread of life—men who in their lives feel daily the converting power of the Holy Spirit, and who cherish a strong, unselfish love for those for whom they labor." "The minister who makes the word of God his constant companion will continually bring forth truth of new beauty. . . . The Holy Spirit will fill his mind and heart with hope and courage and Bible imagery, and all this will be communicated to those under his instruction."—*Gospel Workers*, pp. 185, 253.

FURTHER STUDY: Continuing priority must be given to revival and a return to true godliness in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This is the “greatest and most urgent of all our needs.”—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 121. Another major need is the development of a strong appetite for Bible study: “If the people of God would appreciate His word, we should have a heaven in the church here below. Christians would be eager, hungry, to search the word. They would be anxious for time to compare scripture with scripture and to meditate upon the word. . . . Their greatest desire would be to eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God. And, as a result, their lives would be conformed to the principles and promises of the word. Its instruction would be to them as the leaves of the tree of life.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 193.

God’s heart broken by our neglect. When poet Elizabeth Barrett married poet Robert Browning, her parents disowned her. When the newly married couple settled far away in Florence, Italy, she loved her parents so much that she wrote to them several times a month. Ten years after she began that practice, Elizabeth finally received a package from home. Her joy turned to disappointment when she found the package contained her letters returned unopened. They have been called some of the most beautiful and expressive in all English literature. Her parents never read them. Actually, the most beautiful letters of reconciliation ever written are the epistles of love that make up the Bible. How disappointed God must be when His earthly children neglect to read them.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How would you react if you spoke with a Seventh-day Adventist who did not believe in or support the biblical and Seventh-day Adventist position on revelation and inspiration?
2. What can you do to foster weekly Bible-study groups in your local church?
3. As you view the past decade, do you think Seventh-day Adventists, on the average, study the Bible more, or do they study it less? Are they more or less acquainted with what it teaches? What is your reaction, and why?

Review and application: Review the **Key Thoughts** and **Summaries** for this quarter’s guide. As you review each lesson, ask yourself, Have I experienced the transforming power of the Word of God in my life? Have I done something to put what I learned in this lesson to work in my life and to share it with others? Develop a personal plan for doing something about areas that need improvements.



My Hands Are My Gods, Part 2

Andrejs Arinsh and Baldis Zilgalvis

When Sofia joined the Adventist Church in Riga, Latvia, her husband was angry that she no longer went to the theater with him but spent her time studying the Bible. When the pastor invited the man to join the Bible-study group, he answered, "My hands are my gods. They provide everything I need!"

The angry husband had slashed the pastor's tires and put raw eggs into his coat pocket, but the pastor and other believers treated him with kindness and invited him to their gatherings.

Then suddenly his hands became paralyzed; any attempt to move his fingers caused him great pain. He endured two months of treatments, but nothing seemed to help. Finally the doctor told him he would need surgery to cure the paralysis.

When the man asked the pastor to visit him, the pastor hurried to his hospital room. There he found the once-angry husband now humble. He listened as the man described his pain and paralysis.

Was the man asking for help from God? The pastor decided to test him. "We will pray for you," he said, watching the man's face for his reaction.

"I am ready for anything—anything," the man said in a subdued tone.

The pastor organized prayer groups to meet every night and pray for Sofia's husband. In his hospital room the man sat quietly listening as the same group of believers whom he had tried to kick out of his home prayed for him.

A week later the man told the pastor, "My hands are 30 percent better already!" When he was released from the hospital, the pastor invited him to a prayer meeting at church. He came. Then the pastor invited him to pray aloud. He stumbled through his first public prayer. He continued attending prayer meetings and began attending church as well. As the believers continued to pray, the man's hands continued to heal. His heart also showed signs of God's healing touch. Soon he took his stand for Christ and prepared for baptism. By the time he was baptized, his hands were completely healed.

Among the people who had been in this man's house the day he angrily announced that "My hands are my gods" were seven visitors who had not yet made a commitment to Christ. In part because of this man's experience, all seven also have joined the church.

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Bible Study Guide for Second Quarter, 1999

The second quarter adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide, entitled "*Nature of Man*," focuses on studying the origins of humankind, as well as its fall and restoration, as taught by the Bible.

Lesson 1: Created in the Image of God

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Gen. 1:26-31; 2:18-25.

MEMORY TEXT: Genesis 1:27.

KEY THOUGHT: What does it mean to be created in the image of God?

OUTLINE:

Created to Look Like God (Gen. 1:26; Ps. 139:14).

Created to Think Like God (Job 38:1-7; Rom. 12:1, 2; Phil. 2:5-8).

Created to Reflect God (Lev. 11:44, 45; 1 Cor. 2:12-14; 1 Pet. 1:13-16).

Created to Be Like God (Micah 6:8; Matt. 5:43-48; Acts 10:34, 35).

The Image Broken (Gen. 3:8-11; Jer. 17:9; Rom. 3:23).

Lesson 2: Our Physical Nature

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Ps. 8:1-9.

MEMORY TEXT: 1 Corinthians 6:19.

KEY THOUGHT: How is our physical well-being related to being created in God's image?

OUTLINE:

Molded From Clay (Gen. 2:7; 3:17-19; Eccles. 3:19, 20).

Affected by Sin (Gen. 3:16-19).

None of These Diseases (Exod. 15:26).

Health and Healing (Ps. 103:1-5).

Body Temples (2 Cor. 6:16-18).

Bible Study Guide in Braille

The regular adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guides are available free each month in Braille and 16 2/3 rpm records to blind and physically handicapped persons who cannot read normal ink print. This includes individuals who, because of arthritis, multiple sclerosis, paralysis, accident, old age, and so forth cannot hold or focus on normal ink-print publications. Contact the Christian Record Services, Box 6097, Lincoln, NE 68506.

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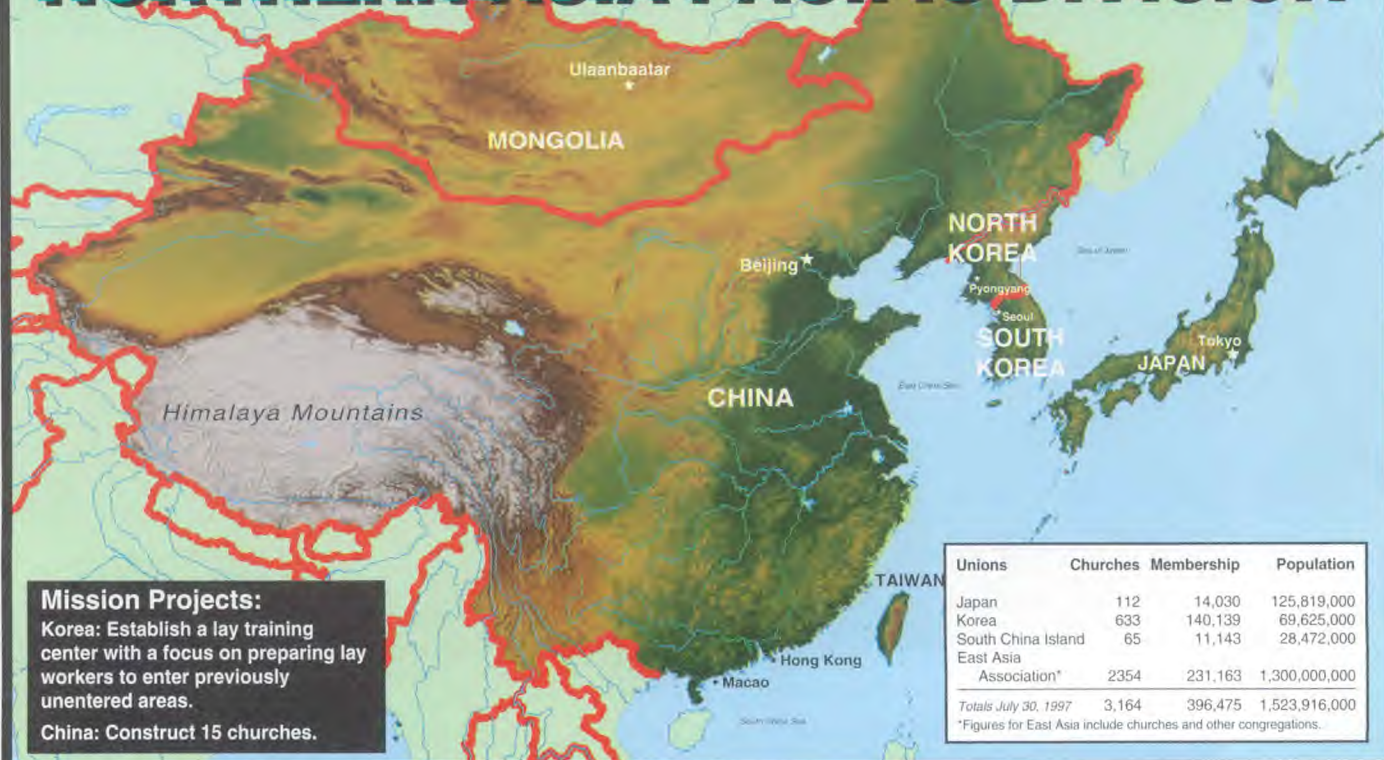
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